

Salma Malik

TERRORISM: IMPLICATIONS FOR PAKISTAN'S SECURITY

Abstract

Terrorism poses unique challenges to the liberal democratic state in the post-Cold War world. The aim of terrorism is clear - influence public opinion through symbolic violence, and to date there is no clear understanding of exactly what the "political formula" is that leads to terrorism. With the rising challenges of globalization on the one hand and internal fragmentation on the other, the contemporary nation-state still remains the most viable political entity. This paper attempts to define what terrorism constitutes. The paper explores the reasons behind the rise of terrorism in Pakistan, its consequences, both at the internal and external levels, and steps taken by the Pakistani establishment to redress the rising menace of terrorism in the society. Furthermore, it examines whether the Pakistani establishment's anti-terrorist posture was in response to the US call for collective combat against terrorism *per se* or driven by domestic concerns. What repercussions the Pakistani establishment has to face as a result of these policies? And, lastly, what more needs to be undertaken?

What is Terrorism?

Terrorism poses unique challenges to the liberal democratic state in the post-Cold War world. It would not be incorrect to contend that terrorism is antithesis to democracy. The aim of terrorism is clear - influence public opinion through symbolic violence, and to date there is

Ms. Salma Malik is Lecturer at the Department of Defence & Strategic Studies, Quad-i-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan. Her e-mail address is: salmamehr@yahoo.com

no clear understanding of exactly what the "political formula" is that leads to terrorism. According to Paul Wilkinson, it is the systematic use of coercive intimidation, usually to service political ends.¹ A similar perspective is followed by the UN in its description of this complex phenomenon as a tool and not an ideology or a philosophy when through its General Assembly resolution terrorism was stated to be "criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public."²

Terrorism has proved increasingly elusive against attempts to formulate an agreed definition, mainly because it has constantly shifted and expanded its meaning and usage in a long chain of conflicts and violence. The adage that 'one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter' reveals the wide range of variation in its interpretation. Simply stated, terror is 'extreme or intense fear'. It is a psychological state which combines the physical and mental effects of dread and insecurity. Terrorism thus implies a system or a concept in which terror is systematically applied to cause fear, panic and/or coercive intimidation to exert direct or indirect pressure to achieve political objectives. Invariably, the people are the main targets and the means employed are frequently violent, though not necessarily extreme or excessive. It is a simpler explanation and may seem inadequate to capture the full magnitude of the problems and new factors that are now associated with terrorism worldwide. However, it provides a literal beginning by combining the intrinsic meaning with its purpose and application.

The rise of complex terrorist activities worldwide has compelled socio-political scientists to review this issue which is no longer a tool devoid of any philosophy or ideology and simply in the realm of criminality. Terrorism could therefore be described as "the calculated use of violence or the threat of violence to inculcate fear intended to coerce or intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious or ideological." Furthermore, Peter Chalk

1 Paul Wilkinson, *Terrorism versus Democracy: The Liberal State Response*, London: Frank Cass, 2002, p. 13.

2 United Nations General Assembly Resolution, GA Res. 51/210 Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism – 1999.

describes it as “the use or threat of illegitimate violence that is employed by sub-state actors as a means to achieve specific political objectives.”³

With the rising challenges of globalization on the one hand and internal fragmentation on the other, the contemporary nation-state still remains the most viable political entity. And nations without states are still struggling in their quest for statehood. The end of bipolarity has given rise to feelings of irredentism, nationalism, religion and ethnicity, which place an immense stress on the international system. Bruce Hoffman claims that these sentiments are fueling terrorism and forecasts that these forces “...long held in check or kept dormant by the Cold War may erupt to produce even greater levels of non-state violence....”⁴ The range of these forces would be aimed at affecting political behaviour through any type of activity ranging from religious to most secular and apolitical in its manifestation.

Walter Laqueur concluded that, “terrorism constitutes the illegitimate use of force”,⁵ while James M. Poland defined, “terrorism as the premeditated, deliberate, systematic murder, mayhem and threatening of the innocent to create fear and intimidation in order to gain a political or tactical advantage, usually to influence an audience”. The shifting focus from the accepted national objectives, which provided some political legitimacy to terrorism, and the increasing lethality of violence, at times being irrationally excessive, have become the cause of serious public concern worldwide. Its fallout has been highly favourable to state terrorism, which thrives on the weakened opposition and operates even more boldly and brutally, as is being demonstrated by Israel and India following the 11th September incident.

This paper basically aims to address the following questions: How to define terrorism and what constitutes terrorism? What are the reasons behind the rise of terrorism in Pakistan and what are its consequences both internally and externally. What steps were taken by the Pakistani establishment to redress the rising menace of terrorism in the society? Was the Pakistani establishment’s anti-terrorist posture in response to the

3 Peter Chalk, *The Nature of Contemporary Terrorism*, Conference Paper delivered to the CSCAP Transnational Crime Working Group, Sydney Australia, May 2001.

4 Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, USA: Columbia University Press, 1998.

5 Walter Laqueur, ‘Postmodern Terrorism’, *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 1996, p. 25.

US call for collective combat against terrorism or was it dominated by domestic concerns? What repercussions the Pakistani establishment has to face as a result of these policies? And, lastly, what more needs to be undertaken?

Implications for Pakistan

By no means an issue specific to a single country or a region, terrorism has international implications and, for a candid and honest analysis, there is a need to trace the genesis of this malaise. In Pakistani culture, more often than not, the delineation between a *Just* cause and a *Terrorist* activity has not been on clear-cut lines. Nonetheless, there is no denying the fact that this menace, which has already become endemic to our society, requires concerted efforts to be countered and eradicated at all levels.

Until the beginning of the 1980s, this issue was not so dangerously intrinsic in Pakistan, especially the aspect of religious intolerance and sectarian violence. In fact, religion was by and large a personal issue, deeply ingrained in the national identity but demarcated from the daily functioning of the state. Many factors, such as the advent of Zia's Martial Law and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan strengthened the clergy's hand in Pakistan as also the influx of arms and money from the US, Saudi Arabia and other countries sponsoring the jihad against the Soviet occupation forces. Besides, Indian state terrorism in Kashmir and elsewhere, the rise of transnational religious groups and, most importantly, Pakistan's own domestic situation were instrumental in making the country a hotbed of terrorist activities.

However, the issue of terrorism assumed global significance in the wake of the September 11th terrorist attacks on the United States. Suddenly the world stood divided between those who supported the US in its unilaterally-pronounced war against terrorism and those who did not. Under the circumstances, Pakistan was presented with both opportunities and challenges. Pakistan got an opportunity to manage its domestic sectarian and terrorism problem, and also to restore its lost diplomatic standing and reclaim its status of a trusted US ally. However, at the home front, Pakistan had to face immense pressure from domestic forces, both religious and secular, for its decision. The apprehension has been regarding the negative fallout of this decision, and much remains to be seen what dividends lie in store for Islamabad in the long run. Also,

the international support is entirely conditional, balanced precariously. There is indeed a lingering fear of a sudden and swift withdrawal of support to Pakistan, subject to change in US strategic priorities, in spite of the fact that the government in Islamabad has tried to manage the situation to its advantage.

A large part of the rise in terrorism, sectarianism and extremist politics in Pakistan lies in the country's political history, and its civil-military relations, in which interest groups have retained state power at the expense of democratic and socio-economic development. To strengthen and prolong their rule, various civil as well as military governments in the past have formed domestic alliances, mainly with the clergy, strengthened and manipulated marginalized political groups in an attempt to weaken stronger and mass-based political groups, such as the rising Muhajir Quami Movement in the province of Sindh in the late 1970s and in the 1980s as a counter-weight to the Pakistan People's Party. In this process, the civil society got badly undermined, and the breakdown of democratic norms was compounded by problems such as the deterioration of justice system and the rule of law, the lack of accountability as evidenced in massive corruption, smuggling, drug-trafficking, criminal violence, power personalization and human rights abuse. This increased polarization along ethnic and especially religious sectarian lines, marginalization and suppression of political opposition. Alienation of ethnic minorities, together with extremist religious movement, has led to political violence and intimidation. All this has been compounded by economic failure, injustice and stagnation made worse by the relentless political penetration and enervation of state bureaucracy.

As they gathered momentum, these pathologies of governance choked off the horizontal relations of trust, cooperation, honesty, reciprocity and public-spiritedness that constitute the social capital of a vigorous prosperous democratic society based on "civic community." Three main problem areas would be highlighted below - the Afghan Jihad and the problems associated with it, such as the unchecked refugee inflow and cross border trafficking of all kinds; gun-running and weapons proliferation; and the infamous madrassah culture giving rise to issues of sectarianism, religious intolerance and extremism coupled with militancy and violence.

Afghan Jihad

The traditionally strong cultural, religious and social ties between the peoples of Pakistan and Afghanistan and over 1000 miles of their border naturally got the former involved in the war in the latter. Generally, it can be said that Pakistan's role in the Soviet-Afghan war and her acceptance of millions of refugees have had serious implications for the country. To begin with, it entirely changed the country's orientation from a moderate Islamic state to an increasingly theological one. For President General Zia-ul-Haq, it came about as a blessing in disguise. It brought him closer to the US, making Pakistan a frontline state in the CIA-sponsored war, and through the call for Jihad, Zia managed to gain the much-needed legitimacy and clergy's backing which otherwise would have been not too easy to achieve.

Secondly, the most glaring repercussion was and remains the proliferation of weapons, both small and heavy, that resulted in enhanced violence, free gun-running and display of firearms. Coupled with drugs, trafficking of illicit firearms as well as smuggling of commercial goods increased corruption and crime and the consequent loss of faith in the government's writ. As stated by Naseerullah Khan Baber, a former Interior Minister, "drugs, terrorism and weapons were the fallout of Pakistan's role in Afghan Jihad," adding that "Afghanistan had become a training ground for terrorism that was being imported into Pakistan and other parts of the world."⁶

Some of the training camps and religious schools in Afghanistan and parts of Pakistan became breeding grounds for ethnic and sectarian violence as well as terrorist training camps. During the Soviet occupation, Afghan and Soviet forces even conducted raids against Mujahideen bases inside Pakistan and a campaign of terror bombings and sabotage in Pakistani cities. In 1987 alone, some 90 percent of the 777 terrorist incidents recorded worldwide took place in Pakistan.⁷ The Afghan jihad, correspondingly, also promoted trafficking and smuggling of counterfeit goods and currency in the country and proved highly instrumental in the establishment of the infamous madrassah culture in Pakistan.

⁶ Tahir Raza Naqvi, "Afghanistan – Terrorism & implications for Pakistan's Security," *Margalla Papers*, Year 2001, p. 121.

⁷ *ibid*

Pakistan, in spite of being a Third World country with many a problem of its own, accepted and at one point single-handedly sustained not less than three million or so refugees on its soil. From the very outset, the government policy towards these incoming refugees was flawed. As Islamabad is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Follow up Protocol, it was not binding on Pakistan to allow the refugees to enter its territory; however, these refugees were accepted on sheer humanitarian grounds. The Pakistani government did initially try to register these refugees, but as the number grew with time, not only was that practice disregarded, but they were free to go anywhere in the country. This resulted in their spreading out far and wide, giving rise to resentment amongst the local population as well as increased demographic shake-ups. The refugee population, who sought local citizenship, was spread over 300 camps mainly in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Baluchistan and represented over 20% of the local population. In certain areas they even outnumbered the indigenous population.⁸

The most alarming repercussion of the Afghan Jihad was the rise in narco- smuggling and introduction of a violent gun culture, commonly referred to as the *Kalashnikov culture* in the Pakistani society, which became a hallmark of the 1980s. As regards narcotic abuse, in the year 1980 there were virtually no heroin addicts in Pakistan; the number reached 20,000 by 1981 and within four years the number grew to an alarming figure of 365,000 recorded addicts. According to a survey, by the year 1999, Pakistan had an estimated five million addicts.⁹ This was an extremely precarious and dangerous situation for Pakistan. On the one hand, narcotics and drug money fuelled law and order problems, corruption, and money laundering and, on the other hand, it was encouraged by some foreign governments financing the Afghan Jihad so that the money earned from this channel could be spent on the purchase of arms and weapons from the international black market, thus creating a vicious cycle which after more than a decade continues unabated.

8 Salma Malik, "Refugee Rights under International Jurisdiction: A Case Study of Afghan Refugees," *IPRI Journal*, vol. V, no.1, Winter 2005, pp. 143-60.

9 Shaheen Akhtar, "Transnational Violence & Seams of lawlessness in the Asia-Pacific: Linkages to global terrorism," for the *APCSS Geo-Strategic Implications of terrorism in South Asia: Pakistan's perspective*, February 19-21, 2002, Honolulu, Hawaii.

Weapons Proliferation

According to the 1998 census, Pakistanis owned around 2 million *licensed* firearms. In addition, officials of the Ministry of Interior believe that there are roughly 18 million more illegally held.¹⁰ Although weapons have somewhat always been available in the arms bazaars within the NWFP, such as Darra Adamkhel and Landi Kotal, the major impetus and free flow of modern light weapons increased manifold after the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. Given the nature of the proxy war, millions of tons of military material were imported into the region, including a variety of weapons. Other countries also contributed in one way or another by providing the warring Mujahideen with direct or indirect assistance both in material and finances. For example, China wary of Soviet designs contributed weaponry, whereas Saudi Arabia came forth with financial assistance.

As a front line ally, Pakistan became the conduit for this massive military assistance programme, its top Intelligence outfit, the Inter-Services Intelligence agency (ISI), managing the receipt and distribution with the American CIA and coordinating the supply of weapons. With a bitter Vietnam experience still fresh in memory, the United States did not want to be seen as providing direct military assistance for the Mujahideen, and for this reason massive amounts of arms were purchased from a variety of sources. Interesting trends could be witnessed in this undercover arms pipeline; the CIA would procure through Egypt large amounts of antipersonnel mines originally produced in Italy and so on. During this time period weapons even of Israeli and Indian makes could also be found in circulation. The CIA would then arrange for the arms to be either flown to Islamabad or shipped, via Oman, to Karachi.

Madrasah Culture

Traditionally, the Islamic religious schools called *Madrasah* have been a sanctuary for the homeless and displaced people, sustaining and supporting thousands of poor people who otherwise lack access to formal education and served an important humanitarian role. In Pakistan, as in

10 Salma Malik and Mallika A. Joseph, "Introducing the Small Arms Debate in the Security Discourse of South Asia," *RCSS Policy Studies*, No. 33, Manohar Publications, New Delhi, April 2005. p.69.

many developing countries, education is not mandatory and many rural areas lack public schools. On the other hand, religious madrasahs, located all over the country, have been a regular source of free education, free food, housing, and clothing. According to a World Bank estimate, only 40 percent of Pakistanis are literate. However, over a period of time, these religious institutions have become *Schools of Hate* as, in the words of Jessica Stern, not only most of these schools offer religious education alone, some extremist madrasahs preach Jihad without understanding the concept. They equate jihad - which most Islamic scholars interpret as the striving for justice (and principally an inner striving to purify the self) - with guerrilla warfare only, as their own interpretation of social justice.

During the Soviet-Afghan war, Madrasahs were already seen as “the supply line for jihad.”¹¹ *Jihad*, a highly revered tenet of Islam, has been used specially during the Afghan occupation by Soviet troops by vested interests to exploit the common man’s sentiment and allegiance to the cause in the name of religion. And after the end of the Afghan war, violence and militancy was spread in the name of jihad. During the 1980s, madrasahs were promoted as a way to garner the religious parties’ support for the military rule and to recruit troops for the anti-Soviet war in Afghanistan. At the time, many madrasahs were financed through *Zakat*, giving the government at least a modicum of control. But with time, funds and donations by wealthy Pakistanis at home or abroad, private and government-funded organizations belonging to the Persian Gulf states increased, which exacerbated the problem as these donors carried their specific interests. And with lessening state control, the madrasahs were now free to preach the warped and narrow version of a violent Islam as propagated by these actors.

Out of the estimated 40,000 to 50,000 madrasahs, only about 4,350 have registered with the government.¹² These schools encourage their graduates, who often cannot find work because of their lack of practical education, to fulfill their "spiritual obligations" by fighting against Hindus in Kashmir or against Muslims of other sects in Pakistan. Such Madrasahs have become fiefdoms of the clerics who run them according to their biases. Hence, they oppose government policies towards any kind of regularization or registration of the institution, for they fear that they

11 International Crisis Group, “Pakistan: Madrasahs, extremism and the military,” *ICG Asia Report, No. 36*, July 29, 2002:, p. 2.

12 *ibid*

could get secularized, that the unchecked flow of finances being provided to them may get stopped or questioned and that their authority might get curbed.

9/11 and the Changing Scenario for Pakistan

Following the events of 9/11, Pakistan actively joined the US-led international coalition against terrorism. However, prior to this, President Pervez Musharraf, mindful of the growing menace of terrorism at home, had initiated various steps to curb and check the problem. One such action was the nationwide *arms control campaign*, which was initiated in autumn 2000. Its main aim was to purge the society from gun-running and make the country a weapons free society. Besides, two large sectarian based organizations, the *Lashkar-e-Jhanghvi* and the *Sipah-e-Mohammad*; infamous for spreading militancy and extremist sectarian sentiments, were also banned. These organizations were initially put on a watch list and later banned altogether along with few other such organizations after their activities were found detrimental. However, 9/11 not only brought Pakistan to the center stage of global politics, but also helped the government intensify its anti-terrorist activities. Pakistan's contribution to the war against terrorism has been crucial and acknowledged worldwide.

In the pre-9/11 period, Pakistan was suffering from a negative image problem due to various factors, such as its support to the Taliban regime since 1994, corruption of the political elites, bad economic conditions, nuclear explosions in 1998, alleged support to the Kashmiri freedom struggle, the Kargil conflict, the military coup against a democratically-elected government in 1999, and so forth. Pakistan joined the US-led coalition in the anticipation that it would instantly help address all these problems. Although it was abundantly clear to the new rulers in Islamabad that joining the US-led coalition would mean cutting off relations with the Taliban regime, affecting the precariously balanced Afghan policy of Pakistan. This also carried implications for the freedom struggle in Kashmir, given that both the US and India have evolving strategic relations.

Pak–US Anti-Terrorism Cooperation

Beside the formation of the *Joint Working Group on Counter-terrorism and Law Enforcement*, Pakistan provided basing and over-flight permission for all U.S. and coalition forces and deployed a large number of its troops along the Afghanistan border in support of *Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF)*. It was by no means a small feat, as Pakistani troops were then also engaged along its eastern border to counter an unprecedented Indian military concentration. In return, there was a revival of the *US–Pak Defence Cooperation Group (DCG)* in September 2002, after five years. The first joint US-Pakistan military exercises also took place since 1987, with approximately 120 soldiers from each country participating. The renewal of *US Assistance to Pakistan's Security-related Programmes* brought about US assistance worth US\$396.5 million for FY 2002, an allocation of US\$56.5 million for FY 2003, and further entertaining the request for another US\$120 million worth of assistance for FY 2004.

According to rough estimates, regional terrorism efforts have caused the Pakistani economy losses in excess of \$10 billion since October 2001.¹³ In addition, the US pledged 73 million dollars for border security, to be utilized specifically for intelligence gathering equipment and three helicopters for the interior ministry. Finally, there was the lifting of the nuclear- and democracy- related sanctions. However, it must also be added that the reciprocal initiatives promised for Pakistan in the earlier pronouncements of the West did not come through in full, nor did the Western governments make any significant contributions to address the issues arising from the negative portrayal of Pakistan and Islam's image in their media. Besides, there is a growing perception amongst the people that, with Afghanistan no longer much important after Iraq, Pakistan has once again lost its chance. There would neither be any tariff relief nor trade concessions; the fiscal aid package would also be conditional.

13 Samina Yasmeen, "Unexpectedly at Center Stage: Pakistan," in Mary Buckley & Rick Fawn eds. *Global Responses to Terrorism 9/11: Afghanistan and Beyond*, Routledge, London, 2003. p. 197.

Domestic Political Dynamics

Following the events of 9/11 and the subsequent developments in the region and around the world, there has been an increase in the anti-West and anti-American sentiments at the civil society level in the Muslim World in general and in Pakistan in particular. This has happened specifically after having seen the devastation that followed the American bombing of Afghanistan, resulting in the loss of thousands of innocent civilian lives as 'collateral damage'. Besides, anti-American sentiments are a direct response to the malicious Western media campaign against Islam and the Muslims. There is a general perception that the Western media work in tandem with their respective governments, and these developments have impacted upon the electoral process in Pakistan. One of the significant outcomes of this anti-US resentment was reflected in the success of the six-party alliance of religious political parties *Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA)* in the October 2002 elections. All major parties in this alliance have been supportive of, and traditionally have had links with, various Afghan organizations, while being extremely critical of the U.S military operation in Afghanistan. In the absence of strong leadership of the traditionally main political parties, the MMA managed to capitalize on the anti-US and anti-establishment vote bank.

Pakistani public views with concern any possibility of compromising state sovereignty even to a little degree, such as the dissatisfaction surrounding the WANA Operation launched by the government to flush out foreign militants, which allowed foreign troops to be stationed on Pakistani soil and foreign intelligence agencies to operate within the country, or the signing of non-transparent agreements for cooperation on the war on terrorism. The assassination attempts on the President and the Prime Minister of Pakistan are also indicative of the fact that the outlawed militant outfits are on a constant lookout to seek an opportunity to sabotage totally the government's initiative. There is no doubt that the nation backed President Musharraf's decision for joining the anti-terrorism coalition for safeguarding the national interests. However, the conditions and limits of collaboration need to be defined now, especially in view of the deteriorating security situation on Pak-Afghan border where clashes between US and Pakistani and Afghan and Pakistani troops are being reported with more frequency.

President Musharraf in his historic January 2002 speech clearly outlined his regime's posture towards terrorist outfits, with five more extremist organizations banned and barred from operating under new names, bringing the total tally to seven. The offices and assets of these organizations were sealed and confiscated and not less than 400 activists along with their leaders were rounded up and arrested. Prior to this, in a September 2001 address, President Musharraf pointed out four critical priority areas that needed to be preserved: 1) Security of the country, 2) Economy and its revival, 3) Strategic nuclear and missile assets, and 4) the Kashmir cause. The Kashmir issue, which is of critical importance to Pakistan, was duly highlighted in both of his addresses.¹⁴ While enunciating the government's policy on the issue of terrorism and replying to Indian allegation about Pakistan's alleged involvement in the October and December 2001 terrorist acts in India-held Kashmir and in Delhi, the President stated:

No Pakistani can afford to sever links with Kashmir. The entire Pakistan and the world know this. We will continue to extend our moral, political and diplomatic support to Kashmiris. We will never budge an inch from our principled stand on Kashmir. The Kashmir problem needs to be resolved by dialogue and peaceful means in accordance with the wishes of the Kashmiri people and the United Nations resolutions. We have to find the solution of this dispute. No organization will be allowed to indulge in terrorism in the name of Kashmir. We condemn the terrorist acts of September 11, October 1 and December 13. Anyone found involved in any terrorist act would be dealt with sternly. Strict action will be taken against any Pakistani individual, group or organization found involved in terrorism within or outside the country. ... Pakistan will not allow its territory to be used for any terrorist activity anywhere in the world. Now you must play an active role in solving the Kashmir dispute for the sake of lasting peace and harmony in the region.¹⁵

14 Fazal-ur-Rahman, "Pakistan and the War on Terrorism," *Strategic Studies*, Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad, no. 3, 2003, http://www.issi.org.pk/strategic_studies_htm/2003/no_3/article/3a.htm#top.

15 General Pervez Musharraf, address to the nation on radio and TV, 17 October 1999, and also his speech on 12 January 2002. *Dawn*, January 13, 2002.

De-weaponisation Campaign

In response to the rising social violence and the easy availability of automatic weapons, in the autumn of 2000, the government of Pakistan initiated a *National Arms Control & Recovery Campaign*. The main goal of the campaign was to facilitate "de-Weaponization" through confiscation and prosecution of illegally-held arms. A three-phase programme was launched. Initially, owners were encouraged to register their licensed weapons. In the second phase, owners could surrender illegal firearms over a two-week amnesty in June 2001. Although the number of weapons received was not expected to be great, the hope was that these measures would break the culture of freely carrying Kalashnikov rifles in public and facilitate future police intervention. In May 2001, the Cabinet approved a *New Arms Control Policy and Action Plan for the Recovery of Illicit Weapons*. Earlier, a ban was imposed on the display of weapons throughout the country in February 2000, while issuance of fresh arms licenses was stopped totally from March 2000.

However sincere the government's arms recovery action plan might have been, unfortunately there was poor implementation and follow up. Especially after the year 2002 elections, the campaign failed to meet up with its desired goals. More important was the targeting of the illegal arms market, but with Afghanistan still a troubled region, it continues to equip the warring factions with the required armaments.

Madrasah Reforms

Although there were attempts to bring about reforms in the madrasah system even during Zia's time period, not much of success was achieved. As part of the Musharraf plan, the mosques were to be reformed, i.e. all mosques would be registered and no new mosques were allowed to be built without permission to prevent its abuse.

While conducting operations, the Pakistan army invariably rounded up suspects, who mainly came from the Arab world and Central Asian States. With no restrictions placed on the entry of such activists in the past, the country hosted thousands of foreign jihadis in its various madrasahs and other places, mostly run by Arab NGOs, with virtually no documentation or registration in place. Beside the arrest of wanted Al-

Qaeda suspects, the government by March 2002 identified for expulsion some 300 foreigners from the country.¹⁶

As early as December 1999, the National Security Council had formed a *Working Group* to recommend effective madrasah reforms without affecting the autonomy of madrasahs. On the basis of recommendations suggested, three model seminaries, one each in Islamabad, Karachi and Sukkur, were set up, and they function under the *Pakistan Madrasah Education Board (PMEB)*.¹⁷ Established under the August 2001 Ordinance, the PMEB was basically to monitor the admission of both students and teachers in these seminaries, as well as to set an appropriate curriculum for them. The government in June 2002 proposed another ordinance for voluntary registration and regulation of the madrasahs. However, not only do the clerics dismiss these ordinances and find these model institutions as a showpiece with little relevance to and impact on religious education but also dispute the government's involvement in mandatory registration and official financial scrutiny.

Under the ordinance, no new madrasah would be set up without permission from relevant district authority, and the existing ones were to voluntarily register themselves with their respective PMEB chapters. The finances of these institutions would be monitored, with no foreign grant, aid or exchange of personnel (both students and teachers) taking place without a *No Objection Certificate* by the Ministry of Interior. Secondly, the madrasah administration would not be allowed to indulge in fuelling extremist or sectarian sentiment. Proper routing of finances for the

16 "Foreigners leave madaris' hostels", *Dawn*, 8 April 2002.

17 Ministry of Education, Government of Pakistan, "Education Sector Reform: Action Plan 2001-2004", 1 January 2002. The board consists of the secretaries of the ministry of education and ministry of religious affairs; the chairman of the University Grants Commission; two ulema who are or have been members of the Council of Islamic Ideology (to be nominated by the chairman); the director general of the Dawa Academy of the International Islamic University, Islamabad; a professor who is also the head of the department of Islamic studies in a university; provincial education secretaries of all the four provinces; a president or Nazim of a madrasa wafaq; the president of the Tanzim al-Madaris; and the Nazim of the Rabita al-Madaris. Source: International Crisis Group, "Pakistan: Madrasahs, extremism and the military," *ICG Asia Report No. 36*, July 29, 2002:, pp. 24-25.

madrasahs has been one of the most difficult aspects, since there are very effective informal methods of monetary transactions.¹⁸

Through the regulatory system, the government plans not only to provide the madrasahs with books, computers, etc. but also to allocate budget for hiring teachers as well as launch teachers' training programmes; besides, the syllabus and courses taught at the madrasahs would be monitored.¹⁹ However, the problem the government is already facing is that, in spite of claiming that there are 10,000 unregistered madrasahs, the number is actually much more. Not all madrasahs are willing to register, thus working on mere speculations is not enough.

Not all the existing madrasahs are linked to some militant organization or spreading sectarianism; thus it is wrong to treat them as identical units. Secondly, the government's plan lacks a focal point, with responsibilities dispersed amongst various ministries including concerned agencies. Thus, many a time, there is an overlap in the tasks assigned as also a lot of confusion prevails at the implementation phase. Effective madrasah reform requires a central regulatory authority that would regulate the functioning of these institutions and also provide a focal point for donors, foreign governments, and the media as well as facilitate coordination between the various government departments. Laws and not temporary ordinance should be implemented, with availability of credible data as a necessary prerequisite to address the problem. Finally, most important is the need to create a nationwide financial Intelligence Unit to supervise, monitor and coordinate financial intelligence both within and outside the country.

Conclusion

The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks against the United States have radically and permanently altered the balance of power politics in South and West Asia, a fact that makes Pakistan very jittery. The United States can no longer afford to isolate a nuclear Pakistan and still hope that nuclear nonproliferation in South Asia — especially preventing the theft of fissile material or technology — remains a viable and effective policy. Pakistan's perspective regarding the balance of power in the region has to be seriously taken into consideration by Washington. This

18 *ibid*, p. 30-1

19 "Madaris asked to diversify syllabus," *Dawn*, 31 January 2002.

is because the United States may be able to find a long-term solution to terrorism only by committing itself to the maintenance of the balance of power in Pakistan's neighborhood. This means guaranteeing the political *status quo* in South Asia with a resolved Kashmir issue as essential ingredients of a stable balance of power.

The fly in the ointment, however, is the willingness of the United States to commit itself to the role of a facilitator — along with Pakistan — and to ensure that this commitment remains unchanged for the next five to 10 years. As the lone superpower, America's strategic interests are much too cumbersome to remain focused on one particular region for long, even though South and West Asia remain highly explosive regions. However, the U.S. "war" on transnational terrorism will have to go much beyond capturing or killing Osama bin Laden. Peace and stability in South and West Asia will neither be easy nor will it materialize anytime soon, while Washington can hardly afford continuing instability over the longer term.