

The Taliban Imbrolio: Search for a Durable Peace in Pakistan

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Abstract

Taliban are not a homogenous group of fighters or extremists rather they are conglomerate of different groups. According to one estimate 'there are 52 Taliban groups inclusive of 12 foreign groups'.¹ Some well-known Taliban or affiliated groups are the Afghan fighters within Afghanistan, Afghan fighters operating in Afghanistan from bases in Pakistan, Tehrik-e-Taliban, Pakistan, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Muhammad etc. One common feature among these groups is the hostility towards the West in general and the US in particular. This also makes them natural allies to the declared terrorist group of Al-Qaeda. As all of them believe that in the guise of war on terror the West has launched a crusade against the Muslims of the world, and it is now the duty of all Muslims to confront them in whatever way possible. They have been very successfully using the issues that Muslims are facing in different countries of the world, such as Kashmir, Palestine, Iraq, Chechnya, Afghanistan etc. They have also declared war against those Muslim countries that are supporting the West in the war on terror.²

This article gives an overview of different militant groups and their fighting strategies with respect to the problem of restoration of peace in Pakistan.

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¹ Fazal Hakeem, 'Direct talks with TTP', *Pakistan Observer*, 06 April 2014, <http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=238768>, accessed on 04 April 2014.

² Anne Speckhard, 'De-Legitimizing Terrorism: Creative Engagement and Understanding of the Psycho-Social and Political Processes Involved in Ideological Support for Terrorism', *Connections*, Winter Issue (1) available at AIRRA website, http://www.airra.org/documents/De-legitimizing_terrorism{1}.pdf, accessed on 30 September 2011.

Introduction

The US forces are preparing to leave Afghanistan by the end of 2014 after fighting the longest war of its history. It is obvious that the US and international forces did not get an absolute victory, however, they did make some progress. Taliban are still a major threat, but the 5 April 2014 Presidential elections in Afghanistan show that majority of Afghans do not support their violent and extremist agenda. This fact is obvious from the 7 million votes cast out of 12 million registered for 2014 elections. This should be an indicator to the Taliban in Pakistan as well.

The Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) basically takes inspiration from Afghan Taliban and also pledge loyalty to Mullah Umar, the *Amir-ul-Momineen* of Afghan Taliban. The TTP power house is primarily Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan, which account for 3.42 per cent of Pakistan territory and 2 per cent of Pakistan total population. Out of 2 per cent population a fraction of them are actually actively supporting their agenda but since they are using violent methods for the achievement of their goal, the rest of population, which is in large majority, have been taken hostage by them.

The Nawaz Sharif government policy of ‘carrot and sticks’ has shown some success by forcing the TTP to agree for negotiations. It is commonly believed that after some violent attacks by the TTP on the government forces across Pakistan, the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) jets carried out surgical strikes on the TTP targets that compelled them to agree for negotiations. Negotiating with Taliban is a double edged sword. It can give time to the TTP to relocate their strategic assets and leadership to much safer places out of reach of PAF, but it can also erode their support among the already marginal number of population.

Militant groups

When we look at these different groups from Pakistan’s perspective one can find the following groups which are busy in violent activities:

Al-Qaeda is generally perceived as a terrorist organization which has waged a war on the basis of a distorted version of Islam and world facts. So there is no ambiguity in the minds of majority of Pakistanis that Al-Qaeda has no right to work from the territories of Pakistan against the whole world and brings bad name to Pakistan and its government. Therefore they are the declared enemies of Pakistan state and its people and need to be expelled from Pakistan by any means.³

³ Naeem Khalid Lodhi (Lt. Gen. Retd.), ‘The Good Taliban, The Bad Taliban’, 6 July 2011, *Pakpotpourri2's Blog*,

Afghan Taliban are those people who are fighting against the US and allied forces and who do not mingle in Pakistan affairs. They claim that they are fighting a national liberation war against the occupied forces and even, now, they prefer to call themselves as *mujahideen* and freedom fighters. Their main source of strength is coming from within Afghanistan and their reach is spread over the entire length and breadth of the country but their strongholds are in the south and east of Afghanistan where the majority of Pakhtuns live. However, the 5 April 2014 presidential elections in Afghanistan have shown that they have lost popularity among the Afghans in general as in spite of their appeals and threats around 7 million Afghans (out of 12 million registered voters) cast their votes.⁴

The western media lump Afghan Taliban with other extremist groups for their own interests but they are totally different from the rest of the Taliban. Their policy towards Pakistan is not very hostile and aggressive except that they do not like it's pro-West and War on Terror policy. Rather some of these groups which have alleged safe havens in Pakistan try to help Pakistan in reigning in the extremist TTP who are fighting the Pakistani state. Among these groups the Haqqani network has allegedly known connections with the Pakistan army and has helped the security forces of Pakistan many times against the TTP. Even Mullah Omar himself has reportedly made efforts to reign in the militants of TTP against Pakistan.⁵ As such Pakistan does not fear their present activities but it is careful about their future behavior about Pakistan particularly once the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) leaves Afghanistan by the end of 2014. Pakistan is carefully watching the 2014 elections and it has shown no support to any particular presidential candidate rather one of the experts on foreign policy who is also Pakistan Senate Defense Committee Chairman, Syed Mushahid Hussain, stated about Afghan presidential elections' candidates that Pakistan is interested in the democratic process not in persons.⁶ However Pakistan is

<http://pakpotpourri2.wordpress.com/2011/07/05/the-good-taliban-the-bad-taliban>, 13 July 2011.

⁴ *Al-Jazeera*, News network, dated 6 April 2014.

⁵ Antonio Giustozzi, *Negotiating with the Taliban: Issues and Prospects, A Century Foundation Report* (New York: The Century Foundation, 2010), available at <http://tcf.org/assets/downloads/tcf-Giustozzi.pdf>, accessed on 01 April 2014, p.15.

⁶ *Malaysia Sun*, 10 April 2014. Available on line, <http://www.malaysiasun.com/index.php/sid/220881907/scat/303b19022816233b/ht/Pakistan-Hopes-Successful-Afghan-Election-Will-Improve-Ties>, accessed on 10 April 2014.

also careful about the Afghan Taliban as they are still a formidable and undefeated force who also has a great influence on Pakistani Taliban. Thus Pakistan is keeping its options open instead of supporting, at this juncture, any particular group or person.

There is another group of Afghan Taliban who are based in the territories of Pakistan but fight in Afghanistan. Before commenting on their activities we need to understand the geography and demography of the territories where they are located. Pakistan and Afghanistan share a 2250 kms long boarder which is one of the most difficult terrains in the world. This boundary line is known as Durand Line, which has been agreed upon between the British Indian Government and the Amir of Afghanistan in 1893. Since it has divided the people of the same ethnic stock, viz. Pakhtuns/Pashtuns, it was criticized by Afghan/Pakhtun nationalists right from the date of its inception and since then till this date it has not been fully demarcated and is still a controversial issue between Pakistan and Afghanistan.⁷ In some areas where it was demarcated, it created more tension than peace as in some cases it has divided single villages into two states. Keeping in view the demographic complexity of the tribes, both Pakistan and Afghanistan have given them special status with mutual agreement known as 'Easement Rights' that allow them to freely move across the border without formal documentation.⁸

These tribes who share the same language, culture, history and religion are bound by traditions to help each other in times of need. These tribes also share with their Afghan brothers the common animosity towards ISAF. These common characteristics push them towards helping Afghan Taliban in their fight for their country's liberation from outside forces.⁹ After the withdrawal of ISAF it is believed that the Afghan Taliban propaganda about the presence of foreign forces on the soil of Afghanistan would get blunt. What would be the situation after that; different people have different opinion. Some are optimistic and some

⁷ Conference Report, 'The Durand Line: History, Consequences, And Future', organized by the American Institute of Afghanistan Studies, USA and The Hollings Center for International Dialogue, USA, held at Istanbul, Turkey, July 2007.

⁸ Naeem Khalid Lodhi, *op.cit.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

are pessimistic about Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), mainly Afghan National Army (ANA), capability to control the situation.¹⁰

Pakistan is facing great problem in checking cross-border infiltration. It is a great embarrassment for the government, however, it is not only Pakistan that has failed to check them, the ISAF and Afghan forces too have failed to control them in spite of, atleast former's, better equipment and training. For the solution of cross border infiltration the Government of Pakistan has proposed different strategies like fencing or mining the border but none of these proposals have been accepted by the Afghan government and ISAF. The only way to stop this cooperation between the two groups is to stop war in Afghanistan.¹¹

Amongst the Taliban the known anti-Pakistani group is Tehrik-e-Taliban, Pakistan (TTP). This group is a mixture of criminals, smugglers, drug mafias, angry and dissatisfied youth, sectarian zealots and paid mercenaries. They have got prominence due to weak writ of the government, social and economic deprivation, lack of justice and law enforcement. This has provided space for them to spread their influence in the country in general and tribal areas in particular. They have joined hands for vested interests but are also used by hostile intelligence agencies of India, Afghanistan and even CIA. CIA is using them in order to create anti-Afghan Taliban sentiments amongst Pakistani people and cut their support amongst the population. RAW is using them in order to weaken the moral of the Pakistani people and keep the forces engaged in a long war, which would make them vulnerable on the eastern borders. Generally, the Pakistani policy makers consider this group the immediate threat to the solidarity and peace of the country.¹²

Other groups such as Lashkar-e-Taiba, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Jiash-e-Muhammad, etc are either Kashmir related or sectarian motivated groups but they are mainly of local phenomenon. These groups have developed links with either of the Taliban group for their own interests. They have flourished due to weak law and order and faulty and weak prosecution in the country. Though the control of these groups is also

¹⁰ Stefan Olsson, Erika Holmquist, Samuel Bergenwall, Helene Lackenbauer. *Afghanistan After 2014: Five Scenarios* (Stockholm: Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI), 2012).

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Narrative Summary, 'Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan', <http://www.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/105>, Mapping Militant Organizations, Stanford University, USA, accessed on 11 February 2013.

very important, Pakistan government does not want to immediately open different fronts which may engulf them into a bigger problem.¹³

Fighting strategies

Pakistan is a strong supporter of war on terrorism. It is a war which majority of Pakistanis believe is in the interests of the country. In the last ten years Pakistan has given more sacrifices than any other country in this war. The 180 million people of Pakistan are fighting the war to safeguard the future of 7 billion world population. In this war Pakistan till now has given sacrifice of 49,000 people including civilians, politicians, academicians, intelligentsia and security personnel. The Pakistan army has given more sacrifices than the combined casualties of ISAF in Afghanistan. It has deployed 200,000 troops on the frontline and 90,000 soldiers fighting on the Afghan border. The civilian population of Pakistan too has given great sacrifices in this war. They have witnessed 3,486 bomb blasts, 283 major suicide attacks and a displacement of 3.5 million people within their country and a loss of 100 billion US dollars.¹⁴

In order to fight this menace Pakistan needs multi-pronged strategy, which should be the combination of force, dialogue, social and economic development. The foremost thing is to understand the nature of the problem, evolve a policy and create a consensus on anti-Taliban strategy. Amongst the above groups the consensus amongst the majority of Pakistanis is that Al-Qaeda and TTP are the staunchest enemies of Pakistan. The Afghan Taliban are not of immediate concern and threat to the country. Pakistan may extend support to the international community to bring peace in Afghanistan but cannot afford to directly get involve in military operations against them. Further the Pakistani forces are already stretched over a vast area in order to flush out the Al-Qaeda and TTP

¹³ Jayshree Bajoria, 'The Troubled Afghan-Pakistani Border', *Council on Foreign Relations*, 20 March 2009, <http://www.cfr.org/pakistan/troubled-afghan-pakistani-border/p14905>, accessed on 08 October 2012 & Syed Farooq Hasnat, 'Pakistan & Afghanistan: Domestic Pressures and Regional Threats: Pakistan's Strategic Interests, Afghanistan and the Fluctuating U.S. Strategy' *Journal of International Affairs*, Columbia University, New York, 63:1 (Fall/Winter 2009), <http://jia.sipa.columbia.edu/pakistan%E2%80%99s-strategic-interests-afghanistan-and-fluctuating-us-strategy>, 30 September 2011.

¹⁴ 'With 35,000 deaths and \$68 bn in losses, Pakistan fights on', *The News International* e-paper, Monday, 12 September 2011, <http://images.thenews.com.pk/12-09-2011/ethenews/t-8732.html>, 12 September 2011 & *Daily Aaj*, Peshawar, headline, front page, 27 March 2013.

activists. To allocate more men and money to anti-militant operations Pakistan has neither the capacity nor the capability to open new fronts at the same time and that too against less anti-Pakistan groups. Launching operations against such groups would push them to join hands with avowed anti-Pakistani Taliban, which would create havoc in the country.¹⁵

Besides military operations or using force against the militants there is also a need to evolve short term and long term alternate strategies. The counter insurgency experts agree that guerilla warfare and local insurgencies cannot be won simply by kinetic energies. The most useful strategy to counter such situation is to cut their support and roots amongst the people. As they get their energies from the common masses and people. For such policy the elected democratic governments are always in a better position to get the support of the masses. To prove this point the example of Swat and Malakand can be mentioned. During Gen. Musharaf era the militants had taken over complete control of these areas but when the elected government came into power they were able to expose the true face of these Taliban and cut their support amongst the masses. When the army launched operation against them, the militants had no sympathizers and supporters, which gave a quick success to the army in these areas.¹⁶ Such strategies can be adopted successfully in other areas of the conflict zones by the democratic government. The need of the hour is that international community and the US government should strengthen the hands of the elected government. The problem of Pakistan is that whenever there are dictators in the country, the US and international community have opened their kitties in their support but whenever the elected governments have come into power they have withdrawn their support from them on different excuses.¹⁷ The fact of the matter is that democracy can handle more efficiently the menace of terrorism. To quote former Prime Minister of Pakistan, Miss Benazir Bhutto:

¹⁵ Nadeem Khalid Lodhi & Khadim Hussain, 'Five-pronged Strategy', *Dawn*, 24 July 2011.

¹⁶ Nadeem Ahmed, *'Coin in Peace-building: Case Study of the 2009 Malakand Operation'*, National Defense University Press, Washington D.C., <http://www.ndu.edu/press/coin-in-peacebuilding.html>, accessed on 11 February 2013.

¹⁷ Dr. Javed Iqbal, Assistant Professor, Department of History, University of Peshawar, Pakistan, interview by author, 27 November 2012.

The forces of moderation and democracy must, and will, prevail against extremism and dictatorship.¹⁸

Nawaz Sharif, the present Prime Minister of Pakistan, expressed the same views regarding democracy and War on Terrorism sometime back in these words:

Now the situation has changed. A truly representative parliament has come into being.... Every decision will be presented before parliament, they will review Musharaf's policy in the last six years.... The US and Pakistan want to see the world free of terrorism and or innocent people not to suffer. We want to see peace in every corner of the world and we want to see peace in Pakistan also. We do not want that in order to give peace to others we turn our own country into a murder house.¹⁹

After coming into power in 2013, Nawaz Sharif in the pursuit of peace offered negotiated settlement to the TTP. After initial bottlenecks the negotiation process started in the month of March 2014. It is a very positive development in order to win the war on terror. In the short term the use of kinetic energy may be useful but for a long term and durable peace soft strategies may be used.

In evolving such a strategy Pakistan is facing problems with the West in general and the US in particular. Within the country too there are different groups having different opinions regarding this war. One major breakthrough which the former PPP led government has made is that they owned the war. President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Yousuf Reza Gillani explicitly explained the strategy to deal with terrorism. General Kayani, the ex-Pakistan army chief also supported the political leadership policy of war on terror which included political engagement, use of force and economic development. (It is also known as the policy of three 'Ds', which means Dialogue, Deterrence and Development). To quote Kayani:

The multi-prong approach, fully supported by the people of Pakistan will help us defeat the threat of internal terrorism.... Military action alone cannot solve the problem. Political reconciliatory effort is required to go along with the military

¹⁸ Shabana Fayyaz, 'Post-911 Peace Narrative in Pakistan', *Conflict and Peace Studies*, Pak Institute for Peace Studies, 2:1 (Jan-Mar 2009), san-pips.com/download.php?f=72.pdf, 30 September 2011.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

prong to win hearts and minds of the people.... There are no quick fixes in this war.²⁰

Commenting on Pakistan-US strategies in this war General Kayani had shown apprehensions on the coalition forces cross boarder actions inside Pakistan's territories:

Such reckless actions only help the militants and further fuel the militancy in the area. Pakistan Army has given huge sacrifices in this war and it is the presence of the army which has denied the freedom of movement and operation to Al Qaeda and the affiliates. Trust-deficit and misunderstandings can lead to more complications and increase the difficulties for all.... To succeed, the coalition would be required to display strategic patience and help the other side the way they want it rather than adopting a unilateral approach which may be counterproductive.²¹

After coming into power in 2013, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif persistently argued with the US government against the negative impact of drone strikes on Pakistan's efforts for peace process. In the early months of 2014 when the government and TTP started talking about peace agreements, drone strikes significantly reduced and peace negotiations further accelerated.²²

The Government of Pakistan and the military resolve in countering homegrown militancy was further strengthened by the fact that early in January 2014 it was reported by media channels and newspapers that the Pakistan Army has changed its military doctrine shifting its focus from eastern border to internal threats emanating from militant groups who have been targeting the state forces and government installations.²³ Such approach is also shared by majority of the intellectuals, media persons, and Pakistani diasporas.

To bring lasting peace to Pakistan, peace in Afghanistan is a prerequisite. Unless issues in Afghanistan are settled, peace in Pakistan would be elusive. To bring peace to Afghanistan the United States, the Afghan people and their coalition partners must agree on clear and

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, *Monthly updates on the Covert War: February 2014 Update: US covert actions in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia*, 4 March 2014, <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/2014/03/04/february-2014-update-us-covert-actions-in-pakistan-yemen-and-somalia/>, accessed on 10 April 2014.

²³ *The Express Tribune*, 3 January 2013.

unambiguous objective that should be the establishment of end state. The goal of end state should be according to the wishes, culture, and historical legacies of Afghanistan. The 100 per cent western type of democracy is difficult to work. It should be evolved according to the culture, history and environment of Afghanistan. Historically the Afghan governments have enjoyed control over Kabul and other major city centers, leaving the control of rural areas to the traditional power holders, the same could work effectively even today. It would provide the much needed security to the Afghan people and bring peace to that unfortunate war-ravaged country. To achieve this goal the western countries must come forward to show more commitment and resolve for the establishment of good governance which should be free of corruption at every level.²⁴ There is also a need of developing a new '*Meesaq-i-Milli*', i.e. a national and social pact, based on the traditions, culture and wishes of Afghan people. This *meesaq* has to be developed by the Afghan people themselves; international and regional powers can provide help but they must and should not, in any way, try to impose such *meesaq* on Afghanistan.²⁵

The coalition's image of Pakistan's sincerity in war on terror also needs revision. Instead of asking Pakistan to 'do more', there is a need to understand Pakistan's situation. No country would adopt a policy that it considers against its national interest. This is equally true about Pakistan. Since long Pakistan is concerned about the strategic depth vis-à-vis India. To achieve this goal Pakistan wants a friendly government in Afghanistan; however, as the Northern Alliance has a very dominating influence in the Afghan government and is keen to bring in the Indians (the archrival of Pakistan) to Afghanistan, Pakistan considers this move against the interests of their country.²⁶ In spite of Afghan government keenness to give a role to India, they also realize the importance of Pakistan for peace in Afghanistan. Pakistan is also interested in a

²⁴ Nathaniel C. Fick, et al., 'Tell Me Why We're There? Enduring Interests in Afghanistan (and Pakistan)', Policy Brief, Center for a New American Security, Washington D.C., January 2009, http://www.cnas.org/files/documents/publications/CNAS%20Policy%20Brief%20Enduring%20Interests%20Afghanistan%20and%20Pakistan_0.pdf, 30 September 2011.

²⁵ Presentation made by Owais Ahmad Ghani, Governor Balochistan on 6 August 2007 to the Los Angeles World Affairs Council, USA.

²⁶ Michael A. Cohen, 'U.S. Must Accommodate Pakistan's Interests in Afghanistan', *World Politics Review*, 14 January 2011, <http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/print/7568>, accessed on 30 September 2011.

peaceful and stable Afghanistan became it will directly affect Pakistan. Therefore, both countries have made some progress towards cooperation, which is obvious from the ‘strong political signals about shared interests in a stable post-2014 Afghanistan. For example the two countries agreed to form a joint peace commission to reach out to Afghan Taliban insurgents in North Waziristan in 2012. At the third annual Pakistan-Afghanistan-Iran trilateral summit in Islamabad (February 2012), Pakistan and Afghanistan stood shoulder-to-shoulder in calling for an Afghan-led peace initiative ‘free of foreign intervention...’.²⁷

In order to work together for peace in Afghanistan both Pakistan and Afghanistan opened talks in Turkey in December 2012 and discussed in detail the so called ‘Peace Process Roadmap to 2015’ prepared by the Afghan High Peace Council. In this roadmap Pakistan has been given a central role to facilitate the peace process. Some observers analyze the road map as an opening towards giving the Taliban an important role in the Afghan government. However, the document did not dilate upon this possibility. It only put more emphasis on negotiations with the Taliban.²⁸

These developments show that the Afghanistan government also realizes that there are some strategic interests of Pakistan in Afghanistan. Especially looking at the hostile and unfriendly relations between Pakistan and India, no one can deny that confrontation is a possibility between the two erstwhile opponents. In such a situation the Pakistani policy makers believe that a hostile government in Afghanistan would be catastrophic for the security of the country. Disagreements in the policy on war on terrorism would continue to remain.²⁹ Until and unless the US policy makers also understand that Pakistan’s real perceived threat still comes from India.

There is also a dire need to give Pashtun majority³⁰ adequate representation in Afghan government and revival of Afghan economy.

²⁷ Mona K. Sheikh & Maja T.J. Greenwood (eds.), *Taliban Talks: Past, Present and Prospects for the U.S. Afghanistan and Pakistan* (Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies, 2013), p.17, available at http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/RP2013-060Taliban-Talks_web.pdf, accessed on 01 April 2014.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.17-8.

²⁹ Syed Farooq Hasnat, *op.cit.*

³⁰ According to World Fact book/Library of Congress country studies for the years 2004-2010, it is estimated that there are 42% Pakhtuns, 27% Tajik, 9% Hazara and 9% Uzbek in Afghanistan. The same sources for pre-2004 have given the following percentage: Pakhtuns 38 to 50%, Tajik 25 to 26.3%, Hazara 10 to 19%, Uzbek 6 to 8% and Qizilbash 1%.

Unless these issues are settled, peace in Afghanistan would not prevail and the resulting lawlessness would continue to affect Pakistan as well. To achieve cooperation between Pakistan and Afghanistan continuous dialogue between the two governments is necessary. Instead of trading allegations the two countries need to seriously engage in negotiations and evolving joint strategies to crush religious extremism.³¹

To fight the Taliban it is also important to divide them into different categories. Distinction should be made between different opportunists, criminals and extremists ideologues. The motivations of these groups' are different from each other but have joined hands together as that gives them better opportunity to achieve their goals. The strategy of dealing them should also be different. The first step in this regard should be dividing the ranks and files of Taliban: As opportunists have joined them for economic and other mundane benefits, Pakistan with the help of international community can win over them from Taliban by offering them better opportunities. Criminals have found safe havens with the Taliban, by improving the performance of the law enforcing agencies such elements can be dealt with appropriately. The last group viz. extremists ideologues are the only ones that cannot be handled easily and may need the use of kinetic force but if the first two groups could be separated it will be much easier to bring the last group under control.³²

The Government of Pakistan also believes that the Pakistani Taliban as well as Baloch separatists are supported by India through its consulate in Jalalabad and Kandahar respectively.³³ But the extremists have gained strength also due to ineffectiveness of the security agencies and weakness in the system of justice in Pakistan as well. The international community can also help in the provisions of sophisticated security equipment to the law enforcing agencies. An improvement in these areas can bring about a dramatic improvement in the overall law and order situation of the country.³⁴

Economy of Pakistan has also been affected by bad law and order situation, resulting in unemployment and rise in poverty. The deterioration of economic conditions provides fertile ground to the Taliban and other extremist groups to spread extremism among the poor

³¹ Owais Ahmad Ghani, *op.cit.*

³² These are the author's views, although, during many discussions with Pakistani intelligentsia at different forums as well as person to person discussions, overwhelming majority endorses such a strategy.

³³ Stefan Olsson et al, *op.cit.*, p.44.

³⁴ *Ibid.* Also see Jayshree Bajoria, *op.cit.*

classes of the society. With the improvement of law and order situation, the economic health of the country would also improve which will have a positive impact on curbing extremism.³⁵

An important strategy in curbing terrorism should be reform in the *madrassa* (Islamic religious schools) curriculum. Though madrassas have been imparting religious education for centuries and have produced great scholars in the fields of natural and social sciences in the past, for the last three decades some madrassas are spreading extremism and sectarianism. The chain of such madrassas was especially spread during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in order to prepare fighters against the Soviet forces. With the help of Saudi and other Gulf countries the West encouraged their establishment. In these madrassas special emphasis was laid on the concept of violent *jihād*. Special books, which were printed by the University of Nebraska, USA, for the Afghan schools were also used by these religious extremist madrassas to teach *jihād*.³⁶ Though this strategy succeeded in defeating the Soviets in Afghanistan, it has also left behind thousands of madrassas with the same establishments which are still producing religious zealots full of anti-non-Muslim sentiments. In order to stop extremist madrassas to spread hatred and produce these jihadists, the curriculum of madrassas need revision and proper state control. Pakistan with the help of international community in general and Arab countries in particular may establish strictest possible supervision and curb all kind of funding to those madrassas who do not agree to reform the curriculum.³⁷

One of the main attractions for the people in religious madrassas in Pakistan is free education, boarding and lodging.³⁸ For the poor

³⁵ See Joshua T. White, 'Pakistan's Islamist Frontier: Islamic Politics and U.S. Policy in Pakistan's North-West Frontier', *Religion & Security Monograph Series*, Number One, Center on Faith & International Affairs, Arlington, VA, USA, 2008, <http://www.cfia.org/go/frontier/> 30 September 2011, also available on AIRRA Website at http://www.airra.org/documents/Islamist_Frontier-1.pdf.

³⁶ Dr. Fazal-ur-Rahim Marwat, *From Muhajir to Mujahid: Politics of War Through Aid*, (ed.) Dr. Parvez Khan Toru (Peshawar: Pakistan Study Center, 2005), pp.33-4.

³⁷ Khadim Hussain, 'Terrorism in the Pashtun belt: Analytical framework for finding solutions through people's voices', AIRRA Website, July 2008, <http://www.airra.org/documents/abstractTerrorism%20in%20the%20pashtun%20belt.pdf>, accessed on 30 September 2011.

³⁸ Robert Looney, 'Reforming Pakistan's Educational The Challenge of the Madrassas System', 28:3, (Fall 2003), Naval Postgraduate School,

masses of Pakistan, who are in majority, it is a great attraction. To wean away students from madrassas, the Government of Pakistan with the help of international community may establish 'model public schools', where too education, boarding and lodging should be provided free of cost.³⁹

For the reformation of the madrassa curriculum discussions and studies have been made and different NGOs and government functionaries have been urging the importance of bringing changes into the curriculum, generally the public schools' curriculum has been ignored. The fact is that the texts of the Pakistani public schools too are fanning communalism and extremism. Over the past three decades such texts and pictures have been published in the public schools' textbooks that teach religious extremism. It promotes exclusivism instead of pluralism. Following excerpts are quoted to highlight the kind of curriculum taught in the public schools.

'Social Studies: At the completion of Class-V, the child should be able to:

- Acknowledge and identify forces that may be working against Pakistan.
- Demonstrate by actions a belief in the fear of Allah.
- Make speeches on Jihad and Shahadat.
- India's evil designs against Pakistan.⁴⁰

Such text books are intentionally or unintentionally promoting religious militarism and narrow minded approach towards the problems the Muslims in general and Pakistan in particular are facing. There is an urgent need for the revision of public schools' textbooks with the help of local wisdom, which should include lessons for the promotion of democracy and pluralist society based on respect of human beings. This should be taken on war-footing in order to save the young generation from falling into the trap of religious militancy.⁴¹

The modern times have seen a very effective media in molding public opinion. The militants have been using media very effectively to gain support amongst the masses. Pakistan need to counter the militant

Monterey, CA 93943, <http://www.uvm.edu/~envprog/madrassah/reform-edu.pdf>, accessed on 11 February 2013, p.261.

³⁹ Dr. Fazal-ur-Rahim Marwat, Vice Chancellor, Bacha Khan University, Charsadda, Pakistan, interview by the author, 28 November 2012.

⁴⁰ Pervez Hoodbhoy, 'The Roots of Extremism in Pakistan: How Pakistan is being Saudi-ized and what this means for our future' available on AIRRA website at [http://www.airra.org/documents/Extremism%20Roots\[1\].pdf](http://www.airra.org/documents/Extremism%20Roots[1].pdf), 30 September 2011.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

propaganda with a comprehensive and effective counter media policy, which would deprive the militants from vital public support. Special attention should be made on the non-violent aspects of Islam for the attainment of certain goals. Islam is a peace loving religion and there are many anecdotes in the history of Islam, where the heroes of Muslims have adopted non-violent methods to achieve their goals. There are also many ayats in Quran and sayings of the Holy Prophet, which have abhorred violence and killings.

Allah says: ‘...whoever kills a person, except as a punishment for murder or mischief in the land, it will be written in his book of deeds as if he had killed all the human beings and whoever will save a life shall be regarded as if he gave life to all the human beings...’ (Qur’an; 5:32)

Islam is also a tolerant and pluralist religion. The well-known Imam Shafi once stated:

I am convinced about the authenticity of my opinion, but I do consider it likely that they may turn out to be incorrect. Likewise, I am convinced about the incorrectness of the views different from mine, but I do admit the possibility that they may turn out to be correct.⁴²

These tolerant and pluralist views should be propagated through the media and with the help of religious leaders who have a great influence on the masses of Pakistan.⁴³

Last but not the least, the policy of dialogue with all those militant organizations which are willing to work within the constitutional framework of the country must be pursued sincerely. Military operations can bring a temporary peace but it cannot guarantee durable and sustainable peace. Political dialogue should be the strategy for peace by all anti-Taliban forces. Reconciliation and political dialogue can bring stability and peace not only to Pakistan but to the region and the whole world.⁴⁴

Conclusion

The problem of Taliban and restoration of peace in Pakistan are very complex phenomena. These problems started with the Pakistan

⁴² ‘*Takfeer: The Dreadful Doctrine of Terror*’, Faith Forum, <http://faithforum.wordpress.com/jihad-myth-and-reality/takfeer-dreadful-doctrine>, 20 October 2010.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Khadim Hussain, ‘Five-Pronged Strategy’, daily *Dawn* Sunday 24 July 2011, opinion page.

involvement first, in the anti-communist war in Afghanistan, and later its decision to join war on terrorism. Since these problems have developed over decades, it also would take time to control the situation. Further, Pakistan received these problems not only because of its own decision of joining international forces against communism and Taliban but also as a joint strategy of the international community, so now it is also the responsibility of international community to help Pakistan in overcoming these problems.

Pakistan and international community need to develop consensus on the methods and priorities of each other. While fighting the Taliban problem the international community also need to understand the national interests of Pakistan. In the same manner Pakistan also needs to behave like a responsible sovereign state to protect the world from the menace of terrorism. It is the misfortune of Pakistan that it is located in a very strategic place, so it has to develop such strategies and policies that should not endanger its own national interests but at the same time it should also take into cognizance the international community concerns and worries. However, in order to defeat the menace of terrorism both need to understand each other's problems, instead of blaming each other it would be prudent to develop a unified strategy. For this purpose especially Pakistan and USA need to develop trust in each other. Currently both are involved in blame game and allege each other as 'unfaithful friend', which is in no way helpful in the fight against terrorism.

The most important thing in the control of terrorism is the situation in Afghanistan. Pakistan too has bequeathed these problems from the fighting in Afghanistan. As long as peace is not restored in Afghanistan, peace in Pakistan would be a far-cry. History is a witness to the fact that use of force is not a permanent solution of any problem; the need is to bring peace in Afghanistan through dialogue. Who so ever is ready for talks must be encouraged and accommodated. Along with peace negotiations meaningful reconstruction and rehabilitation in Afghanistan is also a prerequisite for permanent peace there. Once peace is restored in Afghanistan, it would roll on to Pakistan by default, as Pakistan's national poet Allama Muhammad Iqbal has termed Afghanistan 'the Heart of Asia', so if heart is in pain the whole body feels the pain but if heart is at peace the whole body remains at peace.