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Violence, Governance and Islam  
in Pakistan

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## ***Introduction***

Violence in Pakistan has external and internal dimensions. The country is located in a difficult neighborhood. It is bordering India, with which it has already fought three wars and several mini-wars (the last one in the Kargil area/Kashmir, in 1999) and numerous border skirmishes. In addition, during the last generation major wars have been only narrowly avoided at least four times.<sup>1</sup>

It is next to Afghanistan and has been involved in its internal wars since at least the early 1980s. Pakistan is also a neighbor to Iran, a relationship which often has been quite strained, without ever escalating into war. It also shares a border with a China, where the Muslim minority of Uigurs feels disenfranchised by the central authorities. And Pakistan is not very far from the Central Asian countries, like Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, which brings additional problems, for instance the presence of extremist Uzbek fighters in the Pakistani tribal areas. Taken together, the region is combining several serious conflicts and cross border tension, while at the same time it is home to three nuclear powers (China, India, and Pakistan itself), plus a potential one (Iran).

Internally Pakistan is unstable and has experienced an increasing wave of violence since 2002. In 2007 some 3600 people got killed by several forms of political violence, compared to 8000 in the Afghan war in the same year.

**Number of People Killed by Political Violence in Pakistan, 2003-2007<sup>2</sup>**

Year	Civilians	Security Force Personnel	Terrorist	Total
2003	140	24	25	189
2004	435	184	244	863
2005	430	81	137	648
2006	608	325	538	1471
2007	1523	597	1479	3599

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<sup>1</sup> A short overview of Pakistani-Indian relations and the violence between these countries provides: Jean-Luc Racine, *Living with India – Relations between Pakistan and India*, in: Christophe Jaffrelot (Ed.), *A History of Pakistan and its Origins*, London 2004, p. 112-133

<sup>2</sup> Institute for Conflict Management, South Asia Terrorism Portal, Pakistan Assessment 2008, online: [www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/index.htm#](http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/index.htm#). The numbers given are probably understating the actual numbers, since not all fatalities became known to the public. This is especially true in Balochistan and the NWFP.

Currently political violence in Pakistan mostly occurs in three areas of conflict:<sup>3</sup>

- (a) An insurgency in the economically backward and politically marginalized province of Baluchistan, located in the southwest of the country and bordering both Afghanistan and Iran.
- (b) Confessional clashes and massacres organized by extremist groups from the Sunni and Shiite communities, which occur in several parts of the country.
- (c) And, of key importance because of its magnitude and political repercussions, is an insurgency/civil war situation in the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP), which is closely connected to the Afghan war, just across the border. This violent conflict has spread from the tribal areas to other parts of the province, and later to other areas as well.
- (d) In addition to these current areas of violent conflict we should not forget that the mega-city and economic powerhouse of Pakistan, Karachi, went through a civil war situation in the 1990s, and occasionally still is experiencing serious violence.

The violence in Pakistan generally is deemed relevant for four reasons: because of the human suffering involved, because it tends to block economic and social development, because of its impact on neighboring Afghanistan, and because Pakistan is perceived as a “failing state” – Pakistan is ranking quite high at the *Failed States Index 2008* (rank number 9, just two ranks better than Afghanistan).<sup>4</sup> Taken together – and placed into the regional context of difficult neighbors and nuclear weapons – it is quite obvious that controlling violence in Pakistan should be placed high on the political and academic agenda.

The question of violence in Pakistan should be dealt with in three ways. The relevant questions are: (a) Who is controlling violence and its means?; (b) what are the dynamics and strategies of violence?; and (c) what could be done trying to control violence? The term “control of violence” in this paper will mean attempts to reduce its magnitude, and to make its effects less harmful for Pakistan and for the neighboring countries and regions.

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<sup>3</sup> Jochen Hippler, *Das gefährlichste Land der Welt? – Pakistan zwischen Militärherrschaft, Extremismus und Demokratie*, Köln 2008, S. 208-233

<sup>4</sup> *Foreign Policy Magazine* and *Fund for Peace*, *Failed States Index 2008*, online: [www.fundforpeace.org/web/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=99&Itemid=140](http://www.fundforpeace.org/web/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=99&Itemid=140)



### ***The Structure of Violence in Pakistan***

As mentioned above, violence in Pakistan is not one, homogeneous phenomenon, but quite diverse. It differs in its regional manifestations, in regard to causes, its ideologies, and in its means and strategies. In contrast to what often is perceived as the result of a basic confrontation between religious extremism against secular and democratic moderation violence in Pakistan has several faces, some of which have very little to do with religion. In addition to the four main categories of violence mentioned in the introduction, we could also add sporadic violence against religious minorities (especially Christians, Ahmadis and Hindus), violence in the context of human rights abuses by government agents or institutions (e.g. torture, “extra-judicial killings”), violence against women (e.g. killings by relatives to restore the “honor” of a family or to depose off unwanted wives), and violence by criminal

gangs or in the context of “feudal” social relationship in the countryside or of inter-tribal conflict.

While this paper is focusing on the violence in die Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) and to a lesser degree on Baluchistan and the inter-confessional massacres between Sunnis and Shiites (and to an even lesser degree will touch upon the civil war in Karachi during the 1990s), this should not imply that these additional dimensions of violence should be ignored or taken lightly.

### **Insurgency in Baluchistan**

Baluchistan is by far the largest and least populated province; it is both politically and economically at the margin of Pakistan. At the same time the province has traditionally felt not only neglected by the central authorities, but also exploited and denied its political rights. Many of these complaints have their merits, as the natural resources (especially natural gas) have always been used by the other provinces without proper compensation,<sup>5</sup> because mega-projects like the new port in Gwadar have been built without any participation by the provincial government or the local people, to name just two key examples<sup>6</sup>. Also Baluchistan, like other Pakistani provinces, has several times experienced the sacking of popular local governments by the central authorities. In the 1970s the province already rose up in insurgency (lead by socialist ideology and resting on a tribal social base), which was brutally repressed by the army under orders of the secular Prime Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

During the last several years a new insurgency has developed, stressing the “colonial” behavior of the government (or, depending on political taste of actors, by the dominating province of Punjab). What started as incidents of isolated attacks on Pakistani soldiers in some areas of Baluchistan broadened to include more systematic insurgent operations in most of the province, which in turn were dealt with by brutal force by the military. One of the key leaders of the Baluch tribes for instance was killed under highly dubious circumstances by the army.

The Baluch insurgency has hardly anything to do with religion. The Baluch in general and the insurgents tend to have a quite secular view of religion, and religious matters are not

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<sup>5</sup> Frédéric Grare, Pakistan: The Resurgence of Baluch Nationalism, Carnegie Papers, Number 65, Washington, January 2006

<sup>6</sup> International Crisis Group, Pakistan: The Worsening Conflict in Balochistan, Asia Report No. 119, 14 September 2006, p. 14-16

figuring in the causes or ideology of the insurgency. Instead, the violence in this province has developed as acts against what many locals perceive as colonial domination and exploitation of Baluchistan by the central authorities and the Punjab. The heavy-handed and even brutal military response has had the effect to validate the arguments of the insurgents, to strengthen the resistance and trigger more violence. In early September 2008 the three major insurgent groups in Balochistan have declared a suspension of their military operations, but it remains to be seen whether this will actually end the insurgency for good.<sup>7</sup>

### **Sunni-Shiite Clashes and Massacres**

The origin of confessional violence committed by Sunni and Shiite extremist groups can be traced to the mid-1980s. At this time, in the central Punjabi district of Jhang social and economic competition between landlords and agricultural workers and between two transport companies led to violence, which soon took a confessional turn, since most landlords were Shiite, while their workers Sunni, and the two bus companies involved were led by owners of different religious orientation. There are strong indications that the military dictatorship of General Zia ul-Haq utilized the tension for political purposes: (a) in the context of his program of Sunnification of society (itself an attempt to gain political legitimacy) his government covertly supported Sunni extremist groups against Shiites; (b) in the early and mid 1980s the dictatorship felt being in the defensive because of the *Movement for the Restoration of Democracy* (MRD) and other oppositional activities. Sunni-Shiite violence seemed to be a way to deflect attention away from this; and (c) because of increased self-confidence of Pakistani Shiites as a result of the Shiite Revolution in neighboring Iran the government used Sunni extremists to attack and weaken Shiites. During the years from 1987-2002 approximately 1000 people were killed. Some 60 percent of those were Shias – which make up only 15-20 percent of the population.<sup>8</sup> After the mid 1990s the number of victims decreased, only to rise again after 2002/2003. In 2006 201 persons were killed in inter-confessional attacks or massacres, 349 were injured, and in 2007 441 people were killed in 341 attacks (of these some 300 alone in Kurram Agency of the tribal areas of NWFP). 630 were injured.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Baloch groups call off militancy, in: *Dawn* (Karachi), 2 September 2008, online: [www.dawn.com/2008/09/02/top9.htm](http://www.dawn.com/2008/09/02/top9.htm)

<sup>8</sup> Muhammad Amir Rana, *A to Z of Jehadi Organizations in Pakistan*, Lahore 2006, p. 240

<sup>9</sup> Institute for Conflict Management, South Asia Terrorism Portal, Pakistan Assessment 2008, online: [www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/index.htm#](http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/index.htm#)

It should be noted that Sunni-Shia violence did not result because of popular or broad-based spontaneous attacks, but was organized by small extremist groups. These at times had the sympathy or even encouragement of the Pakistani government, or of government agencies. Some of the Sunni extremist groups responsible for attacking Shias were also involved in what they perceived as *Jihad* in Afghanistan or Indian Kashmir.

### **Civil War in Karachi**

The economic power hub of Pakistan, Karachi, is the capital city of Sindh province with some 12 to 15 million inhabitants. The rural areas and small towns of this province are mostly inhabited by Sindhi speakers, while in the few big cities (mostly Karachi, Hyderabad) Urdu speakers are the clear majority. These have migrated to Sindh mostly in 1947 and 1948, in the process of partitioning British colonial India into the new and independent states of India and Pakistan. Today only less than 10 percent of the population of Karachi are Sindhis, while the huge majority are Urdu speaking *Muhajirs* (meaning “refugees” or migrants in Urdu), with sizable minorities of Pashtuns (migrants from NWFP, mostly working as construction workers, truck drivers and in similar blue color jobs), Punjabis and other migrant communities, including from abroad (Afghanistan, Iran and Bangla Desh). The *Muhajirs* began to develop from a heterogeneous community of immigrants and refugees originating in different regions of India into an ethnic group since the late 1970s and early 1980s – that is, also during the reign of military dictator Zia ul-Haq. To weaken Sindhi nationalism (which had linked with democratic demands) and the *Pakistan Peoples Party* (PPP, of the Bhutto family) the dictatorship supported the new ethnic *Muhajir* party MQM (*Muhajir Quami Movement*, later re-named to *Muttahida Quami Movement*), despite its secular ideology, which seemed to run counter to Zia’s “Islamization policy”. Since the early 1990s the MQM has achieved political dominance in Karachi, as a result of grassroots organization, electoral politics, and ruthless violence against its enemies and even internal dissidents. Armed groups of the MQM used all means available, including torture chambers, assassinations, abductions and massacres, to secure the party’s undisputed primacy. In the middle of the 1990s violence escalated into a full-fledged civil war, with some 2000 people killed in one year. After the Pakistani army could not put down the revolt in 1992-1994, the paramilitary *Rangers* and the police took over under the leadership of the civilian *Intelligence Bureau* (IB). This campaign of repression was as brutal as the MQM itself, using systematic violence against the party, including numerous incidents of “extra-judicial killings” (i.e. murder by the police against suspected militants, e.g. shooting of prisoners,

staged “encounters” with MQM activists or suspects). By the end of the 1990s the situation in Karachi had calmed down considerably, and the level of violence was greatly reduced. The MQM tried to develop a more moderate image and behavior and became an important coalition partner in President Musharraf’s government until the elections of February 2008. Despite these developments the MQM always stayed the dominant political force in Karachi, winning 17 out of 20 parliamentary seats in the 2008 national elections.<sup>10</sup> Currently, violence by criminal gangs in some of the poorer neighborhoods is a major problem, but political violence is still relatively low compared to the 1990s, while still existing. Occasionally confessional violence does erupt (like a massacre in May 2004)<sup>11</sup> or major political (secular) violence in May of 2007 (40 killed in one day),<sup>12</sup> which according to witnesses was organized by the MQM, despite its new moderate façade.<sup>13</sup> The roots of violence in Karachi are quite multi-faceted: they contain ethnic dimensions (Muhajir vs. Sindhi vs. Pashtun), city versus countryside dimensions, and a social dimension (“feudally” dominated Sindhis versus middle class dominated Muhajirs). It should also be noted that the war in Afghanistan during the 1980s played a key role, by flooding Karachi with weapons and drugs.

### **Insurgency and Terrorism in the Northwest Frontier Province<sup>14</sup>**

The key conflict in Pakistan today, though, is the insurgency and civil war in the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP), which is linked to a growing campaign of terrorism. The background to this again is quite complex, and it again leads us back to the time of Zia ul-Haq’s military dictatorship. During the Afghan war of the 1980s (the “American Jihad”) the Pakistani, US and Saudi Arabian governments organized, armed and financed the Afghan groups fighting the Soviet Union’s occupation forces. They tried to strengthen the motivation

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<sup>10</sup> Karachi: MQM major election winner in city, PPP distant second, in: *Dawn*, 20 February 2008, online: [www.dawn.com/2008/02/20/local1.htm](http://www.dawn.com/2008/02/20/local1.htm)

<sup>11</sup> Bloody May – 62 Dead, 204 Injured, in: *The Herald*, June 2004, p. 62-75

<sup>12</sup> Kanchan Lakshman, Karachi: Metropolis of Terror, in: *South Asia Intelligence Review*, Weekly Assessments & Briefings, Volume 4, No. 40, April 17, 2006, online: [www.satp.org/satporgtp/sair/Archives/4\\_40.htm#assessment1](http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/sair/Archives/4_40.htm#assessment1)

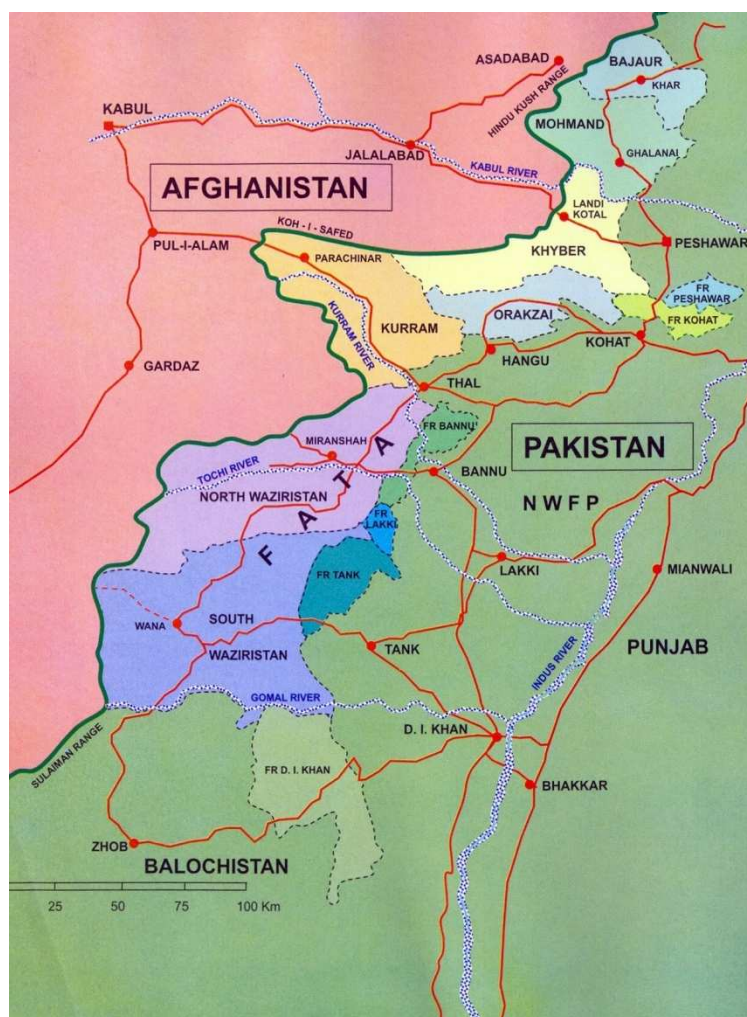
<sup>13</sup> Massoud Ansari, The Day Karachi Bled, in: *Newsline*, June 2007; online: [www.newsline.com.pk/NewsJun2007/cover3jun2007.htm](http://www.newsline.com.pk/NewsJun2007/cover3jun2007.htm)

<sup>14</sup> Jochen Hippler, *Das gefährlichste Land der Welt? – Pakistan zwischen Militärherrschaft, Extremismus und Demokratie*, Köln 2008, S. 218ff

and mobilization of the fighters by transforming them from national, regional and tribal resistance groups into a religiously inspired “holy war” against the Soviet Union, a *Jihad*. Two examples may illustrate this point: Approximately 70 percent of the considerable US assistance to the armed groups (roughly 3,5 billion US dollar) was provided to one of the most radical groups, the *Hisb-e-Islami* of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar – who would later publicly brag about his support for Usama bin Ladin’s escape from Tora Bora. And the US development Agency USAID spent 50 Mill. Dollar for producing textbooks for children promoting religious war – which were still in use by the Taliban and are in use today by extremist groups.

Creating and sharpening Muslim religious extremism became a tool of both the American and the Pakistani governments to weaken the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. A result of this strategy has been the transformation of the *Deobandi* version of Sunni Islam in the Pashtun areas of Pakistan from a conservative but generally non-political and even secular ideology into a militant, *Jihadi* brand of Islam. This politization and militarization of Islam still haunts Pakistan (and Afghanistan) today.

Against this backdrop the US military intervention in Afghanistan to overthrow the Taliban took place in autumn and winter 2001. Approximately 700-800 fighters from Al-Qaida (according to other sources up to 2000) fled from Afghanistan to the tribal areas of Pakistan,<sup>15</sup> where they were received



<sup>15</sup> Zahid Hussain, *Frontline Pakistan – The Struggle with Militant Islam*, New York 2007, p. 120, 143

friendly by most local tribes because of the joint Jihad against the Soviet Union and marriage relationships dating back to this time. Financial largess contributed to this local hospitality.<sup>16</sup>

To better understand the dynamics of conflict and violence in the NWFP, at this point it is necessary to provide some additional background in regard to the situation in Pakistan's *Federally Administered Tribal Areas* (FATA), which are part of the NWFP and bordering Afghanistan. FATA constitutionally belongs to Pakistan, but the same constitution clarifies that Pakistani law does not apply there – if the President does not specifically decree otherwise,<sup>17</sup> which very rarely happens. Governance in FATA is quite archaic. It rests on autonomy of the individual tribes, which are overseen by *Political Agents* (PA), appointed by the Governor of NWFP province in the name of the President. The PAs are the highest state representatives in the respective *Tribal Agency*, of which seven exist. They cannot directly rule or administer, but their influence is based on cooperation with the tribal leaders (*maliks*). This approach uses old techniques of Carrot-and-Stick, providing money, infrastructure and other incentives to the *maliks* in exchange for cooperation, or threatening disadvantages (withholding of money or other desirables) or fines. Basically the relationship between *Political Agents* and *maliks* is one of mutual need: The power of the *maliks* in regard to their tribes to a big degree depends on the financial, political or other support of the PA, which they used to build clientelistic networks. On the other hand, without the cooperation of the *maliks*, a *Political Agent* would be quite ineffective.

This type of indirect rule has been developed during British colonial times, and was codified 1901 in the *Frontier Crimes Regulation* (FCR). It is still in force today, as no government has ever managed to take full control of the tribal areas bordering Afghanistan.

This model of governance raises several problems, one of which is its negation of basic human rights (no state courts, tribes are collectively punished for criminal behavior of individual members, political parties are illegal, etc.) and democracy. Also, this model can only work, if the tribes are still in full control of their own area, and if the tribal structures (the dominating role of the *malik*) are intact. The problem is that these two requirements do not exist any longer, to a big degree. During the Afghan war of the 1980s and early 1990s traditional tribal structures became subverted by at least two new social groups that gained

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<sup>16</sup> Intikhab Amir, Romancing for Cash – The Presence of Foreign Militants has Altered the Dynamics of the Waziristan Economy, in: *The Herald*, November 2006, p. 58

<sup>17</sup> Constitution of Pakistan, Part 12, Chapter 3, Paragraph 247(3); online: [www.pakistani.org/pakistan/constitution/part12.ch3.html](http://www.pakistani.org/pakistan/constitution/part12.ch3.html)

power: (a) Military commanders involved in the war, which were not necessarily tribal leaders. In war, traditional social structures tend to become less important than military efficiency, and in many cases military leaders became powerful local figures because of their fighting and organizational competence, not their tribal status. (b) *Mullahs* and other religious functionaries rose in status and influence because of the strengthening of religious motivation in fighting the anti-Soviet *Jihad*. Formerly, mullahs were basically part of the tribe and of secondary importance politically, even the target of jokes. Now, they tended to rise to higher status and political influence.

Taken together, the traditional values and political mechanisms were weakened by actors with organizational and military competence, and by religious ideology – which tends to be not particularistic (tribe-oriented), but universalistic (oriented towards all of humankind, or towards the community of all believers). On top of this, some socio-economic trends also contributed to a weakening of tribal structures, for instance migration to big cities.

We may now return to the point mentioned above, when in autumn and winter 2001 hundreds of armed fighters connected to *Al-Qaida* (and in addition many Afghan-Pashtun Taliban) fled from Afghanistan to the tribal belt of Pakistan. The Arabs among them tried to stay out of local inter- or intra-tribal politics and also provided financial incentives for local leaders to be accepted. Some non-Arab groups – most numerous among them Uzbeks from the “Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan” led by Tahir Yuldeshev, but also Chechen, possibly Uigurs from China and others sometimes became part of local conflicts and alliances<sup>18</sup> – but all of them further weakened an already weak tribal structure.

The next and possibly final blow to the traditional way of governance occurred with the military intervention of the Pakistani army in the tribal areas since 2002, and with much stronger forces since 2004. Historically, the army could only operate in the tribal areas on the invitation of the respective tribes, and not against their will. In the context of the new Pakistani alliance with Washington in the “war against terrorism”, the Pakistani army along with paramilitary forces entered the area to seal the border to Afghanistan and move against fighters and allies of *al-Qaida*. These operations were of only limited success and brought considerable losses to the army and other government forces (some 1500-2000 killed until now). At the same time they tended to antagonize several tribes because of military units

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<sup>18</sup> Rahimullah Yusufzai, Uzbeks, Go Home, in: *Newslite*, April 2007, p. 47-49; and: Shafiq Ahmad, The Jihad Within, in: *The Herald*, April 2007, p. 92f

operating in their area, because of the pro-US policy background to these operations, and because of the mounting civilian casualties. As a result of this polarization, several local (Pashtu) militant *jihadi* groups were established and gradually gained strength, and served as local partners for foreign fighters (often linked to *al-Qaida*) and Afghan Taliban across the border. While at the beginning these local militants called themselves Mujahedin, gradually they re-named into Pakistani Taliban, therefore indicating the link of their struggle to the war in Afghanistan.<sup>19</sup>

These two processes of military involvement and the establishment of new local jihadist groups further weakened the old tribal structures (because of ideologically committed militants, who accepted *maliks* only if politically sympathetic and cooperative; and because of army units who operated without permission of the *maliks*, thereby undercutting their prestige and efficiency). They also weakened the old system of governance, because the presence of the army undercut the role of the *Political Agents*, by bypassing or ignoring them, which gravely damaged the only state-structures in the tribal areas.

### ***The Link between Regional Sources of Violence and National Factors***

As we have seen, political violence in Pakistan does not result from only one source or one cause, but has several regional and causal origins. At the same time, regional conflicts need not necessarily lead to violence, but only do this under specific circumstances and conditions. And in Pakistan there is no lack of factors that help contribute transforming local or regional conflicts into violent confrontations.

On the one hand we have to take into account a weakness of the political system, which reduces the capacity of political mechanisms to manage conflicts in non-violent ways, and also contribute to trigger or sharpen conflicts. We will return to this point later. On the other hand both academic and political observers have often pointed to the role of extremist Islam, or of Islamist groups.

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<sup>19</sup> International Crisis Group, Pakistan's Tribal Areas: Appeasing the Militants, Asia Report No. 125, Islamabad/Brussels, 11 December 2006

### **Radical Islam as a Contributing Factor**

While the Muhajir-Sindhi violence in Sindh province is of much lesser importance since the late 1990s, it has secular causes, resulting from competition over influence, public employment and education between “ethnic” sectors of the population which both did not use religious discourse to justify their respective claims. Also the insurgency in Balochistan has very little to do with religion, but is caused by uneven development and political disempowerment of the province.

The two more important violent conflicts though, the sectarian violence and the insurgency and terrorism originating from the Northwest Frontier Province, obviously are closely related to religious justifications. Sunni-Shia violence by definition has a religious dimension, while insurgents in NWFP generally advocate political demands of secular character (like an end to cooperation with the United States), but strongly stress their goal of introducing Islamic Law, *Sharia* – which again by definition has an religious dimension.

Western analysts quite often have tended to stress these religious aspects of violence, not rarely interpreting the ongoing conflicts as a basic power struggle between Islamist and violent groups against secular, democratic and moderate forces.<sup>20</sup> This perception has little relation to reality.

(a) The religious groups and parties in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan may have a degree of public support and ideological influence, but they have never come even close to taking power. In the elections of 2002 they achieved their best election result in Pakistani history, under very special conditions – just after the US invasion of neighboring Afghanistan, and with the party leaders of the two main secular parties (Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif of the PPP and the PML, respectively) in exile. Still, all religious parties combined did not receive more than 12.3 percent of the public vote, resulting in some 16.5 percent of the seats in Parliament.<sup>21</sup> The 2008 elections brought a stunning defeat for the pious or would-be pious groups: Today they are left with a mere 1.8 percent of the seats in Parliament.<sup>22</sup> Generally the

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<sup>20</sup> Stephen Philip Cohen, *The Jihadist Threat to Pakistan*, in: *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 3, Summer 2003; Andreas Rieck, *Pakistan zwischen Demokratisierung und “Talibanisierung”*, in: *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, Nr. 39/2007, 24. September 2007; International Crisis Group, *Pakistan: The Mullahs and the Military*, ICG Asia Report No. 49, Islamabad/Brussels, 20 March 2003

<sup>21</sup> Election Commission of Pakistan, *Detailed Position of Political Parties/Alliances in National Assembly General Elections 2002*, online: [www.ecp.gov.pk/content/GE-2002.htm](http://www.ecp.gov.pk/content/GE-2002.htm)

<sup>22</sup> Election Commission of Pakistan, *National Assembly General Election - 2008 Party Position Including Reserved Seats*, online: [www.ecp.gov.pk/NAPosition.pdf](http://www.ecp.gov.pk/NAPosition.pdf)

support of all religious parties combined in Pakistan is not exceeding 3 to 7 percent. The religious parties do command a certain amount of public respect, but Pakistani voters never seriously considered to vote them into power.<sup>23</sup>

(b) While these groups will never take power in elections, some analysts think they might take over the country by force, or by using the Pakistani army as a tool. This, again, is extremely unrealistic. The army has often used religious groups for political purposes in the past, and not the other way around. And the use of these groups by the army was such an attractive option because of their weakness, not because of their strength. The ideology of the army, despite its machiavellistic instrumentalization of religion in Afghanistan, Kashmir and to a lesser degree in Pakistan itself, is quite pluralistic, but mostly centered around professional and technocratic values. The army as an institution is secular and mostly interested in its institutional integrity.<sup>24</sup> Religious activism has been brought under control since the end of the Zia ul-Haq dictatorship, and even during Zia's time in power religion was more of a political tool than a strategic goal. The Armed Forces of Pakistan will not bring religious extremists to power, since this would undercut its own decisive role in society. It has lost more than 1500 soldiers during the last few years fighting religious extremism. At the same time the army still is the strongest and most efficient organization in Pakistan, and its strength of 550,000 professional soldiers is complemented by more than 300.000 paramilitary forces, which combined cannot be overcome by 10-20.000 armed insurgents in the border areas and a ruthless terrorist campaign. Violent religious extremists are quite able to afflict painful and violent blows on the population or the security forces; their taking power in the foreseeable future is completely out of question, either by peaceful or violent means.

The main power struggle in Pakistan is not between peaceful and secular democrats versus violent Islamists, but between secular forces.

(1) The secular army leadership, which was dominated for a decade by General and then-President Musharraf, was locked in a power struggle with nearly all political parties, which

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<sup>23</sup> See also: Julian Schofield / Michael Zekulin, Appraising the Threat of Islamist Take-Over in Pakistan, Centre d'études des politiques étrangères et de sécurité, Université du Québec à Montréal / Concordia University, Note de recherche 34 Mars 2007; and: Frédéric Grare, Pakistan: The Myth of an Islamist Peril, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Policy Brief 45, February 2006

<sup>24</sup> Stephen Philip Cohen, The Jihadist Threat to Pakistan, in: *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 3, Summer 2003, p. 16

were led by the PPP and the PML. Both have an appalling record of corruption and incompetence, but both are basically secular. The role of the religious parties (most importantly the JUI and the JI; see below) generally was restricted to collaborating with one of the leading secular camps, sometimes with President Musharraf, who gained his election to the Presidency in 2002 only after a deal with the fundamentalist JUI and the Islamist JI; and later with the opposition, dominated by the PPP and PML.

(2) The second major power struggle for the last twenty years has been between the PPP and the PML – not because of serious differences in ideology or political goals, but over access to personal power and state resources. This basic conflict has been papered over for the last few years because of the common enmity to President Musharraf, but their unusual alliance seems to be over, after the PML withdrew from the coalition government. It can be assumed that both will move back to their old habit of viciously attacking each other very soon, and again trying to enlist the support of the religious parties in this endeavor.

### **Religious Parties and Violence**<sup>25</sup>

The religious parties, as we have seen, are important actors in Pakistan, but still quite far away from being power centers. Also, their position has become extremely complex and contradictory in recent years.

Until around 2002, the religious camp could be described like this:

(a) On the one hand, two major religious parties could be distinguished: One is the sunni-deobandi *Jamiat-Ulema-i-Islam* (JUI), with strong sectarian tendencies and a highly conservative or even reactionary religious ideology. This party was and still is dominated by traditional *mullahs*, it is mostly of Pashtu ethnic composition and rurally based. The level of education in the party is low and often shaped by the *madrassa* system of religious schools. The JUI combined an ideology supporting *jihad* in Afghanistan (since the Soviet invasion of this country) with Pashtu nationalism and an opportunistic political behavior.

The second major religious party was and still is the *Jamaat-i-Islami* (JI), which in contrast to the JUI is dominated by urban middle class cadres with good education. It is also mostly Sunni, but less sectarian, and its members generally are from Deobandi and Ahl-i-Hadith background, but also include Barelvi and a few Shia. This party is not fundamentalist and literalist (like the JUI), but a right-wing reformist, Islamist party.

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<sup>25</sup> Jochen Hippler, *Das gefährlichste Land der Welt? – Pakistan zwischen Militärherrschaft, Extremismus und Demokratie*, Köln 2008, S. 234ff

Both the JUI and the JI theologically and ideologically propound a radical and often even extremist version of Islam. Both also have been involved in jihadist policies beyond the border, especially in Afghanistan and Indian Kashmir. These policies have been anti-Soviet, anti-American (or anti-NATO), and anti-Indian in orientation. In all these cases the jihadist ideology and practices resulted from the perception of foreign occupation of Afghan and Kashmiri land and were seen as helping their Muslim neighbors in self-defense. In Pakistani domestic politics both parties have been highly pragmatic, even opportunistic, forming formal or informal alliances with all major political players, no matter military, civilian, or secular. Also, both the JUI and the JI have learned over time to value democracy, fair elections and the rule of law. This often is in contradiction to their militant rhetoric, but since their political success and very existence depend on a liberal, pluralistic and democratic system, they have become part of the mainstream of politics, and have no less been active in the struggle against military rule or dictatorship and in support for the rule of law as the secular parties. The same paradox applies to their relationship to violence: While talking about *jihad* (and the JI about an “Islamic Revolution”), both parties have not used violence as a tool of politics inside Pakistan.<sup>26</sup>

Mariam Abou Zahab and Olivier Roy summarize the politics of the JI like this: „It has always respected the rule of law, in spite of its ideological radicalism which declared Pakistan's status as an Islamic state to be the sole reason for its existence. It was also elitist, advocating "entryism" into the senior civil service and the army, and has never undertaken armed action (inside Pakistan).”<sup>27</sup> And Seyyed Nasr observes from the mid-1950s onwards “an increasing discrepancy between its religious façade and the pragmatic political reality”.<sup>28</sup>

Taken together, the JUI and JI can be understood as right-wing parties with a radical religious ideology, a mostly reactionary program (especially in regard to women) and mainstream, non-violent, opportunistic policies in Pakistan. The jihadist violence was for export only and generally undertaken jointly and under the oversight of the secular army and

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<sup>26</sup> There have been several exceptions, especially from the JI's student wing, which in the 1970s (and occasionally later) has used club-wielding gangs to intimidate other student groups. Another exception was the violence used under the guidance of the secular army during the war in former East Pakistan, now Bangla Desh, in 1970/71.

<sup>27</sup> Mariam Abou Zahab / Olivier Roy, *Islamist Networks – The Afghan-Pakistan Connection*, New York 2004, p. 20

<sup>28</sup> Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution – The Jamaat-i Islami of Pakistan*, Berkeley 1994, p. 41

the military intelligence agency, ISI – or even in collaboration with the secular PPP, which was actively involved in creating and supporting the Afghan Taliban in the early and middle 1990s. It could be said that the jihad of the JUI and the JI abroad was undertaken on behalf of the secular Pakistani state.

(b) Besides the two big religious parties there exist dozens or even hundreds of small and often irrelevant other religious groups of different kind, ranging from political, educational or welfare oriented to spiritual, from progressive or liberal to extremist, from mystical (*sufi*) to dogmatic, from different Sunni tendencies to Shia, Ismaili and Ahmadi.

(c) Also, since the 1980s there have been several militant and even violent groups, generally of small size, and formerly often backed by secular state institutions and the armed forces, for jihad in Afghanistan and Kashmir, or to create tension between Sunnis and Shias.<sup>29</sup> While their ideology generally was very close to the JUI and JI (and some of them had split from the JUI) the practices were militant and violent, and several of these groups later developed into outright terrorist groups, some of which linked up with al-Qaida. After 2002 (and the US invasion of Afghanistan) most of these groups were outlawed and to some degree persecuted by the security agencies. This process was a result of the turn-around of the Pakistani government after 9/11, when it distanced itself from its former Taliban clients and their supporters. As a result, the military and the intelligence agencies (especially the ISI) lost control of their former tools, of which some turned against their former backers.

Rana lists these actually and potentially violent or terrorist groups:

**Suspected sectarian and terrorist groups  
as identified by the law enforcement agencies 2005<sup>30</sup>**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Network</b>
Ahle Hadiath Youth Force		Jamait Ahle Hadiath youth wing	Pakistan
<i>Al-Badar Tigers</i>		Faction of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi	Punjab, Balochistan
Al-Farooq		Sectarian	Underground
Ali Tigers		Sectarian	Underground

<sup>29</sup> Compare: Aarish Ullah Khan, *The Terrorist Threat and the Policy Response in Pakistan*, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), SIPRI Policy Paper No. 11, September 2005

<sup>30</sup> Muhammad Amir Rana, *Changing Tactics of Jihad Organizations in Pakistan*, Pak Institute for Peace Studies (Lahore), online: <http://pips.com.pk/JihadOrg.asp>; groups which are thought to cooperate with al-Qaida are presented in italics.

Almi Jamaat-e-Ahle Sunnet	Under observation	Sectarian	Punjab
Ashgaria Organization		Shia sectarian	Sindh
<i>Harkatul Mujahideen Alalmi</i>	Do	Terrorist	Underground
Hizb-e-Islami		Reportedly recruiting Mujahideen for Taliban	NWFP
Imamines	Under observation	Shia sectarian outfit	Punjab
Jamaat Ahle Hadiath		Sectarian	Pakistan
Jamait Ghurba-e-Ahle Hadiath		Sectarian & support jihadist	Pakistan
Jamaitul Mujahideen Alalmi	Do	Deobandi jihadi outfit	Pakistan
Jhangvi Tigers		Terrorist	Underground
Khumani Tigers		Shia sectarian and Jihadi	Underground
<i>Lashkar-e-Jhangvi</i>	Banned	Terrorist	Underground
<i>Lashkar-e-Umer</i>		terrorist	underground
Majlis-e-Ahrar	Under observation	Sectarian jihad supporter	Pakistan
Mukhtar Force		Shia	Punjab, NWFP
Nojawana-e-Ishat Toheed wal Sunnah		Sectarian	Punjab, NWFP

(d) Finally, after 2002 in the Northwest Frontier Province several new jihadist groups were formed or older ones strengthened. In Swat valley, the *Tehrik-i-Nifaz-i-Shariat-i-Mohammadi* (TNSM) gained support and in 2007 and 2008 felt strong enough to militarily resist Pakistani paramilitary and army units. But most importantly foreign jihadists and Afghan Taliban entered the FATA, and several groups of local jihadist fighters emerged (see pages 9-11, above), which first called themselves “mujahidin”, and later often used the name *Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan*. They cooperated and competed with several other militant groups. First their main area of operations was North and South Waziristan, later major fighting erupted in Bajaur Agency, which produced major losses among the militants, the civilian population, and the security forces. The Pakistani Government declared in mid-August that nearly 500 people had been killed over the last ten days alone in the fighting in this small area. 22 of these dead were security personnel, according to the Interior Ministry. 3000 militant fighters are supposed to operate in this tiny area, coming from Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia.<sup>31</sup> Large sectors of the civilian population fled to the relative safety of Peshawar area (capital city of NWFP province).

<sup>31</sup> Riaz Khan, *The Associated Press*, Friday, August 15, 2008; 9:34 AM

The violence committed by extremist religious groups inside Pakistan is creating a very difficult situation for the established fundamentalist and Islamist parties JUI and JI. Theologically and ideologically, they do not differ very much from the insurgent and terrorist groups, and it is not easy for them to openly denounce these groups without weakening their own religious credentials. At the same time, politically they are also competitors to the extremist subculture, and when they were ruling the Northwest Frontier Province, the JUI and JI supported military operations against them and ordered paramilitary operations against the insurgents in Swat valley. Their curious combination of pragmatic policies and extremist ideologies is threatened by extremist groups which act according to their ideology. In this sense, the extremist and violent groups are challenging the mainstream of Pakistani politics, to which the JUI and JI belong. Religious rhetoric, no matter how radical, has long become a part of a general Pakistani discourse, even from secular parties. For instance, both the PPP and the PML have supported the *sharia* in Pakistan. But this generally remains shallow and empty talk – while the extremist violent groups are violently acting according to their rhetoric.

If we are analyzing the causes of violence, it is crucial not to assume that these are primarily religious, even if the violence is committed by religious groups or with religious justification. Very often the violence is aimed to achieve quite secular goals, like the change in foreign policy orientation (e.g. end of the support for the US in the Afghan war and its “war against terrorism”), resistance against what is perceived as foreign occupation (in Afghanistan and Kashmir), resistance against troops threatening the own autonomy, the arrogance of a central government against a province, region or ethnic group, or resistance against dictatorial or oppressive forms of governance, or the struggle for power in a specific area or region. Religion very often is expressing quite secular grievances or goals; it can be a cultural code to express political aims. The use of this code can fulfill the function to award the own political intentions more legitimacy, no matter whether it is done intentionally or not. Whether religious or other ideologies are utilized (like democracy/human rights, socialism, nationalism, ethnic identity) generally will depend on the political context and on the credibility of the respective ideology at a specific point in time. It should also be noted that religious discourse is seldom “pure”, but often fused with other, supporting ideologies. In case of the militant Deobandi version of Sunni Islam, so powerful in the NWFP, it is deeply connected to anti-imperialist (or anti-US) and ethnic Pashtun ideologies. One of many examples is Maulana Fazlur Rehman, the leader of JUI, who remarked: The USA “are the

scion of imperialism and it was violating human rights throughout the world. He said the American imperialism threatened oppressed nations of the world.”<sup>32</sup>

Often these anti-imperialist or Pashtun rhetoric seem to be more important than just an Islamic discourse.

### ***Military Rule and Deficits of Governance as Backdrop of Violence***

Pakistan is a very heterogeneous country with many problems in the fields of economics, development, in society, politics and culture. Here is not the place to go into these more deeply, but it should be remembered that Pakistan originally has been established in a painful and violent process of separation from India as a secular state for the Muslims of the Subcontinent. Creating a *secular* “Muslim state” – later re-named an “Islamic Republic” – brought about one of the key contradictions in Pakistani politics, which haunts the country until this day. In this context Islam had a double face: On the one hand it served as an integrating ideology to unite the ethnically highly diverse society into a Pakistani (Muslim) Nation, stressing one of the very few things nearly all (more than 95 percent) Pakistanis had in common. On the other hand this opened the opportunity to use Islamic discourse to undercut the secularity of the country: Many people did not really understand how and why a country could be Muslim without being Islamic. This led to a fragile way of doublethink in Pakistan: While the political system still is not driven by religion but by secular interests, most politicians are pretending it to be otherwise and (mostly Sunni) Islam is seen as the official ideology of Pakistan. Using Islam as the key unifier and ideological mechanism of integration of the heterogeneous society has not worked very well: The Shiite and other non-Sunni Pakistanis (Ismaili, Ahmandi, Christian, Hindu) have to feel excluded, the different Sunni theological trends (Deobandi, Barelvi, Ahl-i-Hadith) have not always agreed on the correct way to be good Sunnis, “orthodox” and mystical kinds of religion are in disagreement, and the agnostic and openly secular citizens are open to the criticism not to be good Pakistanis. The violent breakup of Pakistan in 1971 (when former East-Pakistan seceded and became Bangla Desh, after a civil war, a war with India, and major massacres) demonstrated that “Islam” as a political ideology is quite insufficient to keep the country

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<sup>32</sup> Islamic Forces Ready for Peace Talks with US: Fazl, in: *Dawn*, 11 February 2008, online: [www.dawn.com/2008/02/11/nat4.htm](http://www.dawn.com/2008/02/11/nat4.htm); see more general also: Nazish Brohi, *The MMA Offensive – Three Years in Power, 2003-2005*, Islamabad 2006, p. 48

united. This point is reinforced by the current violence, in which to some degree Islam has been transformed from an integrative ideology into one justifying insurgency and terrorism.

These problems of fragmentation, of a lack of national unity or of a highly difficult Nation-Building have dominated the thinking of the political elites since the founding days of Pakistan. The second approach to national unity besides instrumentalizing the common – but not so common – religion has been a continuous attempt of centralizing the state and using it to homogenize the society from above. One example is the introduction of Urdu as the national language in Pakistan – where Urdu has not been spoken before the founding of the new state. The educational system and electronic media were fully utilized to this effect, at the expense of the many local languages. (This may sound harmless to many Europeans, but the language question strongly contributed to the secession of Bangla Desh and in the 1980s and 90s also had an important effect in the Karachi bloodshed.)

Even more important, though, have been the many situations when a strict political centralization was forced upon a quite heterogeneous society. Since the central state apparatus generally was dominated by the elites from Punjab, to some degree from the Muhajir community of immigrants/refugees from India, and later from NWFP, the underrepresented people from Balochistan, Sindhi speakers, and Bengali speakers from East-Pakistan (and at first also the Pashtu speakers of NWFP) felt this drive towards centralization to be in fact marginalizing them. Political and to some degree violent resistance resulted, which was dealt with brutally and reinforced the feelings of disempowerment.

The third major approach to deal with internal heterogeneity was military rule. Generally speaking military rule (1958-69, 1969-71, 1977-88 and 1999-2008) has been directed against civilian politicians and was justified as a means to bring greater efficiency and discipline into the governance system. It also tended to be even more centralized than civilian rule, and at least in some cases it used repression much more freely. Besides that, military rule occasionally achieved more efficient governance on a tactical level, but completely failed strategically: It sometimes managed to overcome some problems in regard to reforming specific state institutions in specific sectors of statehood, but it was responsible for not allowing the political system in its totality to mature and to overcome its grave structural problems. One key example is the Pakistani system of political parties, which is a key precondition to develop stable and democratic statehood. The parties are, with the partial

exception of the Islamist JI, internally not democratically structured, generally party functionaries are appointed, not elected. They are responsible to the party leadership, not the members. Organizationally they are extremely weak, again with the exception of the JI,<sup>33</sup> and generally are more like clientelist networks than actually parties. Corruption is endemic, and party leaders Asif Zardari (“Mister 10 Percent”, now President of Pakistan, PPP) and Nawaz Sharif (PML) are both notorious for their shameless self-enrichment. It is extremely difficult to build democratic – or any functioning – statehood on these building blocks. It does not come as a surprise then that also the state bureaucracy and police are often highly corrupt and of low competence and efficiency.

When the military took power it could easily and plausibly point to these shortcomings of civilian rule,<sup>34</sup> and at least in 1958, 1977 and 1999 the coups were applauded by large sectors of societies. But instead of addressing these grave problems, the Army only used them to its tactical advantage, deepening them in the long run. In all military regimes the Generals first tried to completely sideline or even abolish all political parties. When they later needed to build a political base in society, they shifted back to allow parties – and created ones under their own control. When military rule had run its course and started to weaken, restrictions on parties were lifted, and the un-reformed parties took over, beginning a new period of corrupt, incompetent and clientelistic civilian rule, which later again was to be overthrown by a military coup.<sup>35</sup>

This cycle of civilian and military rule has paralyzed the Pakistani political system since its inception.<sup>36</sup> It has led to an astonishing continuity of political elites despite the fluctuations in models of governance, and to a big degree perpetuated the character of the former colonial state. In other words: The possibilities for participation of citizens in politics are extremely limited; the state is not structured to serve the needs of the majority of the population but to be the tool and quasi-property of the elites; the rule of law is extremely unevenly applied, if at all; the political process as shaped to serve informal networks of influence, not so solve

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<sup>33</sup> In regard to the organizational side of JI see: Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution – The Jamaat-i Islami of Pakistan*, Berkeley 1994, p. 47-80

<sup>34</sup> For the justifications of military rule see: Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, *The Armed Forces of Pakistan*, Karachi 2002, p. 135f

<sup>35</sup> Hasan Askari Rizvi, *The Military and Politics in Pakistan – 1947-1997*, Lahore 2000, p. 273f

<sup>36</sup> Husain Haqqani, *Pakistan – Between Mosque and Military*, Washington 2005

problems in society; and repression against marginalized groups or political opponents is always a possibility. Therefore, it is not surprising that most Pakistanis do not trust the state and its functionaries, but also look for informal support from family, tribe, clan, religious or ethnic groups, thereby weakening the state further. Police and the legal system, for instance, are often not perceived as institutions that might redress some ill, but are often feared because of brutality, arbitrariness, corruption and inefficiency.

### **Governance and Violence**

Our point here is that there exists a strong link between the deficits in governance structure and its performance and the political (and to some degree criminal) violence. Both the policies and the paralysis of the state do play an important role here. In a sense the key problem is that the Pakistani state is both over-developed and underdeveloped at the same time, resulting in a screwed overall character of statehood, which does not address causes of conflict and violence in time or at all, while at the same time adding additional ones. The overdeveloped side of Pakistani statehood grows out of its militarization (more than 900.000 armed security forces, economic penetration of society by the armed forces,<sup>37</sup> formal and informal political dominating role of the army, etc.); its neglect and disempowerment of most citizens; its overcentralization and control of the central state structures over the provinces and districts. The state is strong and relatively efficient when it comes to control, to repress and restrict – but it is exceedingly weak when it comes to build, create, provide services, integrate society, develop the potential of the own country.

This uneven character of statehood has to a big degree contributed to the current level of violence, to which we have to add international factors. The state has traditionally shaped and manipulated the political parties, using the civilian and military intelligence agencies to split them (like the PML into the PML-N and the PML-Q), the help create or strengthen new ones (like the MQM or the PML-Q), it has been instrumental to establish alliances between parties (e.g. the IJI or later the MMA),<sup>38</sup> to buy votes in Parliament, and to rig elections. The result has been that the political system is largely incapable to solve the societal problems, but turned into a grave problem itself, creating additional fragmentation and instability. It has

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<sup>37</sup> Ayesha Siddiqa, *Military Inc. – Inside Pakistan's Military Economy*, Karachi 2007

<sup>38</sup> International Crisis Group, *Pakistan: The Mullahs and the Military*, ICG Asia Report No. 49, Islamabad/Brussels, 20 March 2003, p. 9; und: Husain Haqqani, *Pakistan – Between Mosque and Military*, Washington 2005, p. 201f

destroyed most of the respect of the population for politicians, members of parliament, police officers, judges (with the recent exception of the judges deposed by then-President Musharraf) and bureaucrats. (This has very much included politicians from the religious parties.)

This screwed state has pursued policies which in turn led to serious conflicts.<sup>39</sup> The support and utilization of religious extremists inside Pakistan and in regard to Afghanistan (in close cooperation with Washington during the 1980) and Kashmir has created an extremist subculture which now the state has lost control of. The very groups that now are violently attacking the Pakistani government and the ideologies that support jihad in Pakistan and abroad have been nurtured by often quite secular state officials and politicians. This process has been symbolized by the suicide attack that killed Benazir Bhutto – who during her second term as Prime Minister was the “Mother of the (Afghan) Taliban”, only to be assassinated in December 2007 by people obviously connected to the (Pakistani) Taliban.

On the other hand, the problem is not just what the Pakistani state does or did do, but also what it does not. The weakness and partial paralysis of the state does create areas of limited statehood, all over the country – at least in some sectors like the legal and justice system. This is obvious in some geographical areas, for instance in Southern Punjab or rural Sindh, where big landowners have been known to keep up their private prisons, and in FATA to give just few examples. To mention another one, which was told me by a Pakistani intelligence agent last year:

In the Afghan-Pakistani border area a widow with four children was in grave economic need after the death of her husband. One important problem was her brother in law, who illegally took 10 acres of her land and used it for himself. For ten years this woman tried to recover her land through the legal system of the state, but with no result – despite her attempt to even bribe the judges. (Her brother-in-law paid more.) After all this time and after the political situation has changed locally, she visited the Taliban functionary responsible for the village and presented her case. This man listened carefully, and then invited the brother-in-law the next day, and two days later a judgment was decided: The man had to return the land to this

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<sup>39</sup> Jochen Hippler, *Gewaltkonflikte und autoritäre Staatlichkeit in Pakistan*, in: Andreas Heinemann-Grüder, Jochen Hippler, Bruno Schoch, Markus Weingardt und Reinhard Mutz (Hrsg.); *Friedensgutachten 2008*, Institut für Friedensforschung und Sicherheitspolitik an der Universität Hamburg (IFSH), Hessische Stiftung Friedens- und Konfliktforschung (HSFK), Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC), Institut für Entwicklung und Frieden (INEF), u.a., Juni 2008

lady at once – and he had to give 10 acres of his land to the widow for 10 years of use, as a compensation for his illegal act.

This example is very illustrative. It first demonstrates the lawless and quasi-stateless situation in the border areas. And it illustrates why many local people will support the Taliban in their villages: It is much better to have a rough and unsophisticated form of order and justice than none at all – no matter what the ideology or theology of the judge. If now the central or provincial government sends military or paramilitary forces to this village to drive out the Taliban and reestablish the legal structures of the state, we can easily imagine or even understand the reaction of the local people.

To summarize our point here: The sectarian violence between Sunnis and Shias in Pakistan has been the result of a misguided state policy of the Zia ul-Haq dictatorship in the early and middle 1990s, which built on local socio-economic conflicts in parts of rural Punjab. Later, the violence by sectarian groups got out of hand and could not always be controlled any longer. But even in the Sunni-Shia violence in the Northern city of Gilgit (2005, some 100 people killed; it started over textbooks for school children), the government first supported the Sunni extremists.

In regard to the Baloch insurgency, this was mainly the result of the neglect of the province by the central government, of the arrogance of the central authorities, of the exploitation of the natural resources and of the exclusion of the people and the government of the province from the mega-project of Gwadar. In addition the heavy-handedness of the government under President Musharraf played an important role in letting the conflict escalate, until it had spread to most of the province.

The violence in the tribal areas of the Northwest Frontier Province (FATA) can only be understood against the backdrop of the “American Jihad” of the 1980s, which greatly helped transform Deobandi religiosity in the Pashtun belt from very conservative to militant and created an infrastructure and mentality of violent struggle. Also the neglect and marginalization of FATA in Pakistan should not be ignored as starting points for the later insurgency. The second precondition for the ongoing violence was the US intervention in Afghanistan in late 2001 and the overthrow of the Taliban, leading to Pashtun and foreign militants fleeing to FATA and upsetting an already fragile equilibrium. These two factors were linking developments in FATA to the Afghan war, transforming the area into a territory

for rest and reorganization in regard to the struggle in Afghanistan. And finally, the participation of Pakistan in the US “war against terrorism” in general, but especially the military operation of the Pakistani army in the FATA to seal off the border and hunt down al-Qaida fighters led to an eruption of major violence inside Pakistan, first in FATA itself, then in the rest of the province, and later affecting other parts of Pakistan, including the Capital.

In this sense the insurgency and campaign of terrorism are a direct extension of the Afghan war into Pakistani territory.

### ***Control of Violence in Pakistan***

The term “control of violence” is quite broad and includes many different aspects. Here it is exclusively used in the sense of reducing or minimizing the level of violence in a given area or socio-political context.

Conceptualizing the control of violence in Pakistan requires thinking on three levels: (1) The international context, which means Afghanistan and Kashmir, and the “global war against terrorism”, including relations with Washington; (2) the structural level in Pakistan as a whole, as far as it affects violence – which mainly means problems of governance that increase local and regional tension, or decrease the chances of peaceful conflict management; and (3) conflict-specific approaches and activities, especially in regard to Balochistan, Karachi, FATA/NWFP, and sectarian conflicts.

It is quite obvious that the first level is most difficult to implement, and the second is still a very serious challenge, while the last one offers easier approaches, but those will be less effective as long as the problems on level one and two are not being addressed.

#### **Conflict-specific approaches**

The violence in Balochistan is the easiest to control and to end by the use of conflict-specific measures, though these could and should be linked to structural reform in Pakistan generally. If the national government would change its policies for good in regard to this province, the insurgency could be over in the course of a few months, may be even earlier than that. The following measures would be both possible and effective:

- Paying all provinces the same royalties for their natural gas, which would end the unfair discrimination of Balochistan in this field;

- Allow the provincial government a key role in the development of the Gwadar port project, and let the people of the province participate and benefit from this big endeavor (including the labor market);
- Military construction and military operation in Balochistan should only be undertaken with the permission and coordination of the provincial government;
- The national government should publicly declare that it will respect and not dismiss any elected provincial government and allow it to function in the province according to the constitution. Such a declaration should be fully implemented;
- Finally, for at least the next twenty years the province should receive additional funds for development and infrastructure, to make up for the neglect in the past. Generally projects for infrastructure development should be decided in the province itself, not in Islamabad.

Nearly all of the insurgents would be willing to stop using violence if these measures would be implemented, since they would address their key complaints. The chances of success are excellent, since the insurgent groups have declared a suspension of their military operations just a week ago anyway. If these measures were not taken, the danger would arise that this violent conflict might escalate and radicalize.

It is much more difficult to solve the problem of Sunni-Shia violence, since this is much less based on practical complaints, and more ideologically charged. Besides police repression of the violent crimes committed, which in some areas of the country (Punjab) has been done quite effectively, there is very little that could be done in a short time frame. Key would be, though, that any and all state agencies should refrain from giving any open or indirect or even ideological support to Sunni extremist groups, as they did in the past, even under Benazir Bhutto's and President Musharraf's leadership. Any sectarian violence, including against Christians and Hindus, should be dealt with on the same standards and with the full force of law. An equal standard in the persecution of perpetrators of violence of any sect or religious group is a precondition to overcome inter-sectarian violence. Still, a control and reduction of this specific kind of violence will take time. And success depends on a general reduction of conflict and tension in Pakistan, since non-sectarian problems and insecurities have always fanned sectarian tension.

In the FATA and adjunct areas the violence has already escalated to a level where no set of simple measures will make a difference. At the same time, a "military solution" has no

chance of success, for several reasons. (Among those are that many roots of the insurgency are located across the border; that the insurgents often are very difficult to distinguish from the civilian population; and that the armed forces generally are viewed with a considerable degree of skepticism by the tribal people.) To control violence in FATA also a focus on economic and social development will not suffice, though this might have prevented the current level of violence if undertaken a generation ago. Today, controlling and gradually reducing violence in FATA and NWFP will take some patience, and can only be achieved by connecting socio-economic development with building or re-building local and regional statehood in a way that is useful for the local population, fair and clean (in the sense of being non-corrupt). It would also require a few things which are of more general character, especially a reduction of tension in Afghanistan or a withdrawal of NATO forces from this country.

#### **Measures in Regard to Governance in Pakistan and the International Environment**

Control of violence in Pakistan does require in most cases, with the possible exception of Balochistan, not just measures in regard to the specific conflict in question, but also more basic readjustments of the political system at the national level. While all the different categories of violence in Pakistan have different and specific causes and dynamics, they all are being affected, deepened and perpetuated by deficits in the political system of Pakistan, by the screwed structure of statehood mentioned above, and by specific measures state institutions and political actors have taken. And they all are made more difficult to resolve because the defective governance mechanisms make it more difficult to manage conflicts peacefully or find a way out of violence. (1) For the control of violence in Pakistan it would be extremely helpful to reduce the manipulation of society and politics by state agents, especially the intelligence agencies and the army for tactical reasons. (2) To apply equal standards to all groups in society, regardless of their ethnic or political identity or political convictions, would go a long way in preventing conflicts to escalate and turn violent. (3) To respect the law, and to place the rule of law above political or economic considerations would also take some of the pressure out of local and regional conflicts. (4) If the state does provide justice, and provide it fast, in an affordable way and in the spirit of equality, this would very much reduce the incentives for religious, ethnic or political groups to take justice in their own hands. (5) This means that the state has actually to behave like a state, not as a party or as the quasi-property of influential groups – and it implies that it develops functioning structures of governance, which apply to all of the national territory and all

relevant sectors of politics and administration. Geographical or sectoral areas of limited statehood invite groups to build elements of counter-statehood, which in turn fragments and weakens society. It also subverts the equality of all citizens before the law, which is one of the key mechanisms for peaceful conflict resolution in modern societies. (6) In addition, to avoid or peacefully manage conflicts it would be highly advisable that Pakistan develops a functioning balance between provincial and national authorities and a way of fruitful cooperation of these entities. The problems in Balochistan, Sindh and the NWFP would either not have been as grave as they are now, or they would have not escalated into violence at all if the national government would have respected the rights and interests of the provinces. (7) The development of functioning, participatory and democratic parties would help create more openness and flexibility into the system of governance, and produce more responsive policies.

These seven points of reform are modest in principle, and they would require hardly anything which is not already part of the constitution or of the general consensus of the Pakistani public. The problem is not that Pakistan would need a complete new legal setup (though in some areas that would be advisable, in as far as the current framework contradicts the equality of citizens, like the *hudood* amendments from the time of Zia ul-Haq's dictatorship,<sup>40</sup> or the *Frontier Crimes Regulation* in FATA from colonial times), but that the political actors including the government should finally take serious their own rules and laws, and actually behave accordingly. Overcoming violence in Pakistan in this sense would require a set of measures to address the specific causes and problems in Balochistan, NWFP and the inter-sectarian conflicts, plus adjusting the framework of politics and administration – governance – to overcome the biases, the manipulative practices and deficits of the state, which today so much contribute to let conflicts turn violent and reduce the mechanisms for conflict resolution. If this could be coupled with a reduction in international tensions and violent conflict across the border – like in Afghanistan and Kashmir – the future for this country could be bright. If the main political actors will behave as irresponsible, incompetent, selfish and short-sighted as they did in the past, the current wave of violence could further escalate and plague the people of Pakistan at least for another generation.

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<sup>40</sup> Council of Islamic Ideology, *Hudood Ordinance 1979 – A Critical Report*, Publ. No. 79, Islamabad May 2007