

A Study of Talibanization in Pakistan

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Abstract

Taliban is comparatively a new name of militants in Pakistan on the pattern of their counterparts in Afghanistan. The local Taliban who six years ago were few in number and confined to two tribal agencies are now spread over many parts of the North West Frontier Province. Although local problems of each of these areas are different from one another which have given impetus to the rise of the Taliban phenomenon, however, except in Khyber Agency the rest in other localities operate under the leadership of one commander, Baitullah Mehsood and that demonstrates, the seriousness and enormity of the problem. The local administration is powerless in the face of Taliban control of their respective areas they have established their own administration. All such policies enforced by the militant Taliban are commonly known as Talibanization of these areas. The question whether this is a temporary or permanent phenomenon depends where from one traces the roots of it? Some trace its roots to identify Regional unsettled disputes, local environment and tug of war between Islamist and secularists to take hold of power. There is a danger if the local circumstances are not timely changed in favor of the public demands these Islamist militants would take hold of power and Talibanization would become the fate of the country. On an optimistic note, as democratic government has taken over in March this year that gives the only hope to retain Pakistan as a democratic, moderate, progressive Islamic country.

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Introduction

Pakistan is faced with tidal waves of violence and militancy in the recent years, which is commonly assumed as caused by the Taliban factor. The North West Frontier Province in particular is in the grip of extreme insurgency. Especially South Waziristan, North Waziristan, Bajaur and also the rest of the tribal areas are deeply afflicted with violence for the last four years and the scenic valley of Swat since last one year are under the severe spate of insurgency.

The rest of the country is also not spared of such incidents as they occur with frequency in a dreadful manner. Even in the twin cities of Islamabad (capital of the country) and Rawalpindi the number of terrorist incidences is higher than other areas. Suicide bombing, roadside bomb attacks and improvised bomb tactics are the common occurrence in the far and wide of the country.

There are multiple theories which explain the reasons of wide spread violence and terrorist acts in the country, however, three of them seem more in circulation as they are substantiated by evidence. The first one points out that the threat of the Taliban or proliferation of terrorist acts caused due to successive governments' complacency in promoting Islam as the state's identity and of Islamist groups as interpreters of Islamic nationalism which has provided an opportunity to the Islamists to expand their influence in the arena of public policy. This situation has restricted the state's functionaries to deal with Islamist or Jehadi elements with iron hand, so the insurgency has reached to such an enormity that it can not be easily controlled. This theory also refers to the nation-building strategies which politicized Islam and provided opportunity to Islamist to come into the vortex of power. This view point is shared across the board ranging from local people to the foreign observers. It has also created an impression that perhaps the Government of President Musharraf unleashed such activities on its own to prove its credentials or relevance to be the only capable authority to combat forces of International terror on behalf of the International world and in return to prolong its presence in power. Although the post February 18 situation hardly endorse this notion because the democratic system has peacefully taken over from the military led

government and there is visible possibility of the change of policy in dealing with forces of terrorism in the country.¹

The second theory entails that such incidents are happening with frequency due to successive governments' involvements into regional conflicts of the likes of Afghanistan and also Kashmir over the decades which brought the erstwhile veterans of wars back home to fight sectarian wars and also to struggle against the pro-western regimes on the home front. Attacks on the security forces and targeted killings of the pro-government tribal elders or religious scholars and even political leaders are some concrete evidences that endorse this view point.²

There is the third one as well that underscores that it is due to international compulsions of Pakistan that it had to plunge into such conflicts as of Afghanistan in the 80s. At present in the war against International terrorism as a frontline state Pakistan has serious blowback that has afflicted the country with rapid occurrence of terrorist incidences.³

Deeper study of the problem reveals that it is not one but all the three factors which in unison caused the present predicament of Pakistan. It is high time to study the reasons which had landed the country into this turmoil and also to draw meaningful conclusions to help in dealing with the menace of terrorism. Handling the monster of militancy through military mechanism only has exacerbated the problem rather than to control it.

Five to six years of experience of tackling terrorism gives a dismal hope of government's ability to eradicate violence and militancy. Rather it has come down from the tribal areas to the settled territories. The number and strength of the stock holders of terror have also increased. The need of the hour is to engage tangible political process backed by meaningful reform package to address the genuine concerns of the terror affected areas, primarily tribal agencies, Swat region and also its spread into settled districts.

1 Extracted from the Editorial and Articles of leading National News Dailies such as *Dawn* and *The News*.

2 *Ibid.*

3 *Ibid.*

What has caused militancy is as important as to explore the current situation that has unfolded on the ground. Whether this is permanent or temporary phenomenon would also be answered between the lines. An assessment of what has been done by the Government of Pakistan during the course of recent years to eradicate terrorism would be discussed. It would also include the likely future road map based on recent experiences. All such and other related questions would make the core of this study.

The Local Context of the Problem

Understanding the emergence of the Taliban like phenomenon in Pakistan makes it incumbent to revisit the 60 years history of the country. As a point of departure one has to look into the very rationale of the genesis of the country, which intertwines two contradictory ideals of Islam and democracy to build the identity of the country. The philosophy of Islam delineates spiritual and moral principles while democracy represents liberal values, which consider religion a private matter rather than an essence of life that dominates political or other crucial aspects. It was essential to determine the role of religion in the political system of the country right at the outset in the light of precepts of the founding father Mohammad Ali Jinnah.

There is no doubt that Islam was adopted as the political identity of the undivided Indian Muslims, but after the creation of independent state of Pakistan democracy was declared as the political philosophy of the system of newly born state. The need of the hour was to clearly establish the interrelationship between the two and uphold the primacy of democratic norms in shaping the political system of the nascent country. But the leaders in those early years lump the two contradictory ideals together and gave way to the kind of ambiguity in the political system that the country suffers to this day and in such a huge manner.

The Objective Resolution 1949⁴ which became the hallmark of constitution making in the country put emphasized on the role of Islam in the constitutional structure of the country. For example, clause four of the said document envisaged, “wherein principles

4 The Objective resolution of 1949 was a set of basic principles laid out by the first Constituent Assembly for making the future constitution of Pakistan.

enunciated by Islam shall be fully observed”, it further suggested, “wherein the Muslims shall be enabled to order their lives in the individual and collective spheres in accordance with the teachings and requirements of Islam as set out in the Holy Quran and the Sunnah”.⁵ These provisions overemphasized the role of Islam in politico-constitutional structure of the country and in this way the primacy of the democratic norms which had been upheld in the 11 August 1947 famous speech of the founding father Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah were undermined. He had clearly drawn the fundamental principles of the new polity by saying, “you are free to go to your temples; you are free to go to your mosques or to any other places of worship in this state of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed that has nothing to do with the business of state.”⁶

The ideological tripod which was cobbled together during the formative phase comprised of Islamic nationalism, hostility to India and reliance or alliance with the West for economic and security related support.⁷ Given the past experience the same trio has been carried over by successive governments no matter who led them either military or political leadership. The interplay of the three components of state ideology created conducive environment for Islamist forces to grow in influence and assert their position which eventually catapulted them to the center stage.

Frequent disruption of the democratic political process in the formative phase of the country (1947-58) and inconsistencies in the constitution making process equally provided opportunity to the Islamist forces to raise slogans for introducing *Shariah* law and Islamic system in the country as an alternate solution.

As in the early years the leaders succumbed to the Islamic fervor of the people. They had to determine the *raison d’etat* of the country on Islamic ideology which has provided an opportunity to

5 Safdar Mehmood, *Constitutional Foundation of Pakistan* (Lahore: Jang Publishers, 1990), p.52.

6 *Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah’s Speeches as Governor General of Pakistan 1947-48* (Karach: Government of Pakisatn, 1964), p.83.

7 Hussain Haqqani, *Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military* (Lahore: Vanguard Books, 2005), pp.15-16.

the Islamist groups to come into limelight as the custodian and interpreters of the Ideology of Pakistan.

The system has been evolved in a way that reliance on Islam has increased rather than on democracy or representative system. It was realized that Islam was the binding force among the diverse nationalities inhabiting the country, and it was also considered savior in dealing with the complex issues of ethnic rights and provincial autonomy.⁸ Such thoughts and practices radicalized the state and society in a gradual manner.

What difference one sees in today and in those days is that the secular elites were in the forefront at that time and they used Islam as an instrument for the attainment of policy objectives. At present the cat is out of the bag as the secularists are under attack from the Islamist. The Islamists are calling the shots and the liberal elites are on the defensive. This is a major imbalance which has embattled the Islamist against the secularists and as a result the common people are the victims.

Eleven years of Ayub Khan's rule concentrated on the same ideology tripod and used Islam as the policy instrument to mobilize the armed forces against the Indian threat and in the same go gave impression to the US and other European countries of his secular credentials⁹ which kept him dear to the Americans till the mid 60s.

The 1971 dismemberment of the country also brought back the attention of the authorities to redefine the *raison d'etat* of the state of Pakistan. Resultantly emphasis on Islam and hatred of India further enhanced which gave way to religious forces to flourish.¹⁰ Although reliance on the West faced a set back because of the US and European countries complacency to help out Pakistan at that difficult time disillusioned even the liberal elite.

The post 1971 situation strengthened religious parties to such an extent that even the secular leader like Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had to declare the Qadyani/Ahamdi as unIslamic sect through an

8 *Ibid.*, pp.15-37.

9 *Ibid.*, pp.42-43

10 Lawrence Ziring, "Pakistan: Terrorism in Historical Perspective" in *Pakistan Democracy, Development and Security Issues*, Veena Kukreja, and M.P. Singh, (Karachi: Paramount Publishing Enterprise, 2005) p.200.

amendment in the 1973 constitution.¹¹ By the end of his rule he completely succumbed to the demands of the religio-political forces and declared Friday as public holiday instead of Sunday and drinking was prohibited in public gatherings. He was also ready to share power with Islamists before being overthrown by the military coup of General Zia-ul Haq.¹²

The eleven years regime of Zia-ul Haq wherein Islamization of the state was used to legitimize his rule did enormous damage to the liberal and tolerant spirit of the state and society. Having personal leaning towards Islam Gen Zia took keen interest to Islamize economy, administration, legal system and education.

Even Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif having tilt towards the right, during his second term of premiership introduced *Shariat* Bill into Parliament to fulfill the ultimate mission of Islamic elements in Pakistan. Though the bill got stuck in the Senate, Upper House of the Parliament and did not receive the approval.¹³ But it became clear that Islam was no more just a policy instrument but an attempt was made to make the alternate policy replacement.

The Mullah-Military alliance witnessed some more hey days during the initial two years of General Musharaf's rule. Though on the face of it he ordered to ban militant organizations and also cracked down on the *Jihadi* elements, many of them were jailed but later released.¹⁴ After the tragedy of 9/11 it became difficult for him to continue support to the erstwhile allies. Even now his fight against the terrorist elements is suspected to be sincere by the international world due to having past links with such elements.

As a result of October 18, 2002 election though enlightened moderation was the declared spirit of the state policy however in reality Islamists were calling the shots by leading the opposition and formed governments in the two western provinces of NWFP and

11 *Ibid.*, p.180. See also, Saleem M.M. Quraishi, "Pakistan Islamic Ideology and the Failed State?" Veena Kukreja, and M.P. Singh, in *Pakistan Democracy, Development and Security Issues* (Karachi: Paramount Publishing, 2005), pp.95-96.

12 Mr. Afariyab Khattak, Chairman Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (now Provincial President of the Awami National Party) said in an interview with the author in December, 2005.

13 *Ibid.*

14 *Ibid.*

Baluchistan which emboldened them enough to pass *Shariah* bill through the NWFP Provincial Assembly in June 2003.¹⁵

In the post October political scenario religio-political forces extremism, militancy and clamoring for Islamic system increased in leaps and bounds. Not only confined to the tribal agencies which are considered as their main hideouts it trickled down to the settled districts like Tank, Bannu, Kohat, Dera Ismail Khan and to the outskirts of Peshawar (Dara Adam Khail). The Swat region astonishingly has been overwhelmed by the militant factors under the leadership of Mullah Fazlullah popularly known as *Maulana Radio* during the same period.

A new era in the wake of recent elections has started off which surprisingly brought back the liberal and moderate leadership at the helm of affairs. There is a lot of hope with all and sundry that this setup might bring some major turn around in the policy which would moderate the belligerence of the militants and also would enable themselves to deliver in terms of governance by building schools, health care centers, roads and not the least increase employment opportunities for the unemployed youth. Basically better governance and more educational and employment opportunities is the solution of the increasing phenomenon of violence and Talibanization.

The Regional Context of the Problem

Predominance of security concerns against India shaped the regional military strategy of Pakistan army, and brought it into leadership role and also projected itself as the savior of the nation. It championed regional military causes of the likes of Kashmir and Afghanistan on one hand and promoted *Jihadi* elements for the fulfillment of these military missions on the other.

The insecurities of Pakistan in the backdrop of Indian opposition to its creation and then occupation of the dominantly Muslim state of Jammu and Kashmir by the Indian forces back in 1947 has maintained the focus of Pakistani authorities on strengthening the armed forces, though at the cost of development of the economy and social sector at large.

15 *Ibid.*

Although, some anxieties of Pakistan vis-à-vis India are genuine such as the disagreements on the future of Kashmir dispute and even threat from Indian aggression is real as both India and Pakistan have tested arms four times in the past and in 1971 eastern wing of the country seceded and become an independent state of Bangladesh due to Indian military involvement in support of the Bengali separatists.¹⁶

However, to be India-centric proved counter productive for Pakistan. Some of the scholars are even of the view that perhaps Pakistan defines its *raison d'état* through building hostility with India. This view might not be representative of the wider galaxy of scholars or even representative of public opinion. However the enormity of hostility and hatred that has been amassed over the past decades through media and historical writings against India approve the cynicism of those few scholars.

Military option although has been overly but unsuccessfully tried by both the sides to settle the Kashmir dispute and dialogue has been given try only intermittently as a result by maintaining military equilibrium with India. In Pakistan army got primacy over the development of democratic, economic and legal institutions and even the civil society. As one scholar has rightly put it that Pakistan is a country of the army, for the army and by the army.¹⁷

Using the yard stick of size of armed forces and percentage of GDP spent for military purposes Pakistan is much behind of India. Only in Kashmir the number of Indian occupation forces is equal to 2/3 of the entire Pakistan army. According to the 1998 annual report Pakistan spends 5% of its 61 billion dollars GDP on military build- up while India 2% of the 469 billion dollars.¹⁸

To meet with Indian military superiority and also to avenge the 1971 defeat at the Indian army's hands Pakistan rallied on the irregular warfare¹⁹ which apparently has cost Pakistan less but in

16 Jessica Stern, "Pakistan's Jihad Culture", in *Foreign Affairs* (November/December, 2000), p.1.

17 Veena Kukreja, *Pakistan since the 1999 Coup: Prospects of Democracy*, p.77.

18 Jessica Sern, p.1.

19 *Ibid.*, pp.2-4.

reality this *modus vivendi* cast Pakistan more on the regional and domestic sphere than to help in accomplishing the cherished goals.

Through the involvement of civil and military intelligence agencies local and Kashmiri youth have been trained, armed and funded to fight against the Indian occupation forces in Jammu and Kashmir Valley. They are joined by the battle hardened Afghan fighters and other international Islamists as well. At the end of Jihad they considered it their Islamic duty to fight and sacrifice lives for the Muslim causes such as Kashmir and even others. According to a report 40% of the fighters in Kashmir are Afghans and Pakistani and 80% are teenagers which makes it a human rights concern and tarnish the image of Pakistan in the International community.²⁰

By Islamizing the indigenous Kashmiri struggle back in 1987 an ideological cover was provided to the local and international Islamist forces to fight for the cause of liberation. It also proliferated and emboldened the militant wings of the religio-political parties in Pakistan who were frequently engaged against the Indian forces in Kashmir as replacement for the Pakistan's armed forces.

That way Kashmir dispute triggered and entrenched *Jihadi* culture in Pakistan. The *Jihadi*'s groups' prime objective is to liberate Kashmir from the Indian occupation forces. They have been engaged in their mission till that took place in the Indo-Pakistan relationship in January 2004. The next mission on *Jihadi* groups' agenda is to Islamize or struggle for establishing Islamic system in Pakistan by introducing *Shariah* as the only law of the land. In this connection a significant effort was made by the head of *Sipah-e-Sahaba*, Maulana Azam Tariq (late) who introduced the Sharia bill on the floor of National Assembly in 1997 which due to the disapproval of the upper house of the Parliament did not enact into a law.

Other than that such *Jihadi* organizations are anti-Western and anti-Shia. When dialogue for peace commences between India and Pakistan such elements resort to sectarian warfare as it happened during the 1990's era or they start targeting foreigners as it has

20 *Ibid.*, p.3.

occurred in the post 9/11 era particularly in the wake of war on terror. To warn their citizens from visiting Pakistan as a precautionary measure some European and Western countries put in place travel advisory to discourage them from visiting Pakistan due to absence of secure environment. In the month of March 2008 foreigners were attacked in an Italian restaurant, Luna Caprese, in Islamabad in which one Turkish lady was killed and many were injured.²¹

There is no doubt that Kashmir dispute has to be resolved with mutual consensus and facilitation of international powers so to curb size and influence of *Jihadi* elements. However, even after establishing peace with India to pursue other agenda items such as Islamizing Pakistan and pitching battles against rival sects and even targeting foreigners would not let them squeeze in size and influence. The *Jihadi* element which was created with the active support of USA and Saudi Arabia is the major source of bloodletting in Pakistan itself.

The Afghan *Jihad* enormously contributed to the proliferation and promotion of *Jihadi* culture in Pakistan. Especially during the decade of *Jihad* (1979-89) a pro-Jihad mindset was created through madrassa networks and inclusion of *Jihad* related themes and material in the educational curricula. Religio-political parties such as Jumaat-i-Islami and Jamiat-i-Ulama-i-Islam were elevated to share power with the military ruler²² which revived their dormant desires to transform Pakistan into an Islamic model of state with Sharia as the law of the land.

Even the success of Afghan *Jihad* failed to bring about halt to the *Jihadi* mind set and *Jihadi* culture. The government under President Musharaf tried to curtail the power of *Jihadi* elements by imposing ban on them in January 2000.²³ But soon they resurfaced with changed names. Also an effort was made to introduce reforms in madrassas by making it incumbent upon them to register

21 Dawn, Islamabad, 16 March 2008.

22 Mumtaz Ahmed, "Revivalism, Islamization, Sectarianism and Violence in Pakistan", in Craig Baxter and Charles H. Kennedy, ed., (India: Harper Collins Publishers, 1998), pp.103-104.

23 Mr. Rahimullah Yousafzai, Executive Bureau Chief of The News in Peshawar said in an Interview on 11 June, 2008.

themselves with the government, make clear and open their sources of funding and declare the identity of foreign students. An attempt to deweaponize the society was launched but none of these measures prove a success due to either government was complacent or people were reluctant or both.²⁴

Supporting the Taliban Government in Afghanistan is another dreadful legacy of Pakistan's involvement into Afghan conflict. The erstwhile *Jihadi* groups found sanctuaries under the Taliban rule and they flourished to an extent that they become a tall challenge for any government in Pakistan (civil or military) to deal with. The Taliban model of state has been emulated in the border areas and even in some of the settled areas of the country.

Now Taliban are so central to the kind of back-lash Pakistan faces for involvement into the Afghanistan's affairs that local Taliban movement inspired of their Afghan counterparts emerged in the tribal areas of Pakistan which is challenging the writ of the government of Pakistan for the last five years. These local Taliban are not only military challenge for the Pakistani armed forces but they have administrative control in their respective tribal areas. They levy taxes and also execute punishments in the reminiscent of the Taliban style while the local administration is helpless to control the situation.

Talibanization of some of the settled district (Tank, Dera Ismail Khan, Bannu, Dara Adam Khail and Bajaur) in the North West Frontier Province is an alarming development which demonstrates the power and strength of the militant elements and inability of the authorities to deter them.²⁵ The new democratic era dawned after the recent elections (Feb 18, 2008) brought some respite from frequent accuracy of violent and terror acts all across the country. It was assumed to prove as the lull before the storm or become a harbinger of peace and calm on permanent basis that depended on what policy shift would be brought about. Now the situation has reversed to square one. Breach of the agreements between the Government of Pakistan and *Jihadi* groups has

24 *Ibid.*

25 International Crisis Group Report, *Pakistan's Tribal Areas: Appeasing the Militants*, 11 December 2006, pp.2-24.

become a common place and targeted and random violent acts once again occur with impunity.

The International Context of the Problem

The broader context of Taliban upsurge is linked to Pakistan's alignment with the United States of America in the International War on Terror against the *al-Qaeda* and Taliban forces. That makes it essential for Pakistan to fight against those elements that are suspected to have crossed over into Pakistan's border areas after Taliban regime's dismissal in October.2001.

Even much before War on Terror in the era of 1980s an international conflict was fought as a proxy for or on behalf of United States of America by Pakistan against Soviet forces in Afghanistan. It was a decade long war which was militarily and economically sponsored by the American and Saudi nexus. As per reports more than \$10 billion dollars were poured into the war over ten years and even after the withdrawal of Soviet forces in February 1989 the supply of weapons continued to the warring factions through Pakistan and other neighboring countries.²⁶

Many foreign and local reports endorsed the misappropriation of weapons meant to be supplied for the *mujahideen* commanders through Pakistan. The Pakistan military officials would divert them into local arms markets. It caused weaponization and radicalization of the society at large. Very latest arms were available on cheap prices in open markets and mostly people could afford AK/47 rifles because prices reduced from \$10,000 to \$5000 in the 1980s.²⁷ Even second hand weapons are available for much less, it could be rented in the arms markets in Karachi and other cities. In some pockets of tribal areas duplicate arms of most sophisticated foreign brand of weapons used to and still are manufactured locally in the Dara Adam Khail.²⁸

Fighting a long war against the Soviets in Afghanistan legitimized the Islamic concept of *Jihad* as a just war, and those who were fighting it such as the Afghans, Pakistanis and

26 Mr. Afarsiyab Khattak said in the interview with the author in December, 2005.

27 Intiaz Gul, *The Unholy Nexus, Pak-Afghan Relations under the Taliban*, (Lahore: Vanguard, 2002), p.116.

28 *Ibid.*

International Islamists were declared the *mujahideen*, fighting an Islamic crusade on behalf of free world become awash with latest weapons.

By the mid 1980s international Islamist were brought to Afghanistan from all over the world. Their number has variedly been quoted but most favorable figure in this context is of ten thousand fighters.²⁹ They further radicalized or brutalized the conduct of war by using tactics so unknown to the local fighters. Even at present the suicide bombing and slitting throats of the enemy fighters is a foreign tactic adopted by the local militants as result of prolonged war experience with the international Islamist in Afghanistan.

Usama bin Laden, Aiman Zawahiri and other Arab Islamist are the product of the Soviet-Afghan war that now patronize and promote the Islamist and Islamist just causes in Afghanistan and all over the world. Even others such as Uzbeks, Tajiks and Chechens joined their ranks. At present the most deadly fighters in the tribal area are the Uzbeks who according to reliable reports have links with *al-Qaeda*.

It is alleged that *mujahideen* used Pakistan's border areas as sanctuaries both in North West Frontier Province and in Baluchistan their foreign cohorts also crossed the border and used these sanctuaries at ease. They had not only become familiar with area and people but they succeeded in building local support networks obviously with religio-political groups, madrasa students and the religious minded intelligence officials. It provided them an opportunity to overstay in these areas even after the end of *Jihad* of the 1980s. Many of them have adopted local style of living and even have got married in local families. They intermingled with the local population to such an extent that to comply with the order of the local authorities to hand those foreigners over in the wake of imperatives of war on terror become more a cultural issue rather than military or political imperative for local people to decide about their fate. They protected the foreigners instead of obeying the orders of the authorities.

29 Mr. Rahimullah Yousafzai, said in the interview, 11 June 2008

In the backdrop of such developments Afghan war could rightly be called key to what the world has faced in the shape of 9/11 tragic incidence and the subsequent War on Terror against extremist forces. For bad luck they are identified as located in the Taliban's Afghanistan and some pockets in Pakistan and so the international war revisited this region with deadly short and long term repercussions.

As referred earlier sharing cultural and historical affinities the people of the tribal areas allowed Afghan Taliban and some *al-Qaeda* elements sanctuary amongst themselves, which under international compulsions made it essential for Pakistan to launch military operations against such elements. Due to Islamic fervor, cultural norms and also for monetary reasons the tribesmen have been supporting and siding with these elements against the armed forces of Pakistan who have launched military operation against the foreign militant elements holding up in the tribal areas. It has caused immense loss on both sides in men and material. The process of Talibanization instead of curtailment exacerbates with each military incursion by the armed forces or the Americans holding up on the other side of the Pak-Afghan border, called the Durand line.

War against Communism created International *Jihad* with support of democratic free world and elevated its fighters as *mujahideen* (holy warriors). However, the post 9/11 War on Terror turned the erstwhile friends into foes. Now they are declared the terror forces and coalition forces are chasing them on the Afghan side of the border and Pakistani armed forces are tracing them in their tribal areas. According to International Crisis Group report by killing each civilian massive alienation of the locals takes place against the military operations and in scores join the ranks of the local Taliban.³⁰ As a result local Taliban who are inspired of Afghan Taliban and pay allegiance to the leadership of Mullah Umer are on increase in number and influence. The local Taliban's control in their respective areas is stronger than the writ of the local authorities.

30 International Crisis Group Report, 11 December 2006, p.15 Also Rahimullah Yousafzai said in his interview, 11 June 2008.

Bumpy Road Ahead

Interestingly Pakistan never fought the kind of war Afghanistan fought against the Soviet occupation forces in 1980s and afterwards civil war between the warring factions and then again an international military incursion in the wake of 9/11 even then it is more radicalized or militarized than Afghanistan. The main reasons are Pakistan's involvement into regular and irregular warfare with India in Kashmir and then fighting a proxy for America against the Soviets in the 1980s and then pursuing its strategic interest by siding one Afghan faction and the other during the civil war and eventually once again become a frontline state against the forces of terror in Afghanistan and on its own soil. Such adventures strengthened the role of military even beyond its constitutional limits. Consequently instead of democratic rule authoritative military regimes ruled the country more times than the civilian which caused the militarization of state and society.

Pursuing military causes in the regional environment and recurrence of authoritative regimes gave way to militant and extremist elements to grow and become permanent feature of society and political arena. The monster of irregular fighters/militants which was created to help out in fighting against Soviet forces is now devouring the country itself.

Prior to February 18, 2008 elections all kinds of international reports suggested democracy or civil, participative rule as an alternate way for solving the problem of militancy. The results of recent polls brought good omen in the shape of election of liberal and moderate candidates in majority in the Parliament. There is great hope that major turn around in the policy of the newly installed democratic government would take place.

The general belief that Talibanization has become perhaps the ultimate future of Pakistan has been bulldozed by the verdict of the public in the recent elections. The civil society through the ballot rejected the erstwhile *Jihadis* and Taliban. In North West Frontier Province the success of National Awami Party (ANP) is a pleasant surprise for the peace loving moderate majority. Even from the troubled affected areas candidates' of the liberal and moderate

parties (ANP, PPP)³¹ return successful. These recent developments have negated the fears of the people and also of the international world that Talibanization would be the future of Pakistan.

However, this is the first milestone in the way to develop a progressive, modern and moderate Pakistan where extremist and *Jihadi* elements would be the story of the past. But such hopes depend on the success of the newly established democratic process by fulfilling the needs of the common man such as uninterrupted supply of electricity and making sure the availability of flour and fuel on regular and reasonable price in the market. Not the least to curb the menace of violence and insecurity to bring peace and calm in the otherwise volatile lives of the people.

To make it sure it is essential to engage substantive peace efforts to improve relations with India and also to resolve Kashmir dispute that would break the backbone of *Jihadi* elements. Re-evaluation of Pakistan's Afghan policy on rational grounds would dash the hopes of *Jihadi* elements and would minimize the number of violent incidents.

Good governance to create employment opportunities for youth backed with universal and quality education would empower the government to reduce the hold of militant organizations over the youth who are unemployed and are more than half of the total population. Building the network of liberal school system would significantly reduce the number of madrassa going students.

Though at present the situation is yet uncertain, military policy seems predominant and political process still seems to be slow and has not been able to create an environment for confidence building between the authorities and those on the receiving end-the Taliban. There is an urgent need to chalk out new and robust policy on the political lines. Military option has to be used as the last resort not the first.

31 Awami National Party and Pakistan Peoples Party are both mainstream liberal political parties of Pakistan. At present both are part of the coalition, forged in the wake of 2008 general elections, at the centre and also in the North-West Frontier Province.

Conclusion

The founding fathers envisaged a liberal, democratic and progressive Pakistan but gradually authoritative, religious and extremist forces occupied the central stage in the political arena. The democratic process was intermittently interrupted by the military leadership which militarized politics and promoted conservative forces to help them fulfill the need for local legitimacy and also to side with them in pursuing regional strategic plans. All such policies and approaches in an accumulated form has brought the country at the cross roads to decide once again the future course of action either in accordance with the vision of founding fathers or to follow the Islamic precepts and establish Taliban model of state.

Apparently the threat of Talibanization seems transient but it has the potential to become real. Militancy and extremism is though the product of domestic and international compulsions however, it depends a lot on the role of leadership that were at the helm of affairs. Military remained in the forefront and even during the civil rule from behind the scene it was calling the shots and carry the major part of the blame.

Authoritarianism breeds dissent, extremism and radicalization which unluckily became a common feature of political scene. Governments came to power through bullet rather than ballet. They promoted Islamist elements to fight *Jihad* against Indians in Kashmir and communists in Afghanistan which in turn brought the war home. The *Jihadis* are now out of control of their military patrons. To rein the *Jihadis* the civil government has to take the lead.

Consolidation of democracy is the only way to foresee any better future for Pakistan. Luckily it has revisited the country in the wake of recent general election which is a blessing in disguise for the multitude of people in Pakistan. Now it is inevitable upon the local and international players to help make it a success so to reverse the course from Talibanization to democratization in Pakistan.