April 2013

Challenges to Policing Terrorism in Pakistan

by Ahmad Ishaque Jehangir

After the attacks on Afghanistan by the United States, the Taliban spread in the mountainous region along the Pakistan border. Having local knowledge of routes, shelters, and long term religio-cultural relations on both sides of the Durand Line, the Taliban regrouped and mutated. The tribal areas of Pakistan, known as Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), offered the perfect breeding ground. A new organization called the Pakistani Taliban was born with the same ideology as the Afghan Taliban. This new face of the Taliban wanted to imprint its ideology on the settled areas of Pakistan, and sought support of similar outfits already operating in mainland Pakistan.

Before proceeding further in this paper, it is important to define terrorism, something that has been a difficult task even for the United Nations. Developing a consensus on a universally acceptable definition of terrorism is nearly impossible. However, in the context of Pakistan, terrorism can be defined according to the Global Terrorism Database's definition:

> "the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by non-state actors, in order to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation."

Pakistan is predominantly an agricultural country with almost 64 percent of its people living in rural areas (World Bank a) and associated with professions based on an agrarian economy. With 22.3 percent of the population living below the poverty line (World Bank b), conditions were ideal for giving rise to terrorism. Coupled with problems of illiteracy and social backwardness, Pakistan became an ideal breeding ground for militancy and terrorism. Bad governance and the absence of the rule of law were major destabilizing factors in Afghanistan leading to the birth of the Afghan Taliban. Their idea of the administration of speedy justice was also imposed in Pakistan. FATA always had the *Jirga* system (a group of elders who debate and decide local issues and crime based on traditions and cultural values) to decide cases, and British law was never imposed in these areas. In a way, the Taliban provided some stability; there was less crime because people feared their harsh punishments. The Pakistani Taliban very intelligently exploited poverty, meager land holdings, and the lack of government writ, a strategy that helped them gain ingress and some support in these communities.

Ahmad Ishaque Jehangir is Deputy Inspector General in the Police Service of Pakistan, and a 2012-2013 Humphrey Fellow, spending part of his fellowship year at the Police Foundation. He holds a master's in law from King's College London, and a master's in criminology from the University of Melbourne, Australia.

The Taliban also generated money to sustain and broaden their activities. Due to the presence of Al Qaeda elements from the Middle East, foreign contributions also started to pour in. Local contextual realities were also exploited by the Taliban to generate money. For example, the *Jizya*, a tax collected from non-Muslims in a Muslim state, was collected from Sikhs in the Mohmand Agency of FATA. The emerald mines of Mingora, Swat, were robbed and expensive stones sold. There was massive use of the poppy crop to generate drug money. According to Abbas Zaidi (2010a), "The group follows five financial security principles: funds should be divided between those invested for financial return and the balance—operational funds— should be saved and spent only on operations; all operational funds should not be put in one place; only a few of the organization's members should know the location of its funds; while carrying large amounts of money precautions should be taken; and money should be left with nonmembers and spent only when needed." Furthermore, to justify their actions, the Pakistani Taliban invoked the "doctrine of necessity" (Abbas Zaidi 2010a) to commit crimes of kidnapping for ransom and bank robberies in Karachi and elsewhere. A 50 percent surge in bank robberies was recorded in Karachi alone during 2010. Proceeds of such criminal actions were used for weapon purchases and other activities.

Although many analysts portray the Taliban and Al Qaeda in similar vein and context, their relationship is very complex to understand, especially following the 9/11 events. This nexus of Afghan Taliban and remnants of Al Qaeda was reignited in FATA, especially the Waziristan Agency. As a survival strategy against NATO operations, Al Qaeda developed a "symbiotic strategy" (Abbas Zaidi 2010b) to permeate the ranks of other militant organizations operating in FATA. They were not only able to do that, but also created a militant organization called the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). TTP is a replica of the Afghan Taliban with geographical jurisdiction over Pakistan and a similar agenda to impose a fundamentalist style of Islam. It is essential to mention and establish a link between the major militant groups operating in Pakistan during the 1990s. Some of their operatives hid in FATA and also got weapons and training from across the border in Afghanistan. This history is intertwined with the concept of Jihad, which was initially launched against the Soviet Union, ably supported by the West, especially the United States (Abbas Zaidi 2010b). The TTP has, in just a few years, shaken the very foundations of Pakistan.

To fully understand the terrorism context in Pakistan, and to analyze how a nexus developed between the Taliban, Al Qaeda, and local militant groups, some history is needed. Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) was established in 1985 with the main aim of eliminating Shias in Pakistan. Many members of this organization fought alongside the Taliban against Ahmad Shah Masud, and were responsible for the massacre of Shia Hazaras and Iranian diplomats in 1998. SSP acted as a major link between the Taliban and Al Qaeda for the settlement of the latter in Pakistan's tribal areas. In 2002, SSP was banned, along with some other militant organizations, to curb their activities. SSP went underground, but reappeared over the last decade with three different names or *noms de guerre*. As Abbas Zaidi (2010b) explains, "It is important to contextualize here the continuous evolution of terrorist groups; they are usually in a constant state of flux in terms of capabilities, sophistication, and ideology." Thus, within the SSP, two subgroups

emerged— Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), a hard core militant force to eliminate Shias, and Jaish-e-Muhammad (JM), which focused on Kashmir Jihad. Once developed in strength, these two organizations broke away from the SSP and emerged as threats in their own right (Abbas Zaidi 2010b). Subsequently, these religio-militant organizations transformed and mutated to multiply, both organizationally and geographically.

Founded by Riaz Basra, LeJ was a "very decentralized and compartmentalized" Jihadi organization (Abbas Zaidi 2010b). In a way, it was based on a modern, devolved pattern of Al Qaeda. Al Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban could easily subsume in this organization and keep operating. Having a decentralized cell-based structure, it remained very vibrant. As Abbas Zaidi (2010b) explains, "the greatest advantage of this model is security; any given cell, if compromised, ideally does not have information about other cells, and therefore cannot disclose their identity. A cell is composed for a particular operation, and is disbanded after the objectives of the unit have been realized. Intelligence estimates put the number of a typical LeJ cell at three militants, though it can consist of up to seven persons according to the tactical requirements of the operation." Thus, LeJ was ideally suited to survive counter-insurgency operations due to its cell-based structure. It survived due to decentralization of command and control, but still remained active enough to achieve its objectives. This loose adjustment easily absorbed militants from countries like Saudi Arabia, Algeria, United Arab Emirates, Morocco, Libya, Kuwait, Egypt, Indonesia, Malaysia, West Asia, and even the United States, Australia, and the UK. These factors were some of the major reasons why the Afghan Taliban and Al Qaeda not only survived NATO and Pakistan military onslaughts but also reproduced and grew into a multi-headed monster (Abbas Zaidi 2010b).

Before 2002, the idea of suicide bombings was alien to Pakistan. The first such incidents happened in 2002 against foreigners, and were committed by persons of Arab descent. Between 2002 and 2006, there were at least twenty-five such incidents, including two suicide attacks on President General Musharraf and one against Shaukat Aziz, the prime minister at that time. Although military action against the Taliban and Al Qaeda remnants had begun after 2002, the real turning point of increased suicide bombings in Pakistan started after the *Lal Masjid* operation in July 2007. Suicide attacks—a new brand of terrorism conducted by the Pakistani Taliban—became the norm. In 2007, there was a ten-fold increase in such incidents, killing over eleven hundred civilians and law enforcement officials. The battleground engulfed not only many cities of settled Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province (KPK) but also Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore, Quetta, and Karachi. Perhaps the deadliest attack was the assassination of twice-elected former prime minister and chairperson of the largest political party of Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto. After surviving the first attempt in October 2007, she became a victim, along with 140 other innocent civilians, on December 27, 2007. It was the deadliest year of terrorism Pakistan has faced to-date. However, in 2008, Pakistan topped the list of the most terrorism-plagued countries, surpassing both Iraq and Afghanistan, with high rates of casualties and injured persons. That year also saw attacks on the Pakistan Ordnance Factory in the city of Wah, and what is called Pakistan's 9/11, the September 20 attack at the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad that killed eighty people, including foreigners (Abbas Zaidi 2010c). Thus, every passing year since 2002, Pakistan became more and more engulfed in terrorism

attacks. The number of attacks, their intensity, and their variety perplexed law enforcement authorities. The absence of any centralized body to tabulate, analyze, and address such attacks resulted in failure to counter this organized militancy.

The spatial distribution of attacks from 2002 to 2009 shows the majority (60 percent) in FATA and KPK. Attacks in Punjab accounted for 20 percent, half of which took place in Rawalpindi, a garrison town with numerous military establishments, including the Pakistani Army General Headquarters (GHQ), Pakistan's equivalent to the Pentagon. The remaining 20 percent of incidents happened in Islamabad, Sindh, and Baluchistan. With the increased military offensive in tribal areas, the terrorists shifted their focus from religious targets to military, law enforcement, and intelligence targets, a clear signal to the state apparatus that their offensive would be met with direct attacks (Abbas Zaidi 2010c). There was a 27 percent decrease in suicide attacks across Pakistan in 2012 compared to 2011 (thirty-three versus forty-five, respectively). But there is no cause for complacency, as close analysis has shown terrorists moving from hitting micro to macro targets, such as Mehran Naval Air Base and the Bannu jail break. The use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), including vehicle borne, is also increasing. A combination of factors have contributed to the marginal success in reducing terrorist incidents, including drone attacks, although their value is plagued by controversy. The killing of terrorist leaders and elimination of IEDs and suicide-jacket experts have helped reduce the operational capability of terrorists.

Pakistan is second only to Iraq in global rankings of states facing extreme internal violence and chaos. In 2012, the number of civilian deaths rose to 3,007, with the toll in Sindh Province, mainly Karachi, up to 44 percent, followed by 23 percent in Baluchistan and 18 percent in FATA and 12 percent in KPK Province. In addition, 344 deaths resulted from dreaded drone attacks in 2012. In the first two months of 2013 alone, terrorist incidents killed over 620 people (Krepon and Thompson 2013) indicating a trend of violence and terrorism spreading to all corners of the country. And this violence is particularly targeting Shias in Karachi and Quetta.

The last decade has rocked the state of Pakistan like never before. In spite of fighting deadly wars with India in 1948, 1965, and 1971; facing widespread natural disasters, including floods and earthquakes; and an eroding economy due to military dictatorships, terrorism has shaken Pakistan's roots for ten years from 2002 to 2012. Terrorism has resulted not only in colossal loss of human lives (over 30,000), but also billions of dollars of economic loss, including an almost zero rate of foreign investment. The 2010 International Monetary Fund Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper puts the cost of terrorism for Pakistan from 2004-2009 alone at $25 billion. Pakistan had to bear this financial cost due to reduced exports, dried up foreign investment, diminished industrial growth, lack of privatization, and a weak tax collection regime. An utter lack of security from Khyber to Karachi literally sucked the life out of Pakistan's flagging economy. Sherry Rehman, Pakistan's ambassador to the United States, puts the loss at $25 billion during the decade of 2001-2010 (Center for Islamic Research, Collaboration, and Learning 2011). Under these circumstances, along with a huge electricity and gas crisis, the government started

cutting costs in various departments, including deep cuts in police training and equipment.

Any counter-terrorism strategy must revolve around the police and local law enforcement mechanism, with a centralized coordination unit based on intelligence. Studies have shown that just like ordinary criminals, terrorists also prefer targets near their operational headquarters (Center for Islamic Research, Collaboration, and Learning 2011). And, like ordinary crime patterns, terrorism patterns can be analyzed through clustering studies. In Pakistan, the majority of terrorist attacks have occurred in KPK and FATA. However, attacks away from the operational base are generally better planned and much more deadly in character. Because international attacks are the exception, and local attacks are the rule, local law enforcement has a critical role in preventing and responding to terrorism. Hence, there is a need for a strong and viable local policing system in Pakistan. According to LaFree (2012), "It is hard to imagine a credible anti-terrorism strategy that does not heavily rely on state and local police. The police are critical both in terms of preventing terrorism as well as calming public fears in the wake of a terrorist attack."

Succeeding governments in Pakistan—Musharraf in 2001-2002, Shaukat Aziz in 2003-2008, and Yousaf Raza Gilani in 2008-2012—have tried different strategies to counter terrorism. In 2004, a full-fledged military offensive with the support of local elders was launched in some areas of FATA, but in other parts of Pakistan the establishment has tried not only to appease the militants but also to enter into peace agreements with them, without much success. In February 2011, the Center for Islamic Research, Collaboration, and Learning organized a Conference on Determining Factor for Eradication of Terrorism in Five Years, with the purpose of finding short-term solutions to control terrorism (Center for Islamic Research, Collaboration, and Learning 2011). And the National Counter-Terrorism Authority (NACTA) was formed in 2011, albeit without authority and funds, to address the need for an institutional network and coordination. Recent passage of a NACTA bill, which created a dedicated body mandated to establish state policies on countering terrorism, is intended to improve coordination among provincial governments and intelligence agencies, undertake research, and devise long-term policies to defeat the terrorist agenda.

A report by the Asia Society (Abbas, H. 2012) on reforming the Pakistan police is one good effort to sum up the debate, both domestically and internationally, of how to control terrorism in Pakistan. It not only points out the significance of policing in eradicating terrorism but also highlights the structural flaws present in the law enforcement system of Pakistan. The efforts of the Pakistani state somewhat improved the situation in 2011 and 2012, but policing has not been able to outsmart the militants, with their reach well beyond the frontiers of Pakistan into Afghanistan. Pakistan's security challenges are complicated due to fundamental religio-political influences in society, and radicalized elements within the political and religious spheres. Internal efforts to build a stronger police force are discernible but limited in scope. The report highlights deficiencies in the police system such as inadequate training, meager equipment, weak intelligence collection mechanisms, and poor human resource capability. In addition, the clear lack of political will to pursue a reform agenda (beyond raising police salaries and benefits), and

the extremely poor image of the police are regarded as big hurdles to success. The report also illuminates faults in the training curricula to address issues of internal security, interrogation techniques, and treatment of vulnerable groups in society. It also sheds light on loopholes in Pakistan's Anti-Terrorism Act 1997 (ATA 1997), including poor investigation and prosecution leading to the acquittal of the majority of those accused of terrorism. In Punjab, more than 63 percent of all those accused under the ATA 1997 were acquitted, which shows the inefficiency of the criminal justice mechanism. Reforming the Pakistan police, which will better enable it to fight terrorism, is critical, but the root problems have to be addressed for better results (Abbas, H. 2012).

According to the Asia Society report, "the media can play a helpful role in exposing the wrongs committed by the police as well as reporting good performance" (Abbas, H. 2012). Such balance in the way police are portrayed will improve both the image of police as well as their morale. Because the police are the public face of poor governance, the public, the media, and government unfairly shift much of the blame to the police, despite the fact that they not received the investment of resources needed to fight the menace of terrorism. While the report covers all aspects of the terrorism threat facing Pakistan, its emphasis is on reforming the Pakistan police into an efficient and effective mechanism to face and eventually control terrorism across the country. The requisite political will and adequate funding are needed to follow the recommendations and tackle this menace both comprehensively and professionally.

A report on Pakistan by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (Cordesman and Vira 2011) correctly states, "Pakistan's growing patterns of terrorism, insurgency, and violence must be considered in the context of its overall political landscape, key problems like poverty and employment, challenges like demographics and education, and limits to the quality of governance and the reform of the security sector." The NACTA and the Asia Society report need to be integrated to create a counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism strategy to bring Pakistan out of this quagmire. Mere statements of intent will have to be backed by actionable steps to operationalize such a strategy. There is neither a simple solution nor a short cut to address the myriad facets of the problems that Pakistan faces.

References

Abbas, Hassan, Ed. 2012. *Stabilizing Pakistan Through Police Reform,* A Report by the Independent Commission on Pakistan Police Reform. July. New York: Asia Society. http://asiasociety.org/files/pdf/as_pakistan_police_reform.pdf (accessed January 28, 2013).

Abbas Zaidi, Syed Manzar. 2010a. Understanding the appeal of the Taliban in Pakistan. *Journal of Strategic Security* 3 (3):1-14. http://dx.doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.3.3.1 (accessed January 28, 2013).

Abbas Zaidi, Syed Manzar. 2010b. Geographic trajectories of Al-Qaida and Taliban terrorist groups in Pakistan. *Journal of Strategic Security* 3 (1): 1-18. http://dx.doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.3.1.1 (accessed January 28, 2013).

Abbas Zaidi, Syed Manzar, 2010c. Demographics of suicide terrorism. Dawn.com, August 5. http://archives.dawn.com/archives/30744 (accessed February 2, 2013).

Ali Babakhel, Mohammad, 2013. Challenges to peace. Dawn.com, February 7. http://dawn.com/2013/02/07/challenges-to-peace/comment-page-1/ (accessed February 8, 2013).

Center for Islamic Research, Collaboration, and Learning. 2011. Conference on Determining Factor for Eradication of Terrorism in Five Years. February 24. Islamabad. http://www.circle.org.pk/images/Conference%20Report%20%28printing%29.pdf (accessed April 28, 2013).

Cordesman, Anthony H., and Varun Vira. 2011. *Pakistan—Violence versus Stability: A Net National Assessment*, A Report of CSIS Burke Chair in Strategy, September. Washington, DC: Center for Strategic & International Studies. http://csis.org/files/publication/110907_Cordesman_Pakistan_Web.pdf (accessed January 25, 2013).

Global Terrorism Database, National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism. College Park, MD: START. http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/using-gtd/ (accessed April 23, 2013).

International Monetary Fund. 2010. Pakistan: Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, IMF Country Report No. 10/183, June. Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund. http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2010/cr10183.pdf (accessed April 29, 2013).

Krepon, Michael, and Julia Thompson. 2013. The battle within Pakistan. The Stimson Center. http://www.stimson.org/spotlight/the-battle-within-pakistan/accessed%20march%204/ (accessed April 29, 2013).

LaFree, Gary. 2012. *Policing Terrorism*, Ideas in American Policing series, Number 15, July. Washington, DC: Police Foundation. http://www.policefoundation.org/content/policing-terrorism (accessed April 23, 2013).

World Bank a. http://www.tradingeconomics.com/pakistan/rural-population-percent-of-total-population-wb-data.html (accessed April 29, 2013)

World Bank b. http://data.worldbank.org/country/pakistan (accessed April 23, 2013).

About the Police Foundation

The Police Foundation is a national, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing innovation and science in policing. As the country's oldest police research organization, the Police Foundation has learned that police practices should be based on scientific evidence about what works best, the paradigm of evidence-based policing.

Established in 1970, the foundation has conducted seminal research in police behavior, policy, and procedure, and works to transfer to local agencies the best new information about practices for dealing effectively with a range of important police operational and administrative concerns.

The Police Foundation takes a unique perspective on research. Unlike many organizations, we strive to conduct research *for* policing not on policing. This makes a profound difference in how we conduct and disseminate research. Our goals are twofold. First, we conduct high quality research that produces results directly applicable to the field of policing. Our research is designed to address the questions, challenges, and problems faced by contemporary law enforcement agencies. Second, we act as a translational agent to move existing research from theory into practice.

It was the foundation that first brought researchers into a lasting, constructive relationship with law enforcement, and we have worked for over forty years to build the spirit of collaboration and trust with law enforcement agencies and leaders that continues to facilitate our work. The Police Foundation has worked with police agencies of all sizes, in every region of the United States, and throughout the world. Our work is grounded in the practical world of policing and in developing the science of policing and new ideas, strategies, and technologies to improve the quality of police service.

Jim Bueermann is president of the foundation. Bueermann came to Washington and the Police Foundation in September 2012. He retired from the Redlands (CA) Police Department in 2011 after serving for 33 years, the last 13 as chief.

Motivating all of the foundation's efforts is the goal of efficient, effective, humane policing that operates within the framework of democratic principles and the highest ideals of the nation.

1201 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20036-2636
(202) 833-1460
(202) 659-9149 fax
E-mail: pfinfo@policefoundation.org
www.policefoundation.org