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# Suicide Terrorism in Pakistan

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## An Assessment



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# SUICIDE TERRORISM IN PAKISTAN: AN ASSESSMENT

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## INTRODUCTION

As of 2 July 2009, Pakistan had suffered 36 suicide bombing incidents since January 2009, killing at least 465 and injuring more than 1120<sup>1</sup>. Not surprisingly, these incidents, far exceed those in 2008, when 28 attacks occurred over a longer period, from January to the end of August<sup>2</sup>. While the average death toll was reported to be 24 a week and 83 per month during the first 100 days of the year, it has now increased to 90 deaths a month<sup>3</sup>. Pakistan is indeed facing an unprecedented wave of suicide attacks for a couple of years now. The tactic first appeared in 2002 in Karachi, in a controversial suicide bombing that led to the killing of 14 people, including 11 French engineers of the state firm DCN, involved in the sale of Agosta submarines to the Pakistani army. Some observers argue that the first suicide attack occurred previously in the year 2002, but it is still unclear if the 17 March assault in a protestant temple in Islamabad can be labeled a suicide bombing, for the perpetrators launched grenades into the temple.

For the purpose of this article, the term 'suicide bombing' will be used in reference to an attack that happens at the same time its perpetrator dies, thus, distinguishing it from other suicide

missions where the death of the perpetrator occurs at time T+1. That was, for example, the case with the famous Ismaili sect of the Assassins, a branch of Shi'a Islam around the eleventh century. The psychology of suicide bombing is indeed unique, for it requires the highest of all commitments: there is no room for any second thought. This paper does not intend to answer the question of the motivations for suicide terror since several academics are already engaged in studying this particular aspect in detail (Krueger and Maleckova, Horgan, Greenshaw). Instead, the paper seeks to provide a more general portrait of a Pakistan dealing with an ever increasing number of suicide attacks and see where the country stands in the light of the existing theories on the subject. Put another way, what lessons can be learned from the very specific Pakistani example and where does one go from there?

## I THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SELF- MARTYRDOM

First, some comments should be made regarding suicide terror and the ones who perpetrate such acts. Rather than fanatics, those activists appeared to be rational fanatics as Ehud Sprinzak pointed out in a 2001 article published in *Foreign Affairs*. "In fighting suicide bombers writes Sprinzak, it is important not to succumb the idea that they are ready to do anything and lose everything"<sup>4</sup>. Like any other militant, the self-martyr who enters istishad in Islam – in contrast to sole martyrdom or shahadat that can apply to both victims and perpetrators – makes a rational calculation between the costs and

<sup>1</sup> Amir Mir. 2009. "Pakistan turned into suicide capital of the world." *Middle East Transparent*. 3 July.

[http://www.mettransparent.com/spip.php?page=article&id\\_article=7514&lang=en](http://www.mettransparent.com/spip.php?page=article&id_article=7514&lang=en)

<sup>2</sup> Laurent Gayer. 2009. "Pakistan : du désordre à la guerre" civile?" IFRI Focus Stratégique n°14. February p.5.

<sup>3</sup> Amir Mir, op. cit., & Amir Mir. 2009. "Terror scorecard of first 100 days", *The News*, 11 April. [http://www.thenews.com.pk/top\\_story\\_detail.asp?Id=21454](http://www.thenews.com.pk/top_story_detail.asp?Id=21454)

<sup>4</sup> Ehud Sprinzak. 2000. "Rational Fanatics." *Foreign Affairs*. September-October. 120: 73.

benefits of his/her act. Whether the incentives for self-martyrdom are religious or political, altruistic or personal, academics have learned to address the phenomenon in a more objective way. As Martha Creenshaw puts it, “the resort to terrorism shall not be an aberration”<sup>5</sup>. The same assumption is true when talking about istishad, thus, making suicide terrorism a subject of analysis in international affairs, just like guerrilla warfare or any other asymmetric form of violence. Yet, suicide terror has its own laws.

Throughout history, terrorists have tended to live to see their acts rewarded. In such cases and as far as religious suicide bombings are concerned, the cost/benefit calculations do not take place on earth for the reward promised is a heavenly one. According to Mark Juergensmeyer, this is one of the very symptoms of a “cosmic war”, or a struggle for the defence of a specific identity that can only be won in a different time period because of the perceptible disadvantage on the battle field. Indeed, to the Taliban dogma, western presence in both Afghanistan and Pakistan is likely to be considered a threat to the Islamic identity. With this in mind, the istishad becomes the ultima ratio of the jihadist militancy in Pakistan and can be used against anything representing the enemy or anyone who does not stand with the creed, including NATO convoys, civilians, moderate clerics, and more recently, the government and its agents.

Rather than getting the western coalition forces out of Afghanistan or overthrowing the government however, the real goal of these suicide attacks is to seize the attention of the population, government

and worldwide media. In fact, Juergensmeyer sees them as performances of a violent scenario written by leaders and influential clerics among a religious community. When the whole country sees such images and “when we who observe these acts take them seriously – are disgusted and repelled by them, and begin to distrust the peacefulness of the world around us – the purpose of this theatre is achieved”<sup>6</sup>. The idea is not to win, but merely ‘to not lose’, and keep the struggle alive as long as possible. From this perspective, suicide attacks and the fear they produce appear to be the path chosen by the Pakistani Taliban to preserve their power over the country’s hearts and minds.

## II THE PAKISTANI CASE: CONSISTENCE WITH EXISTING THEORIES

### OCCUPATION MATTERS: TARGETING THE STATE

With more than 140 suicide attacks and 1700 victims between 2002 and 2008, the use of the method is clearly on the rise. Pakistan has now surpassed both Iraq and Afghanistan in this disturbing ranking<sup>7</sup>. Besides, with the LTTE being pushed to the sidelines in Sri Lanka, it seems the numerous jihadist organizations that lie within Pakistan’s borders now have the world’s attention, with one suicide attack occurring every 5 or 6 days since the July 2007 siege of Lal Masjid in Islamabad. The event is particularly relevant to the different jihadist movements in Pakistan, for all have considered the assault made by the army as the yellow-line the state should have never crossed. The mosque already played a major role in the support and recruitment of mujahedeen in the Afghan war back in the 1980s, with the

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<sup>5</sup> Martha Creenshaw. 1990. “The Logic of Terrorism: Terrorist Behavior as a Product of Strategic Choice.” In Walter Riech (ed.) *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies, States of Mind*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press. p.10.

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<sup>6</sup> Mark Juergensmeyer. 2003. *Terror in the Name of God*. Berkeley and Los Angeles : University of California Press. p.128.

<sup>7</sup> Amir Mir. 2008. “Pakistan tops Iraq, Afghanistan in suicide bombing deaths.” *The News*. 15 September. [http://www.thenews.com.pk/daily\\_detail.asp?id=135813](http://www.thenews.com.pk/daily_detail.asp?id=135813)

blessing of the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), whose headquarters are located nearby, in Islamabad. Before the attack, the religious schools of the mosque attracted many students from the North Western Frontier Provinces (NWFP). And in the two years since the dramatic event that left 100 persons dead, the Jamia Hafsa and Jamia Faridia madrasas have not been at rest. Posters and other images inside the building are a constant reminder of the siege to the worshippers<sup>8</sup>. The military operation against the hardline Islamic bastion can be held responsible for both, the constant increase in the number of militants willing to sacrifice themselves and the shift in the jihadists' strategy to the targeting of military and state personnel.

This major change can be explained in another way. Academics such as Robert Pape, have tried to explain the phenomenon in a more inclusive manner. He explains for instance, that in the vast majority of cases, suicide terrorism occurs when there is a military occupation<sup>9</sup>. Though Pape's data have been questioned by other academics (see Bloom), this particular statement might apply to Pakistan, for if there is a common feature between the various jihadist groups in the country and the moderate clerics, it is that Pakistan bears the weight of a foreign power, namely the United States. As the world media mourned the death of the moderate Mufti Sarfraz Naeemi on 12 June in a suicide bombing that left 7 dead, it is relevant to underline that the 61-year-old cleric always described the Taliban as "agents of America" and enemies of Islam<sup>10</sup>. The quotation acts as a reminder

to us that anti-Talibanism is not the equivalent of pro-government per se. Therefore, with the shift in the jihadists' strategy after the Lal Masjid assault, the government became a primary target for them. More than 500 armed forces personnel have been killed in the suicide attacks in the 13 months following the incident, while only 79 deaths have been reported between July 2006 and July 2007<sup>11</sup>. Security forces now account for more than 60 per cent of the targets<sup>12</sup>.

#### SUICIDE BOMBING IN THE SECOND STAGE OF THE CONFLICT: PAKISTAN'S CIVIL WAR

According to Mia Bloom's theory, suicide bombing only comes during the second iteration of the conflict, after more conventional means have been unsuccessfully engaged by the insurgents. From this perspective, the aftermath of the 2007 events in Lal Masjid would constitute a second stage in the conflict. But is the country really at war? In Pakistan where the state is fighting several armed groups over the control of entire districts in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and NWFP, one could definitely argue that Pakistan presents several symptoms of civil war today. This hypothesis has been articulated among others, by former Federal Bureau Investigation Director and PPP Vice-President Masood Sharif Khan Khattak<sup>13</sup>. If one were to go by the three criteria outlined by Fearon and Laitin for a conflict to qualify as a civil war, the endemic violence in Pakistan could indeed take the form of civil war<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> "Refit for Red Mosque amid extremist fears in Pakistan". *Dawn*. 9 July 2009. <http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/news/pakistan/metropolitan/04-refit-for-red-mosque-amid-growing-extremist-fears-pakistan-qs-10>

<sup>9</sup> See Robert Pape. 2006. *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*. Random House.

<sup>10</sup> "Death of Mufti Naeemi." *Daily Times*. 14 June 2009.

[http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=20090614\story\\_14-6-2009\\_pg3\\_1](http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=20090614\story_14-6-2009_pg3_1)

<sup>11</sup> Amir Mir, n.3

<sup>12</sup> Laurent Gayer, n.2.

<sup>13</sup> Masood Sharif Khan Khattak. 2009. "Civil War?" *The News*. 17 February.

[http://www.thenews.com.pk/daily\\_detail.asp?id=163008](http://www.thenews.com.pk/daily_detail.asp?id=163008)

<sup>14</sup> James Fearon and David Laitin. 2003. "Ethnicity, Insurgency and Civil War." *APSR*, Vol.97, n°1. February: 75-90.

The criteria include: first, the existence of a de facto conflict between non-state organized actors and agents of the state. Second, a death toll of a minimum of 1000 killed, with at least 100 deaths each year. Lastly, both sides to the conflict should have been affected, with a minimum of 100 killed on each side. A quick look at the data (Table 1) shows that Pakistan has matched all the three preconditions in the past four years at least. Besides, suicide attacks had resulted in the death of 159 security forces personnel and policemen by September 2008<sup>15</sup>. In addition, figures show that the number of deaths of insurgents since 2008 have surpassed civilian deaths caused directly by terrorist violence: another indication that Pakistan has turned from a state suffering heavy terrorist attacks to a country exposed to civil war.

Although the definition is mainly utilitarian, this hypothesis manages to effectively grasp the situation within the country to provide better answers. Suicide bombing is only an illustration of this tendency towards extreme violence, but it remains the most visible one. While the Lal Masjid events were highly symbolic and were a contributory factor in accelerating Pakistan's civil war, they alone cannot explain the suicide bombing phenomenon.

**Table 1: Annual Fatalities in Terrorist Violence in Pakistan, 2003-2009 (Source: satp.org)**

\* Data till 26 June 2009

	Civilians	Security Force Personnel	Terrorists/Insurgents	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
2008	2155	654	3906	6715
2009*	1222	520	3938	5680
Total	6532	2385	10268	19165

<sup>15</sup> Amir Mir, n.7.

## COMPETITION AMONG A WEAK LEADERSHIP?

Bloom views suicide bombings as a competition between militant groups trying to outdo one another, in an open war like the one Pakistan is facing. The fight over public support is therefore, likely to increase the number of suicide attacks expected. For example, Qari Zainuddin, a major figure opposed to Baitullah Mehsud's former hegemony over the Pakistani Taliban, was shot dead on 23 June by one of his bodyguards, alleged to be working for Mehsud. The man took refuge in the city of Dera Ismai Khan in NWFP less than a year ago, after having split from Mehsud's Tehrik Taliban Pakistan (TTP). The quarrel between the two Taliban figures became a matter of concern to the leadership within the Pakistani Taliban, with Zainudin previously stating that he opposed Mehsud because of his use of suicide bombers against religious scholars. This might be the reason why Zainuddin allegedly received support from the Pakistani intelligence in order to challenge the TTP's authority<sup>16</sup>. Indeed, rarely has the use of istishad been uncontested. In Palestine, Hamas and the Islamic Jihad first faced critics from the long-time Marxist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, before it turned to suicide attacks itself during the second Intifada. And in Sri Lanka, the secular LTTE used the tactic as a way to eradicate other Tamil adversaries like the PLOTE.

The same assumption could apply to Pakistan, for terrorism, and suicide terrorism more particularly, is aimed at several audiences. Indeed, not only will suicide bombings have an influence on the domestic and international public, but also force other militant groups to take positions in this morbid poker game where

<sup>16</sup> Syed Shoaib Hasan. 2009. "A very strange Taliban burial." *BBC News*. 25 June. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/8118373.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8118373.stm)

players try to outdo each other. It is then no surprise that the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) had to face criticism when it launched the first ever suicide bombing in the Indian Kashmir in 1999<sup>17</sup>. And in Balochistan, the Tehrik-e-Taliban Balochistan announced its creation and consecutive split from the TTP precisely because of its use of suicide bombing. Thus far, Bloom argues that “in cases where one group is clearly dominant, there are fewer incentives to outbid”<sup>18</sup>. Yet, drawing a map of the Pakistani Taliban is not an easy thing to do, for the connections between the various jihadist groups are often complex and ambiguous.

Islamic militancy has always been prolific in Pakistan. Though Hakimullah Mehsud – if he is alive – has been declared the new head of the TTP, there is little chance that the fight over the jihadist group is over, as several Taliban figures might still be eager to contest the new leader’s authority in the near future. But within this extremist patchwork, a suicide bombing campaign as revenge for Baitullah’s death, might offer one’s need for legitimacy. Pakistan does provide all the preconditions required for suicide operations to flourish, in addition to exempting those who organize such acts from all moral constraints. To them, Pakistan is at war, and “one of the reasons a state of war is preferable to peace,” says Juergensmeyer, “is that it gives moral justification to acts of violence. Violence in turn, offers the illusion of power”<sup>19</sup>.

### III RADICALIZATION IN THE USE OF SUICIDE BOMBINGS

#### GETTING THE WORLD’S ATTENTION: THE SPREAD OF SUICIDE TERROR

Two tendencies show suicide terror has gone wild in Pakistan. First, suicide attacks

are spreading geographically to the entire country, thanks to both, the porosity of borders and the lack of effective police control within the different provinces. There is a feeling that they can be thrown out more easily in Pakistan than in other countries. Most of the incidents continue to occur in the NWFP (41 per cent of total suicide attacks between 2002 and 2008), Punjab ranks second (21 per cent) and FATA, third (19 per cent)<sup>20</sup>, but new areas are now becoming concerned. In June 2009 for example, the TTP launched the first suicide attack ever in the Pakistani state of Azad Kashmir (AZK), killing two soldiers and injuring three others. Once again, army barracks were the main target and the suicide bomber, according to officials, appeared to have been a Taliban from Waziristan. The TTP did not wait long to claim responsibility for the killing, stating that the attack was a response to the Pakistan army’s air strikes in Waziristan. “We warn the government to stop the operation [...] in Waziristan otherwise we will continue such attacks all over Pakistan,”<sup>21</sup> said Hakimullah Mehsud, a top commander of the TTP. The blast was a demonstrative action by the Taliban to show the government that its strategy against them failed, for the movement was able to strike wherever it wanted within the Pakistani borders, including the well-guarded AZK capital Muzaffarabad.

Suicide bombings in Pakistan are directed against three types of targets: the state, US presence, and religious or sectarian opponents. The tactic is thus, slowly hijacking other violent forms of action. The argument is directly linked to the previous one, the idea being that irrespective of the underlying causes, the method is now being used in many places,

<sup>17</sup> Muhammad Amir Rana. 2007. “Terrorism: How the suicide attackers operate in Pakistan.” *PIPS*, 26 June. p.2.

<sup>18</sup> Mia Bloom. 2005. *Dying to Kill*. New York : Columbia University Press. p.94.

<sup>19</sup> Mark Juergensmeyer, n.6, p.157.

<sup>20</sup> Laurent Gayer, n.2.

<sup>21</sup> Tariq Naqash. 2009. “Baitullah’s suicide foray into AJK”. *Dawn*. 26 June.

<http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/news/pakistan/provinces/07-suicide-blast-kills-two-soldiers-in-muzaffarabad-ha-03>

for the perpetrators know they will get worldwide attention. For example, Balochistan now bears the mark of suicide terror despite the fact the method was largely alien to Pakistan's larger province until then, with three incidents reported between 2002 and 2007. Yet, three attacks have occurred in a little over nine months since September 2008, successively targeting security forces, NATO convoys, and political opponents. As reports are talking more and more about the so-called talibanization of the province, Balochistan is not safe from suicide bombings. Balochistan actually ranked second in 2008 in terms of general terrorist attacks (682 incidents), way behind NWFP (1009 attacks)<sup>22</sup>. In the absence of any serious constraints in this province where the Pakistani state is largely absent, one can expect various sectarian and religious groups based in Balochistan to try their hands at suicide bombings in the near future.

#### **SUICIDE BOMBING AND TOYOTAS**

In Pakistan where more than 40 per cent of the population is under 14 years of age, the use of teenage bombers has grown dramatically in the recent past. As of July 2007, before the Lal Masjid assault, the volunteers for self-martyrdom tended to be young, ranging from 18 to 24 years<sup>23</sup>. There are many reasons for this particular tendency of istishad towards younger recruits, one of them being the likelihood of the boy or girl being unmarried. From this perspective, the militant group would not necessarily have to give a financial compensation to the martyr's family, and for the recruits themselves, there are few incentives for turning back. Besides, the younger a recruit, the lesser the suspicion

that surrounds him/her. The police has reported that the boy who blew himself up in Mufti Naeemi's madrasa was aged between 16 and 17 and claimed to be a student. Indeed, adolescents are the best way for the Taliban to remain unnoticed. Whatever be the target, from tribal opponents, (a teenage suicide bomber killed 12 Baitullah Mehsud rivals in a restaurant in the Tank district of NWFP last 27 March) to police forces (a young man dressed as a new recruit blew himself up last year in the army barracks in Mingora, SWAT), they represent a true and convenient modus operandi for the Taliban to cover their activities.

Both Pakistani and army officials made recent statements to the press that Baitullah Mehsud was paying families up to 1 million rupees to get children as young as seven to serve as suicide bombers for the TTP or its subsidiaries. One US official went further, stating that the Taliban leader had "turned suicide bombing into a production output, not unlike [the way] Toyota outputs cars"<sup>24</sup>. The role of Qari Husain, reported to be TTP's suicide bombing mastermind, is from this perspective, anything but insignificant, as he is one of the major contenders in Baitullah's bloody war of succession. The statements however, are only allegations, as no case of suicide bombers aged less than 15 have been reported so far in Pakistan. Yet, the connections between the Afghani Taliban and their Pakistani counterparts grow stronger, with some Pakistani children having been caught in Afghanistan before going beyond the point of no return. Reports have been mentioning for example, the case of an abducted 12-year-old child forced to cross the border to

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<sup>22</sup> "Violence claims 7,997 lives in 2008", *Daily Times*. 21 January 2009.

[http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=20090121\story\\_21-1-2009\\_pg7\\_15](http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=20090121\story_21-1-2009_pg7_15)

<sup>23</sup> "Into the mind of a suicide bomber." *Dawn*. 21 July 2007. <http://www.dawn.com/2007/07/21/local17.htm>

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<sup>24</sup> "Mehsud buying child bombers?" *Daily Times*. 3 July 2009.

[http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=20090703\story\\_3-7-2009\\_pg7\\_15](http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=20090703\story_3-7-2009_pg7_15)



fulfill his suicide mission<sup>25</sup>. The South Waziristan warlord Baitullah Mehsud is to be blamed for allowing this kind of child trafficking to flourish, and one should give more credit to the second part of the US official's statement in which the US defense member said that Mehsud was also "produc[ing] these suicide bombers, which are sold or bartered, which can be used by ... other groups"<sup>26</sup>.

There is little doubt about whether the South Waziristan Taliban leader knew of the child smuggling into Afghanistan, as the Taliban were deeply involved in child recruitment in the nearby district of Tank way before the Lal Masjid events<sup>27</sup>. Up till now, it is impossible to determine to what extent children are being used for suicide operations in Pakistan and if it was ever a source of income for the TTP. Yet, it is known that the phenomenon does exist and is also prevalent in nearby Afghanistan. One of the reasons suicide attacks have flourished in the past few years is the visible rapprochement between al Qaeda and the Pakistani Taliban. What affects one country will ultimately affect the other, and in the absence of any sign of social and economic development in the most isolated districts of the country, Pakistani suicide bombers tend not to be by-products of the madrasa system – the Pakistani society might have to fear the worst regarding its youth.

#### **IV CONCLUDING COMMENTS**

The recent developments regarding suicide terror in Balochistan and AJK are symptomatic of Pakistan's unease with the

<sup>25</sup> Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers. 2008. "Child Soldiers Global Report 2008 – Afghanistan". 20 May.

<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/486cb0df1a.html>

<sup>26</sup> Daily Times, n.24.

<sup>27</sup> Syed Shoaib Hasan. 2007. "Recruiting Taliban child soldiers." *BBC News*. 12 June. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/6731389.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/6731389.stm)

Pakistani Taliban. They want to show that such operations can happen anywhere and anytime, as the major military operation Rah-e-Nijat was directed against Mehsud and its affiliates in South Waziristan. However, it does not mean TTP's strategy will be effective in the long-run. There is little chance the LeT will appreciate the Taliban's strike in its own AZK backyard, as the ISI-backed group has never targeted the Pakistani security forces up until this day. Also, it is not certain if the TTP has the actual technical capacity to maintain a durable presence in AZK or if it even plans to. As to Balochistan, it is still quite unclear how many violent militant groups will decide to jump on the suicide bombing bandwagon, but the chaotic province clearly provides the ground for it. Such hypotheses are clearly to be mentioned, as the practice of suicide bombing is increasing in time, space and intensity.

On the other hand, suicide attacks are merely a symptom rather than a cause of Pakistan's internal troubles. Of the 7,997 lives lost in Pakistan in 2008 because of erratic violence, suicide attacks accounted for only 967 victims which was 12 per cent of the total death toll. Yet, it is these acts of suicide violence that usually get more media coverage and thus, greater public attention. Nevertheless, one has to acknowledge that they are not common acts of violence for they do demand specific commitments unknown to the ordinary militant, and that a rise in their numbers means that Pakistan is moving another step towards disarray and chaos. Besides, a suicide attack is a double-edged sword for a group in its quest for power, for it is simultaneously, a source of legitimacy and an incentive for others to surpass the group. A supreme weapon of the weak, the very act of recruiting suicide bombers and the psychological shift that lies within it will have consequences on other factions, now bound to consider the question and take a position. Pakistan itself

has to take a position in this regard, but so far, little has been done to counter the resurgence of the phenomenon. There are no secret miracles to respond to the implementation of suicide attacks all over the country, and the battle must be fought on several fronts.

First, civil society has a role to play, as it still represents a majority of the victims. We can only agree with columnist Kunwar Idris who exhorts clerics of the main sects in Pakistan to embrace Mufti Naeemi's condemnation of *istishad*<sup>28</sup>. Not only Barelvi clerics, but influential Deobandi political parties such as the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazal Group (JUI-F), should make clear statements disapproving the practice, for the Taliban share common patterns with this school of thought. Several fatwas condemning the attacks were signed by influential clerics successively in 2005 and 2007, but proved to be inefficient in the face of the increasing levels of violence and the Taliban's incredulity. More than mere legal statements that fail to reach their audience, Pakistan needs those leaders and parties to unite their efforts and stand firm before those who command and perpetrate such acts of violence regardless of human life - some kind of a sacred union.

Second, the state should question its anti-terrorism legislation and show its willingness to put to trial those who praise *istishad*. Hafez Saeed's former Lashkar-e-Taiba might have only been involved in suicide attacks in nearby India. Pakistan cannot afford double standards anymore, and Saeed's release last June was clearly a mistake from this point of view. Rather than an improvement in the anti-terrorism laws, Pakistan needs to apply the already existing legislation.

<sup>28</sup> Kunwar Idris. 2009. "Reluctance to slate suicide bombing." *Dawn*. 21 June. <http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/news/pakistan/16-reluctance-to-slate-suicide-bombing-hs-01>

Lastly, there should be a return of the state in NWFP rather than a return of the state of affairs. The military operation Rah-e-Haq in Swat could provide some positive features in the end, as long as the population in the NWFP district sees some kind of social improvement in terms of services, the education system or health facilities. Political integration might be the solution here. But the reality on the ground is quite different. According to the ICRC, the lack of security conditions, the food price increase and lack of electricity make it difficult for the internally displaced population in Swat and Buner to return to their homes<sup>29</sup>. This might pave the way for a return of the Taliban, as in the case of the 2005 earthquake in the aftermath of which jihadist groups provided for all the basic needs of the people in the region. Pakistan should not allow history to repeat itself. This suicide bombing campaign might not last forever and die its own death in time. But how much time does Pakistan have?

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<sup>29</sup> "Pakistan: Displaced People Returning Home Must be Safe and Have Access to Food and Basic Services." ICRC. 16 July 2009. <http://www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/html/pakistan-update-160709?opendocument>.

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