

The Roots of Violence

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Proliferation of violence has become the most serious social problem in Pakistan today. Not a week, often not a day, goes by without some terrible act of violence shaking public confidence in the state's ability to protect citizens, and reminding us that a serious decline in civility has occurred in this country. Officials announce ever stronger measures as the cure while citizens wonder over the causes which underlie our descent into insensate savagery such as the recent massacre of mourners in a Lahore cemetery. This essay is but one man's perspectives on the roots of contemporary violence in Pakistan.

I should begin with five simple observations: One, apart from war and aggression as defined under international law, nine forms of violence may be identified as among the most commonly observed world wide. The degree of their incidence differs in place and time. They are: domestic, criminal, official, ethnic, chiliastic, political (protest oriented), religious-sectarian, terrorist, and revolutionary violence. Often these forms overlap. For example, official violence can be as terroristic in nature as revolutionary and criminal violence. Officially sponsored death squads and foreign covert operations are examples. Similarly sectarian violence frequently takes terrorist forms as Pakistan has been witnessing with some frequency. And revolutionary violence nearly always involves a combination of protest, terrorism, and warfare.

Two, of these forms of violence only one, the revolutionary type is not currently in evidence in Pakistan. Typically, revolutionary violence differs from the other forms in that it seeks system change and tends to be practised in a sociologically and psychologically selective pattern. The other eight forms not only prevail in Pakistan today but have also been on the rise in the last two decades. However, one should note that conditions for revolutionary violence have been gathering in Pakistan since the start in 1980 of the internationally sponsored Jihad in Afghanistan.

There are indications that we might be at the threshold of the outbreak of organised violence aimed at system change. If it does occur, it is unlikely to be selective in the manner practised earlier by the secular revolutionary movements

in China, Vietnam, Cuba, or the Algerian struggle for independence. This lack of selectivity shall be ascribable to the fact that the perpetrators of revolutionary violence in Pakistan are likely to be religious and right wing organisations which have not set theoretical or practical limits on their use of violence. In the countries where Islamists have so far engaged in violence with revolutionary objectives, i.e. with the objective of system change, they have tended to be quite indiscriminate in its use. Contemporary Afghanistan, Algeria, Egypt and, increasingly, Pakistan are examples.

Three, the convergence and accentuation of multiple forms of violence, such as now exists in Pakistan, has historically signalled the decline of the state, its legitimacy, ideological mooring, and institutional will and capacity to govern. Violence practising groups emerge as the weakened state's competitors. As such, in countries where the phenomenon persists the state gradually loses the attributes of authority, and anarchy ensues with power passing to a myriad of militias, warlords, and other more or less lawless and predatory groupings. On a safe-to-critical scale of 1-10, Pakistan falls, in my estimation, somewhere between six and seven among contemporary states. In other words, it is not quite there but is moving perilously toward a critical zone from where it will take the state and society generations to return to a semblance of normal existence. When the critical point of near collapse is reached, the viability of statehood depends more on external than internal factors. In recent years, this development occurred in Lebanon, Somalia, Rwanda, and Liberia.

Four, durable and efficient governing structures and mechanisms often develop when there is a timely and meaningful response to the challenges posed by the enfeeblement of state institutions, and the growth of an environment of generalised violence. A meaningful response is normally one that is based on precise understanding of the roots of the violence and character of its perpetrators. It also requires a certain taming of the repressive instincts that favour augmentation in the coercive capabilities of the state as the best way to deal with augmented terrorism and crime.

The South Asian subcontinent experienced this process in the last century of Mughal power and the early years of British state formation in India. The Mughal did not respond in a creative and contemporary fashion to the challenge, and failed. The British developed contemporary institutions and legislated with care and caution, thus laying the foundations of a state which endured for more than a century. .

These considerations suggest that what Pakistan needs is a two-pronged policy pursued simultaneously: a carefully planned and methodically executed program of reform aimed at removing the root causes of the proliferation of violence in society, and improvement in the investigative, preventive and prosecutorial capabilities of security and intelligence agencies, and the administration of justice. The enactment of harsh laws such as the recently enacted anti-terrorism

law, and tolerance of extra-judicial practices such as murder in custody rarely contribute to solving the problem. More frequently they blur the distinction between law and crime.

Five, throughout history violence has served as a principal weapon of domination, and final arbiter of disputes and discontents. While social attitudes toward and actual expressions of violence have not significantly changed in many societies, modern technology has vastly altered the traditional equation of means and ends in the uses of violence. Countries and cultures which fail to narrow the gap between their traditional instincts and modern reality court the risk of self-destruction. Afghanistan is a case in point.

Afghanistan's was a warrior culture in which the tribal balance of power, the individual's social mobility, power shifts, and even the political economy were defined by groups' and individuals' mastery of violence. The 'Saur revolution', the religious uprisings against it, and super power involvement in the Afghan conflict transformed Afghanistan's arms environment. The instincts and styles of a warrior culture remained and became linked to modern technology. The outcome is the literal destruction of a country which had survived many violent challenges including three colonial wars, and countless local conflicts. A similar process was at work in Lebanon, and later in Somalia and Rwanda.

Culture and Violence

There are links between culture and violence in our society. In particular, between feudal culture and violence. Barring a few Pirs, the feudal order is rarely based on ideology or ascription. Nor, unlike capitalism, does it derive its strengths from a process of constant growth in productivity. What defines the feudal order above all is its mastery of violence. Its members practice it constantly, occasionally with some regard for local customs, and always with scant respect for the law. Any *Hari* knows, as the Hari Commission so accurately described some six decades ago, that violence defines the relationship between lords and peasants. Any experienced district officer will tell you that among the powerful lords of rural Sindh, Punjab, Sarhad, and Baluchistan it is the will and integrity of the government that makes the difference between law and lawlessness, civility and violence. The law abiding feudal is an oxymoron.

In economic terms, feudalism is now only one of many forces in our society, and certainly not the ascendant one. But, the culture it bred over the century remains. Culture almost always persists after the hegemon is weakened and gone. The tenacity with which the colonial culture has, after decolonisation, held out and tightened its grip on Pakistan and India is a case in point. The persistence of feudal and colonial cultures is defined by the failure of the post-colonial elite to spawn alternative values and styles as foundations of a new culture. This

challenge, Pakistan's small and excessively consumption driven, therefore cautious and west-obsessed, intelligentsia has largely ignored. In fact, while feudalism serves as the whipping boy of Pakistan's intelligentsia, to my knowledge not one serious study exists on the nature and extent of feudal power in Pakistan, and none to my knowledge on the hegemony which feudal culture enjoys in this country. Hence, the two cultures, feudal and colonial, continue to enjoy absolute hegemony, that is to say, their norms of behaviour and values are largely those of society.

An extra-ordinary example of the persistence of feudal culture is that in the last decade of the twentieth century the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan has forced open private jails; entire families have been liberated from bondage -- tortured and chained, women used, children misused. And, a remarkable detail: these liberations have been effected not by the state but by a private organisation. It is failures of this magnitude on the part of the state, and the elite that controls it, that help sustain feudal values in our society.

At the expense of stating the obvious, I should note that these values are the contemporary inheritance not only of a class but of society as a whole. Until such time as the state intervenes to enforce laws, and the intelligentsia actively promotes non-violent values, the culture of violence shall continue to prevail. Rather, as social change continues at a rapid pace, traditional systems of social control become progressively dysfunctional, and the state's administrative machinery continues to erode, violence shall increase in its varied forms.

Violence has traditionally occupied a central and elevated place in our cultures. There are numerous manifestations of it in our social life. I shall mention only three: (i) the value we put on revenge, (ii) the violence against women which persists and has possibly increased and, (iii) our abuse of children.

Revenge is viewed by perhaps an overwhelming majority of Pakistanis as a natural sentiment. It is not merely accepted as normal in many areas of our social, political, and family life; rather, it is linked to the identity and honour of the individual, family, *biraderi* and tribe. Friends and relatives express solidarity when a man takes revenge while his adversaries proceed, more often than not, to avenge the avenger. To my knowledge, no annual statistics are compiled of revenge killings in Pakistan. Were it available the figure would run into the thousands.

Pick a day, and you are likely to find a manifestation. Recently, newspapers have been carrying horrifying accounts of revenge driven tribal killings in Sindh between, among others, the Ujjan and Jatoi, Kalarie and Kalhora, Bhayo and Brohis, Magsi and Talpur. Typically, the feud between the Magsi and Talpur started 25 years ago when a woman of the Talpur clan was murdered. The latest flare-up has entailed gun battles between the two; at least one innocent girl died recently in the cross fire. A similarly old feud between the Bhaiyo and Brohis has

cost not less than fifty lives in the last three years. Another fifty persons perished in the dispute between Jatois and Mahars. So goes, week after week, one continuing exhibit on the culture of violence. The latest is the revenge the Nawab of Bugti has visited upon his adversary the Kalpars with, so it appears, the connivance of the state. It is equally certain that while the Kalpar chief wanders homeless with his clan, he dreams of wreaking vengeance upon the Bugtis.

As for domestic violence, wife beating is viewed by a large section of rural society as though it were a *droit de seigneur*. It is common also among urban dwellers especially in working and lower middle class milieu, and is known to persist among educated upper class families. "Wife abuse is a fairly common phenomenon in Pakistan", says an extremely balanced and wise "Report of the Commission of Inquiry for Women" of August 1997, "[it] is also indulged in not only by the husband but also by other members of the husband's family. It can take the form of slapping, beating, torture, mutilation and murder." One may safely assume that for the most part these acts of violence are an expression not so much of hatred as of habit and attitude. People regard violence as a bonafide instrument of attaining social and personal objectives.

Rape, especially gang rape, is becoming endemic in this country. It is equally likely that we are taking more notice of it. In the first nine months of 1997 over 100 women were reported to have been raped in Lahore alone; of these, 28 were victims of gang rape. Typically, the police registered only 35 of the over 100 rape cases reported to it in Lahore, a phenomenon that adds to the victims' inhibition against reporting. Actual instances of rape are estimated by human rights groups as being two-&-a-half to three times higher than those reported in the press. This may be a conservative estimate as girls normally do not report even to their parents the molestation which they suffer at the hands of relatives and servants at home.

With painstaking and risky effort, women's groups and the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) have been documenting the crime against women. HRCP estimates that nation-wide a woman is raped in Pakistan every three hours, and "nearly as many minors become victims as adults". In a majority of instances they also suffered violent assault either before or after the crime. Many commit suicide as a certain shame and opprobrium attaches to the victim of rape in our society.

The ultimate form of violence against women -- murder and mutilation -- is widely accepted as a mechanism for restoring honour, a practice institutionalised in customs like *Karo Kari*, in areas of Sindh, Baluchistan, NWFP, and southern Punjab. To these have been added now a new horror, stove burning, of which spot hospital checks indicate victims in the thousands. Notable, as they relate with my argument on feudal culture, are two facts: (i) 80% of the violent crimes against women are committed in rural areas, 20 % in the urban; and (ii) almost all victims of the reported cases of sexual assault were working class women. Since

from their infancy children witness violence as an integral part of adult behaviour, males and females alike grow to accept it as a normal, even preferred, mechanism for achieving one's objective or affecting behaviour change. There are scant laws to treat domestic violence as crime, and the police are known to routinely discourage registration of cases in domestic crimes.

Violent treatment of children is even more common than that of women. 'Spare the rod, spoil the child' remains a central tenet of our upbringing of children. It is extravagantly interpreted and excessively practised in schools no less than in homes. To be sure, physical abuse of children is less prevalent today in educated upper and middle class families than a few decades ago. It remains, nevertheless, widespread in other strata of society. In the absence of available data it is impossible to identify its comparative prevalence along class or rural/urban lines. For a host of reasons, including studies on Latin American countries, I surmise that among the urban working class, lower middle class, and lumpen-proletariat child abuse is as widely and excessively practised as in rural areas. In the religious schools (*madaris*), which have proliferated exponentially in the last two decades, pupils are routinely administered harsh and inhuman physical punishment. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan has exposed instances even of children being kept in chains, for months even years at a time. There exists a considerable body of literature indicating that abused children often become abusive and violent adults.

If they are serious about eliminating the high rate of violence and crime in Pakistan, the least that our governments can do is to legislate against these practices, and vigorously enforce the laws. Laws, after all, are not merely links between crime and punishment. They also set the moral and behavioural standards for citizens of this and coming generations. Yet, the sensitivities of our ruling establishment are such that during nearly a decade of representative governments not one government has deemed it important to repeal a dictator's laws – the *hudood*, *qisas*, *diyat*, and blasphemy laws are prime examples, which devalue the humanity of women and minorities in our society, promote retrograde attitudes, and invite murder, mutilation and communal violence.

I have not spoken to one official, in this government or the last, who was willing to defend these laws and practices. To the contrary, all have found them, as any sensible and humane person would, repugnant and harmful to society. Yet, even this government, which commands a majority large enough to repeal constitutional amendments, has failed so far to act on a single of the many sensible recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry for Women which was headed by an eminent jurist, Mr. Justice Aslam Zahid of the Supreme Court of Pakistan. This failure is of course another surrender of responsibility to opportunism, a phenomenon not uncommon in politics anywhere. So the responsibility falls ultimately upon us. The government's inaction underlines, among other factors, the absence of organised opinion strong enough to counter the loud pressures of right wing religious groups whose archaic and imagined

perspectives on Islam, commonly described by contemporary scholars as Islamism – conform neither to the tenets of religion nor to the needs of society.

Faith and Violence

The violence of Islamism has emerged as a subject of anxious concern throughout the world, especially the Muslim world. Countries, such as Algeria and Egypt, are virtually in a state of civil war between Islamists of differing hues and secular, regrettably authoritarian, governments. Among these countries, Pakistan is distinguished in several ways:

- 1) It is the original staging ground of Jihad as an international movement.
- 2) Unlike Algeria and Egypt it has had a parliamentary system of government with four elections since 1988 in which the Islamic parties' share of the vote has been declining.
- 3) Unlike Algeria and Egypt where Sunni majorities predominate, Pakistan is a multid denominational country where the non-Sunni constitute an estimated quarter of the population. Furthermore, even the Sunni are divided by theological disputes, the one between the Barelvis and Deobandis is the primary example, which have tended to turn violent. Hence, there is a proliferation here of violence. So far we have witnessed the mutual terror of Sunni and Shia, of Sunni groups against Christians and Ahmedis, and killings across the Barelvi-Deobandi divide.
- 4) Pakistan remains Islamism's 'front-line state', so to speak. The war in Afghanistan continues and, in multiple ways impacts on the internal developments in this country.
- 5) Pakistan's is an ideologically ambiguous polity; here, political paeans to Islam have served as the compensatory mechanism for the ruling elite's corruption, consumerism and kow-towing to the west. As a consequence, the ideologically fervent Islamist minority keeps an ideological grip on the morally insecure and ill-formed power elite. It is this phenomenon that explains the continued political clout of the extremist religious minority even as it has been all but repudiated by the electorate.

From the bombing of the Egyptian embassy in Islamabad to the recent massacre on Macleod Road, this country is strewn with innocent victims of Islamist extremism. Yet, these tragedies have barely caused any reflection in this country,

and others whose policies sowed the seeds of the so-called 'Islamic terror'. The truth is that as a world-wide movement, Jihad International Inc., is a recent phenomenon, a modern, multi-national conglomerate whose founders include the governments of USA, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Israel. It was the American sponsored anti-communist crusade in Afghanistan that revitalised, in the last quarter of the twentieth century, the notion of Jihad as the armed struggle of believers. Israel's invasions and occupation of Lebanon, the West Bank, Gaza, and Golan continue to invest it with moral meaning and give it added impetus.

In the United States, the Islamic resistance to Israel's occupation of Lebanon, the West Bank, Gaza, and Golan and such incidents as the alleged plot to blow up the International Trade Centre in New York City, have aided the media and other propagandists' politically motivated campaign to demonise Muslims and Islam as a threat to western interests and civilisation itself. Their motivation is suspect as it condones Israel's U.S. aided violence on an enormously larger scale while condemning Arab resistance to it. It is suspect also because, as we shall presently discuss, the United States and Europe have played a historic part in spawning the violence of groups and individuals they now denounce, rather brazenly, as "Islamic fundamentalist". The U.S. and European countries largely withdrew from the enterprise after their interests had been served, while the native peoples among whom they promoted the violent ideological enterprise are continuing to pay the heavy price of it.

Never before in this century had Jihad as violence assumed so pronounced an 'Islamic' and international character. The twentieth was a century of secular Muslim struggles. The Ottomans fought their last wars in essentially temporal terms, in defence of a tottering empire and, at least in the Middle East, against predominantly Muslim foes. From the rise of Saad Zaghlul to the demise of Abdul Nasser, the Egyptian national movement remained secular and explicitly Arab and Egyptian. This was equally true of the Iraqi, Syrian, Palestinian, and Lebanese national struggles. The Turks attained their liberation under the banner of intemperate secularism. Iranian nationalists fought and forged a Belgium-like constitution at the start of this century. In India, Muslim nationalism, opposed by an overwhelming majority of Indian Ulema, defined the demand and achievement of Pakistan. All these movements had some resonance among other Muslim peoples who were similarly engaged in anticolonial struggles but none had an explicit pan-Islamic context.

Jihad, noun, to struggle, from the Arabic root verb J.D., to strive, was nevertheless a favoured word among Muslims in their struggle of liberation from colonial rule. When my brother was expelled from school after raising the nationalist flag, he was welcomed in our village as a *mujahid*, one who struggles. In the Maghrib, Algerian nationalist cadres who engaged France in an armed struggle for seven gruelling years were called Mujahideen, and their news organ was named El - Moudjahid. This newspaper was edited for a time by Franz Fanon, a non-Muslim, and the struggle was led by a secular organisation, Front

du Liberation National (FLN). In Tunisia, the national struggle was led by Habib Bourguiba, a die-hard and Cartesian secularist who enjoyed nevertheless the title of Mujahidul-Akbar. The word Jihad did occasionally appear as a mobilising slogan of the 1978 Iranian revolution but Enghelab, revolution, actually dominated as the symbol of the uprising against the Shah. After seizing power Iran's revolutionary government adopted Jihad-i-Sazindazi, jihad for reconstruction, as its mobilising symbol. Without a significant exception, Jihad was used during the twentieth century in a national, secular, and political context until, that is, the advent of the anti-Soviet war in Afghanistan.

For the first time in this century the standard bearers of a Muslim peoples struggle for liberation were Islamic parties opposed to "godless communism", committed to its violent overthrow, and dedicated to the establishment of an "Islamic state" in Afghanistan. Theirs was a Jihad in the classical, strictly theological sense of the word. Ironically, they had the support of western powers as no liberation movement ever did. The United States and its allies supplied to the Mujahideen an estimated ten billion dollars worth of arms and aid.

They also invested in this Jihad the legitimacy of their enormous power, and the lustre of their media made glory. On one especially memorable occasion when Afghanistan's hard line Islamist visited the White House, President Ronald Reagan described them as the Muslim world's "moral equivalent of our founding fathers". Similarly, the American and European media played up the war in Afghanistan as the greatest story of the eighties. Foreign correspondents combed the Hindu Kush for stories of 'Mooj' heroism. Competition for Jihad narrative was so great that in one instance a major network, CBS, paid handsomely to film a staged battle between Islam and Communism. As the western media carries great importance and authority in the third world, its Afghanistan war coverage made an enormous impact especially on Muslim youth.

Within a year of the Soviet intervention, Afghanistan's was on its way to becoming a pan-Islamic Jihad. Hundreds, eventually thousands, of young Muslims from places as far apart as Algeria and the Philippines, Sudan and Sinkiang travelled to Peshawar and Torkham, received training in the use of arms, and under the strict guidance of various Islamic parties became ideologically ripe and tasted more or less of the Jihad-in-the-path-of-God. The United States government and its vaunted intelligence agency saw in this process a cold war opportunity to pit militant Islam against communism. Had the Soviet Union not collapsed unexpectedly, it is likely that the United States shall still be benefiting from this historic mobilisation of jihad.

We knew of the violent pan-Islamic character which the Afghan war was assuming with American sponsorship. But no country, not Algeria, not Egypt, protested the participation of their nationals in a distant war. Pakistan was hospitable to a fault while all watched casually, then looked the other way until,

that is, the chickens of Afghan insurgency returned home to roost. I found in 1986, for example, that Egyptian intelligence had an effective presence in Peshawar and excellent information on the demography of Jihad. They were merely keeping a watchful eye. America, after all, was an ally and benefactor; they could not interfere with its agenda. The demands for extradition started to reach Pakistan from Algiers and Cairo only after the U.S. had cashed in its investments in Afghanistan, and the gates of hell had broken loose in Algeria and Egypt. But whom can Pakistanis request to rid their country of the thousands of armed zealots their government has nurtured, and continues to nurture?

The Jihad's pan-Islamic dimension was a historically new phenomenon. Since the great crusades in the Middle Ages Jihad had not crossed cultural, ethnic, and territorial boundaries. Pan-Islamism did emerge briefly as a movement in the nineteenth century, its banner having been raised by such ideologues as Jamal al-Din Afghani and warriors such as Syed Ahmed Shaheed. At the climax of this pan-Islamic drive, India's Muslims launched into the Khilafat Movement to save the Ottoman Caliphate. Khilafat's leaders, the Ali brothers, did often describe their movement as a Jihad. But this was a non-violent agitation supported by such non-Muslim pacifists as M. K. Gandhi and frowned upon by Mohammed Ali Jinnah who later founded Pakistan. More to the point, it had negligible pan-Islamic resonance. Arabs, Iranians, and Turks alike viewed it as an eccentric, uniquely Indian phenomenon.

Pan-Islamism survived only as an abstract agenda of a microscopic minority of Muslim intellectuals. Its influence showed in the works of some modern writers and poets including Mohammed Iqbal. The generalised sentiment of Muslim affinity on which pan-Islamism relied was real nevertheless and from time to time manifested itself in people's expressions of solidarity with co-religionists in Palestine, Bosnia etc. Yet, the national struggles of Muslim peoples remained national, and pan-Islamism endured only as an inchoate sentiment of solidarity.

By contrast, with the Afghanistan war pan-Islamism grew on a significant scale as a financial, cultural, political and military phenomenon with a world wide network of exchange and collaboration. Myriads of institutions, madaris, Islamic universities, training camps and conference centres, came into being in Pakistan and other places. Sensing its enormous opportunity, traders in guns and drugs became linked to the phenomenon creating an informal but extraordinary cartel of vested interests in gun, gold and god.

Transnational involvement in the Jihad not only reinforced links among Islamic groupings, it also militarised the conventional religious parties. Pakistan's Jamaat-i-Islami is an example. Until their involvement in Afghanistan it was a conventional party, cadre-based, intellectually oriented, and prone to debate and agitation rather than armed militancy. Today it commands, outside Pakistan's army and rangers, perhaps the largest number of battle hardened and armed veterans. In 1948-49, its chief ideologue, Maulana Abul Ala Maududi had

rejected, on theological grounds, the notion of Jihad in Kashmir. Today, his party openly boasts of its militant involvement there. In effect, while the U.S. government and media blamed Iran as the source of organised Muslim rage, armed Islamic radicalism was actually nurtured in Ziaul Haq's Pakistan with American funding and the CIA's help.

In recent years, other conventional Islamic parties, the Jamiat-e-Ulama-i-Islam and Jamiat-e-Ulama-i-Pakistan, have also been militarising, thanks to their linkages with the Taliban, thanks also to their involvement in Kashmir. In addition, other armed sectarian groupings, the Sipah-e-Sahaba, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Harakatul Ansar, Sipah-e-Mohammed, Lashkar-e-Tayba, Anjuman-e-Sarfarooshan-e-Islam, have emerged to menace society no less than the state. They are all sectarian formations, apparently a far cry from Islamism as expounded by the older religious parties such as the Jamaat-i-Islami and JUI. Yet the fact remains that their antecedents lie with these parties, and they draw sustenance from the neighbouring wars which are cast in Islamic terms.

The Battle for the Muslim Soul

The birth of Jihad International coincided with another development which has had a particularly unwholesome effect on Pakistan. Following the prolonged hostage crisis during which Iranian radicals held American diplomats captive in Teheran, a contest began between two versions of political Islam, one conservative and the other radical. One was sponsored by Saudi Arabia and, until 1988, Iraq; the other was supported by Iran.

While the United States was involved in this development its logic was essentially regional. Iran's revolutionary Islamists were quite uncompromising in opposing the U.S. as an imperial power, and in their rejection of monarchy as an un-Islamic form of government. As a pro-U.S. conservative kingdom, Saudi Arabia felt threatened by Iran. Riyadh was quick to counter Iran's proselytising zeal and was supported in this mission by such Gulf sheikhdoms as Kuwait. With the start of the Iraq-Iraq war in 1981, Saddam Hussein's secular government joined in the theocratically cast campaign against Iran. Islamic organisations all over the Muslim world became beholden to one or the other side of this divide.

In countries with mixed Sunni-Shia population such as Lebanon, Pakistan and Afghanistan, this development had the greatest impact as sectarian groups and individuals found new incentive to arouse old hatreds. Neither the Americans, nor Saudis and Iraqis may have intended to arouse anti-Shia feelings. They were merely interested in promoting their brand of conservative Islam to counter Iran's growing appeal. But in local terms anti-Iran was easily translated into anti-Shia.

The Sipah-e-Sahaba is one such product of this process in Pakistan. It was first funded by Saudis; later Iraq stepped in. The terror and counter-terror which followed have involved murders of Iranian diplomats and trainees, American technicians, and ordinary folks in mosques, imambarahs and, most recently a cemetery. Battles for soul often degenerate into a hankering after body counts.

Stranded Between Past and Future

Without doubt, the Islamist and sectarian formations owe much of their contemporary elan, proliferation and armed militancy to the internationalised and "victorious" Jihad in Afghanistan, and to the covert warfare between Iran and its detractors. It should be noted, however, that these international factors would not have yielded such lush growth nationally had they not found fertile soil in Pakistan, Algeria, Egypt, Sudan, Lebanon, or Palestine. As the case of Pakistan under Ziaul Haq and Algeria under the Junta suggests, the growth as well as limits of Islamism are defined by local factors. In Lebanon and Palestine, as in Afghanistan during the Soviet intervention, Jihad became identified with resistance to foreign occupation.

Jihad International Inc. and the contestation between Iran and its detractors developed at a time when the Pakistani environment was particularly hospitable to religious activism. General Mohammed Ziaul Haq had inaugurated the process of "islamisation" which had aroused anxieties among minorities including the Shia minority of Pakistan. One response from it was the formation of the Tehrik-i-Nifaz-e-Fiqah-e-Ja'fariyya (TNFJ) which demanded that Shia be subject to their own Fiqh, a comprehensible demand which nevertheless served to arouse the Sunni die-hard. The Sipah-e-Sahaba followed on the heels of TNFJ.

In Pakistan's multi-denominational environment the proposal to construct the state, its laws, and institutions according to religious injunction was necessarily viewed as a differentiating, discriminatory agenda. Zia's Islamisation, like Z.A. Bhutto's consignment of Ahmedis to minority status, served as a framework for dividing this country and pitting its diverse people against each other. This had to be so particularly in a Muslim society. For our history is seeped in centuries of theological, often violent disputes, a point that is lost even on the current crop of politicians who have been witnesses to the pointless killing and dying of the last decade and a half.

Religious sectarian was an inevitable outcome of "Islamisation". There is first of all the simple insight that appears to have escaped several generations of politicians and soldiers of Pakistan: When a state claims a theocratic mission, it is bound to provoke conflicts over whose model shall prevail. Secondly, when religion is pushed explicitly into politics it becomes a currency of power. Any one who can uses religion to garner support and undercut actual or potential rivals.

To verify this, one may need count only the number of religion wielding newcomers in national and local politics since Zia's Islamisation began. The most virulent hate-mongers of today also belong to his era.

Once religion becomes a hard political currency it has to be deployed in the political arena by means fair and foul. Those aspirants in politics who lack other political capital, large land holdings, modern education, industry, family connection, are likely then to use religion the more, and most virulently. It is not surprising then that the Sipah-i-Sahaba and its off shoot Lashkar-e-Jhangvi were born in Jhang. There, Shia landowners have traditionally held power. Economic changes in the last four decades have, nevertheless, produced a new middle class which is compelled to compete with the traditional power holders. The SS's new middle class leaders were keen to dislodge the old. The ideological environment of 1980s compelled them to deploy anti-Shia Islam in their battle. The logic of escalation is integral to ideology of hate; the results are before us.

There are other less obvious factors at work. The most important of these may be the highly skewed relationship that exist in contemporary Muslim societies between the past and the future. Throughout history, there has existed an ironic connection between them: Those who glorify the past and seek to recreate it almost invariably fail while those who view it comprehensively and critically are able to draw on the past in meaningful and lasting ways. People who have confidence in their future approach the past with seriousness and critical reverence. They study it, try to comprehend the values, aesthetics, and styles which invested an earlier civilisation its greatness, or conversely, caused it to decline. They preserve its remains, enshrine relevant values, and draw enrichment from the images and events of the past both collectively and individually.

By contrast, peoples and governments with an uncertain sense of the future have distorted engagements with their past. They eschew lived history, shut out its lessons, shun critical inquiry into the past, neglect its remains but, at the same time, invent an imagined past, shining and glorious, upon which are super-imposed the prejudices and hatreds of our own time. The religious-political movements of South Asia and the Muslim world bear witness to this truth.

In this region, both Hindus and Muslims of right wing persuasion view history in ways that arouse sectarian hatred. Thus for decades many Muslims viewed the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb as symbolising the strengths and virtues of Muslim rule in India. On their part, Hindu nationalists presented the Maratha chief Sivaji as an embodiment of Hindu resistance to Muslim rule. In reality, both were tragic figures out of synch with their own history, signalling the decline of Indian statehood, and the rise of a European empire in India. In this instance, as most recently in the Babri mosque affair, history became a casualty of communal myth making.

In the summer of 1990, I visited Ayodhya and Mathura while researching the campaign which militant Hindu movements, BJP, VHP, RSS, and Bajrang Dal, had launched to demolish the Babri Mosque and build a temple on the site which they claimed was the real birth place of Lord Rama two thousand years ago. I was amazed at two features of this campaign. The Hindu revivalists had put out an enormous body of publications and 'educational material' on the alleged excesses of Muslim rule in India, and Hindu resistance to it. Apart from books, colourful posters illustrated in graphic detail the presumed atrocities and heroism of the Hindu-Muslim encounter in India. Narratives in prose and songs were also available by the dozens on audio cassettes. I felt overwhelmed by the sheer volume of invented, poisonous, history. To their lasting credit, the most eminent among India's historians have consistently debunked the revivalists' version of history. When I mentioned this to him, M.R. Malkani, a BJP ideologue, was unsparing in his judgement of these historians: "*Inn historians kay liye Hindustan men koi asthan naheen hai.*"

The same attitude towards a critical history has been prevalent in Pakistan since the 1970s, when Pakistan Studies was introduced as a compulsory subject in schools and colleges. Through this, a distorted and sectarian version of history is fed to the overwhelming majority of children and youth who are not privileged to travel the O and A level road. During the decade of Mohammed Ziaul Haq's rule the trend toward sectarianising the educational system advanced to the point that Sunni and Shia were assigned separate Islamiyat syllabus, a practice which continues today. While they issue daily denunciations of sectarian politics, our government officials have retained the sectarian, hate-mongering syllabus in schools and colleges.

The differences between Pakistan and India are, nevertheless, worth noting. One is that during crucial periods of our history, governments have favoured sectarian elements, and actively discouraged historical research, instruction, and inquiry. The other significant difference is that because our institutions of higher learning sharply deteriorated and our insecure rulers, Mohammed Ziaul Haq occupies the highest place in this pantheon, needed the crutch of invented history, in Pakistan historians did not thrive. History and culture, including Islamic culture and history, ceased as a subject of serious study.

In fact, few subjects have suffered greater distortion in Pakistan than Islam and Muslim history. Here, Islam and its history have been invoked for more than four decades. Yet, throughout these years neither religion nor history have been accorded serious attention by the state or society. I know of not a single noteworthy work on these subjects to have been published in Pakistan. The curriculum of Islamiyat, a compulsory subject in our schools and colleges, is almost entirely devoid of a sense of piety (*taqwa*), spiritualism (*roohaniyat*), or mysticism (*tassawuf*). At best it is cast in terms of ritualistic formalism. At worst, it reduces Islam to a penal code, and its history to a series of violent episodes.

The well springs of righteous ignorance have deepened in Pakistan as they did in Algeria where, following decolonisation in 1962, false attempts at "indigenisation" yielded parallel systems of education, one French and the other Arabic, one modern and the other traditional. It is largely the products of the two systems that have been at war since 1992. This war has by now cost some 70,000 lives and continues to inflict enormous suffering on Algeria and its people. In Pakistan, the last two have been decades of dramatic expansion of the *madaris* which continue to receive generous government subsidies and undetermined amounts of funding from abroad. According to the Ministry of Education, in 1995 there were 3706 such madaris in Pakistan with an enrolment of 540048. The figure of enrolment in the higher levels of study, 80051 male, 4738 female, is notable for its social and political implications. After 12-18 years of study, these young people are unprepared for any profession except to serve as imams in mosques or yearn for an Islamic state in which they shall presumably constitute the governing elite.

Commentators in the press often characterise these as 'medieval institutions' which is an outright insult to the medieval Muslim civilisation. Spot checks at several such institutions reveal that their curricula and instruction bear little resemblance to such medieval centres of learning as al-Azhar in the 12th, Zaituna in the 13th, or the Qarawiyyin in the 14th centuries. None of the subjects that were part of the core program of studies in the Islamic centres of learning, e.g. mathematics, chemistry, botany, astronomy, and philosophy, are taught in the contemporary madrassah. They have not and are not likely to produce the al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, Sheikh Saadi or Amir Khusro of the contemporary Muslim world. Their curriculum reduces Islam to a penal code, a ritual of ablutions and prayers, and a litany of sins crimes and their here and now punishments. Thousands of energetic and motivated youth who graduate from these institutions are men abandoned in the middle of the ford, cut off from their real past, totally unprepared to meet the challenges of the future, and fevered by the dreams of a religious polity.

They too can produce a history of sorts, of sectarian gangs setting out to purify the country, and create the Islamic order which they imagine they are equipped to run. The Taliban, graduates themselves of Pakistani madaris, have emerged as the role model of most students and alumni of our religious and secular schools and colleges. More ominously estimates of Pakistanis who have fought with the Taliban vary from 10,000 to 15,000. Overall, the number of armed Islamist militants in Pakistan is estimated at 40,000-50,000, many of them veterans of wars in Afghanistan and Kashmir.

Many wanted Pakistani terrorists find sanctuary in Afghanistan, a fact that only occasionally becomes public. Qari Allah Wasaya who was believed to have led the jail break in Dera Ghazi Khan, is reported to have told police investigators that he had been summoned from a Harakat-ul-Ansar camp in Afghanistan to free his fellow terrorists. The massacre in the Mominpura cemetery on January 11, 1998 was an anniversary commemoration of the bomb blast which killed a

founding father of the Sipah-e-Sahaba. It is understood also to be linked to Mr. Allah Wasaya's death in police custody. In turn, the protestors against the massacre attacked and burned the office of Lahore's deputy commissioner and the post master. This chain of events, like some others, symbolised the contradictory ways in which the state is implicated in the cycles of sectarian violence.

An Umbrella over South Asia's Savage Exchange

Pakistani and Indian officials routinely blame RAW and ISI respectively whenever a particularly heinous terrorist attack or atrocity occurs in either country. A decade ago these accusations did not fly with such frequency. That they do, reflects a certain reality which is that the pace of proxy warfare between India and Pakistan has increased. At various times, Pakistan has suspected India of aiding Afghan sabotage attacks of the 1980s, the ethnic strife in Karachi, and the religious sectarian violence across Pakistan. India has accused Pakistan of aiding Sikh militancy in the Punjab, Muslim militancy in Kashmir, and terrorist bombings in Bombay and Delhi. Independent observers believe that there is a significant measure of truth in these allegations.

The fact that both India and Pakistan have developed nuclear weapons capability may have much to do with their increased engagement in proxy warfare. We know this phenomenon from the cold war years. The United States and the Soviet Union used the condition of nuclear deterrence to wage wars of intervention and undermine each other by aiding and abetting dissidents, rebels, and revolutionaries in each other's spheres of power. In Iran, Korea, Vietnam, Cuba, and Middle East produced confrontations between the two giants; the threat of nuclear war defused them, confirming the premises of nuclear deterrence. India and Pakistan appear to have fallen for this logic of deterrence.

As countries in transition, subject to the instabilities and tensions of rapid social change, without the benefit of vast geographical separation, and lacking the elaborate system of command and control which was necessary to insure a relatively safe interplay of a mutual deterrence, they are dangerously exposed to miscalculation and misadventure. Yet, so far neither country's ruling elite seem to recognise the risks to which they are exposing themselves.

In conclusion, I should reiterate that violence in our society, as in most environments of accentuated violence, has multiple roots. These include (a) a culture of violence which persists while the traditional values and social processes which had limited its uses in an earlier time have been eroded by rapid and uneven social and economic changes; (b) injections of religion in politics and the theocratic promises which have had the effect of provoking sectarian divisions and demands; (c) U.S. sponsorship of an internationalised

Jihad which provided the framework for proliferation of arms and sanctification of organised violence on religious grounds; (d) international and regional interests which have encouraged violent groupings to engage in proxy warfare; (e) an educational policy which breeds frustrated and ignorant armies of youth bred on literature of hate and violence; (f) a nuclear stalemate which has encouraged India and Pakistan to assume that they can support armed dissidents in each others country without incurring the risk of a wider war; (g) decline in the will and capacity of state institutions to investigate crime and enforce laws rationally and vigorously. The challenge, in other words, is too large and complex to be met by limited and half-hearted measures of crisis management.