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Suicide Terrorism in Pakistan

1. Background Details:

In 2005, Pakistan witnessed a total of 4 suicide attacks. In 2006, there were 7 and in 2007 there were 56; more than one a week. In the first 11 weeks of 2008, there have been 17 suicide attacks; an annualized rate of 80.

In 2005, casualties of terrorist violence in Pakistan numbered 648. In 2006 and 2007, casualties jumped to 1,471 and 3,599, respectively. In the first 10 weeks of 2008 casualties already stand at 1,064 with a daily average of 14 and an annualized rate of over 5,000.

2. Situational Analysis:

Professor Robert Pape of University of Chicago has compiled detailed data on age, place of origin, residence, educational background, socioeconomic status and even dietary preferences of 462 individual suicide terrorists (who undertook suicide terrorism campaigns between 1980 and 2003). Here are some surprises. Question: Is there a correlation between poverty and suicide terrorism. Answer: No. Professor Pape has demonstrated that the poverty level of individual suicide terrorists was more or less the same as the rest of the population. Question: Is there a correlation between education and suicide terrorism. Answer: No. Professor Pape has, once again, demonstrated that the level of education of individual suicide terrorists was more or less the same as the rest of the population.

In conclusion—and contrary to the common held perception--suicide terrorism has little or nothing to do with the level of education. Additionally, suicide terrorism is certainly not rooted in poverty (as is often believed). According to Professor Alberto Abadie, of Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, "*There is no significant relationship between a country's wealth and level of terrorism....*" Furthermore, individual psychology has almost nothing to do with suicide terrorism. Suicide terrorism is all about group dynamics.

Dr Yusef Yadgari, an Afghan pathologist, has studied 110 suicide bombers in Afghanistan. Dr Yadgari has found that "80 percent of the attackers had some kind of physical or mental disability."

What then is the way out of suicide attacks? As is always the case, a proper diagnosis of the ailment is the first step towards cure. We must, therefore, make a distinction between forces driven by the tribal code of honor, referred to as the '*Pushtunwali*', on the one hand and elements driven by ideology on the other hand. Tribals driven by their code of honor have no extra-territorial ambitions while ideologically driven forces have extra-territorial objectives. *Pushtunwali* has no room for suicide terrorism while ideology drives all suicide attacks. Peace with the followers of *Pushtunwali* is something that can be negotiated while forces driven by ideology are beyond negotiations.

What then is the way forward?

To begin with, segregation of the two forces followed by political isolation of all ideologically-driven elements. The one political force best suited to do the task is the Awami National Party (ANP). And, the best model to be followed is the '*Awakening Groups*' in Iraq. Over the past five years, some 1,000 Muslim suicide bombers have killed more than 13,000 Muslim men, women and children in Iraq. Last year, tribal Sheikhs began forming ad-hoc armed forces that guard neighborhoods, infrastructure and man checkpoints. These '*Awakening Groups*' across Iraq have managed to identify and then isolate Al-Qaida elements. As a consequence, Al-Qaida is fast losing sanctuaries and is being unable to continue its deadly campaign of terror. *Awakening Groups* have risen; risen up against suicide bombers. And, the number of suicide attacks is sharply down.

In Pakistan, suicide attacks are not a reaction to something that Pak Army may have done. The suicide campaign is entirely proactive seeking to establish safe heavens on Pakistani territory. In the meanwhile, Pakistani society continues to tolerate extremist preachers and Muslim suicide bombers are killing no one but their Muslim brothers and sisters.

3. Recommendations of CRSS:

CRSS strongly recommends the following:

1. The State of Pakistan should not be negotiating with forces that challenge the state's writ.
2. Pakistan's new political leadership should recognize the global consensus on the elimination of the terrorist threat originating from the Pak-Afghan border.
3. As has been the case in the past, negotiating with forces driven by an ideology of destruction shall remain fruitless.
4. Forces representing *Pushtunwali* or the tribal honor code are reasonable and worthy of negotiating with.
5. PPP and PML-N must persuade their respective constituencies that the 'war on terror' is our war as well.
6. The newly elected National Assembly must introduce legislation restraining extremist preachers the use of mosque loudspeakers.
7. The newly elected National Assembly must introduce legislation to bar the use of mosques for inciting hatred against any religion or nation.