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## Pakistan: Terrorism Reigning Supreme?

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**2008 was worse:** In 2008, there were 599 bomb blasts and 6,715 Pakistanis lost their lives to terrorism. In 2007, there were 462 bomb blasts and 3,599 Pakistanis had lost their lives to terrorism. Clearly, 2008 was worse than 2007.

**Muslims are killing Muslims in the name of Islam. To be sure, terrorist violence in Pakistan predates the arrival of NATO forces in Afghanistan.**

**Worsening by the year:** Bombings are one the rise in Pakistan as in 2002, there were only 2 suicide attacks; 2 suicide attacks in 2003, 7 in 2004, 4 in 2005, 7 in 2006, 56 suicide attacks in 2007 and 61 suicide attacks in 2008. It's surely getting worse. Look at the figures of annual fatalities resulting from terrorist violence: In 2003, total annual fatalities from terrorist violence stood at 189. In 2004, a total of 863 Pakistanis died, 648 died in 2005, 1,471 in 2006, 3,599 in 2007 and 6,715 died in 2008. Between 2003-08, 13,793 precious Pakistani lives have been consumed by terrorist violence.

**NWFP/FATA took the real brunt:** In 2008, Swat burned like no other district did. According to a report posted by Ashrafuddin Pirzada, Swat "topped the list of districts where 11 suicide bombers hit targets, killing 101 people and injuring 294 others. Four suicide bombers struck in Peshawar in 2008, killing 99 and wounding 226 others. Punjab witnessed 10 suicide blasts with five in Lahore alone. Three suicide bombers hit their targets in the federal capital during the year. One of these attackers targeted the Danish embassy." In 2008, around 75 percent of all suicide attacks took place in NWFP or the Federally Administrated Tribal Areas (FATA).

**Religious extremism is not new to Pakistan:** Muslims are killing Muslims in the name of Islam. To be sure, terrorist violence in Pakistan predates the arrival of NATO forces in Afghanistan. In the first 9 months of 2001, even before September 11, Pakistan went through 45 bomb blasts including 12 in Quetta, 10 in Karachi, 3 in Rawalpindi and 2 each in Lahore and Peshawar (there were bomb blasts in Okara, Gujranwalla, Sialkot and Gujrat). To be certain, attacks on cable television operators, beauty parlors and on women who either refuse to wear a veil or wear western attire had become common in settled Pakistani areas several years prior to September 11.

At least 2 years prior to September 11, the state of Pakistan had lost its writ over some 10,000 square kilometers of physical terrain between Tochi and Gomal rivers (all figures are based on data bases maintained by the Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS), the Institute of Conflict Management and news reports).

**One basic reality behind terrorism in Pakistan:** In effect, Muslims who reject the current world order want to impose their own world view on the rest of Pakistan--and that too through violence. In essence, it is a struggle for political power, a struggle between two

world views. The struggle is for the soul of Pakistan and the origin of this struggle is older than September 11. Pakistan now has more casualties from terrorist violence than does Iraq or Afghanistan. In NWFP, the entire political leadership is on the run and extremists are winning. In Punjab, there is no political consensus on fighting terrorism. Nawaz Sharif, the leader of the largest political party in Punjab, does not even view the current terrorist threat as a clash between two world views. Shahbaz Sharif says, "The government should shun someone else's war." Nawaz Sharif says, "There's no reason not to engage in a dialogue with those involved in terrorist activities."

The fact of the matter is that the threat to Pakistan is no longer terrorism; it's from a hyper-active insurgency (terrorism refers to "acts which are intended to create fear" while an insurgency is a rebellion where rebels actually hold physical terrain).

**Pakistani State losing land?** Of the 778,720 square km land area we call Pakistan there's some 20,000 square km in FATA that is beyond Islamabad's writ, around 25,000 square km of NWFP is barely under the writ of the state and some 300,000 square km of Balochistan has long been in a state of turmoil, agitation and severe distress.