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Counter Terrorist Trends and Analysis

Inside

Ten Years after Bali - Rohan Gunaratna

Re-empowering a Declining Movement? - Arabinda Acharya

The U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan: Implications for Pakistan's Militant Landscape - Abdul Basit

Ten Years after Bali

By Rohan Gunaratna

This article examines the impact of the Bali terrorist attack on 12 October 2002 on Southeast Asia and the emergency of the Jama'ah Ansharut Tauhid (JAT).

The coordinated simultaneous terrorist attack in Bali on 12 October 2002 was the worst terrorist incident in Southeast Asia and second to 9/11 attacks in the U.S. in terms of casualties and impact. The mastermind of 9/11 attacks and Al Qaeda leader Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (KSM) funded the attack and Al Jemmah al Islamiyah's (JI) operational leader Hambali guided Mukhlas, the JI leader for Southern Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore, to carry out the attack. Southeast Asia was not prepared for a mass fatality and mass casualty attack. Ten years after this terrible attack, JI is no longer the most violent threat group in Southeast Asia. Largely due to Indonesia's leadership in the fight against terrorism, JI has now transformed from a terrorist group to an ideological organization radicalizing the next generation of fighters. However, even as JI declined,

a dozen groups have emerged ensuring a continuity of the threat.

The Bali attack was perpetrated by Afghanistan war veterans including those who participated in the anti-Soviet multi-national Afghan jihad (1979-1989). Although the Soviets withdrew, the fighting between Muslim threat groups and the return of the Taliban in 1995 created the conditions for continuing instability. Afghanistan-Pakistan region emerged as the epicentre of training, ideology, finance and training of insurgents, terrorists and extremists from all over the world including from Southeast Asia. Until U.S.-led coalition intervention in October 2001, Afghanistan-Pakistan region trained tens of thousands of fighters that posed a security threat of global proportions.



People stand at the scene of a bomb blast in Bali on 12 October 2002. Photo credit: Agence France-Presse/Oka Budhi. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/04/21/2548710.htm?site=local>

With the withdrawal of Western forces from Afghanistan in 2014, the return of the Taliban and Al Qaeda to Afghanistan is likely. As on mid-2012, Nuristan and Kunar in Afghanistan and North Waziristan in Pakistan offer safe haven for threat groups from Afghanistan and Pakistan as well as from the neighbouring countries. If they succeed to spread and take Kabul, the threat is likely to spread. South Asia followed by Central Asia, Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia will certainly be the most affected. Today, the Afghan Taliban led by Mullah Omar and its associated groups work together with two dozen groups globally including the Southeast Asian groups.

Why Bali?

The Bali attack was not a surprise for the security and intelligence services in the region. In December 2001, Singapore's Internal Security Department (ISD) disrupted a plot against the U.S., British, Australian, Israeli diplomatic missions and the Singaporean government, as well as other targets. The law enforcement, security and intelligence agencies of Malaysia, Philippines and Australia collaborated with Singapore to dismantle JI, but Indonesia did not. Singapore government provided the name Amrozi to their Indonesian counterparts but they could not undertake a preventive arrest. The return of democracy to Indonesia in 1998 created space for the emergence of several Islamist as well as Muslim militia groups. With the disruption of the JI plot in Singapore, the JI leaders who gathered in Johore, Malaysia planned to bomb bars, nightclubs and restaurants frequented by Westerners. Bali in Indonesia, the region's best-known tourist resort, became their natural target. Al Qaeda funded JI attack in Bali on 12 October 2002 killed 202 including 88 Australians.

Both 9/11 and 2002 Bali attacks created a high fatality and casualty threshold for other insurgent and terrorist groups. During the decade that followed, the world witnessed only four at-

tacks that killed more than 202 people. First, an attack and arson at a refugee camp in Uganda that killed 239 and injured 60 on 21 February 2004; second, hostage taking at a school in Beslan, Russia that resulted in the killing of 336 and injuring 747 on 1-3 September 2004; third, the multiple car bombings in Iraq's Al-Qataniyah and Al-Adnaniyah that killed 520 and injured 1500 on 14 August 2007 and fourth, the attacks bombings in trains in Mumbai, India that killed 202 and injured more than 700.

Since the beginning of the contemporary wave of terrorism in 1968 and until the Bali attack in 2002, there were less than a dozen terrorist attacks killing over 202 civilians. These were an arson attack on a theatre in Abadan, Iran, killing 477 and injuring ten on 20 August 1978; truck bombings of U.S. Marine and French barracks in Beirut, Lebanon killing 301 and injuring 161 on 23 October 1983; the mid-air bombing of Air India flight off Ireland, killing 329 on 23 June 1985; bombings in Bombay, India killing 317 and injuring 1400 on 12 March 1993; attack at Ben Talha, Algeria killing 277 on 22 September 1997; attack at Ami Moussa, Algeria killing 272 on 30 December, 1997; the bombings of U.S. embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Saalam, Tanzania killing 303 and injuring 4954 on 8 August 1998; and mid-air bombing of Pan Am flight over Lockerbie, Scotland killing 270 and injuring 12 on 21 December 1988. According to Dr. Wm. Robert Johnston, who researched the worst terrorist strikes worldwide, the intentional crash of Egypt Air flight off Massachusetts, USA, by pilot on 31 October 1999 may also be an act of terrorism. It can be safely concluded that the attack on Bali was one of the world's worst terrorist attacks.

Post-October 2002 Bali Attack

After Bali 2002, the U.S. government designated Southeast Asia as the "second front" on the "Global War on Terrorism" on 14 February 2003. Even with the designation or because of that,

the Southeast Asian security environment did not deteriorate because the Southeast Asian security and intelligence agencies, law enforcement authorities and militaries were able to contain the threat working together with their U.S., European and Australian counterparts. However, while governments have disrupted and degraded the terrorist networks in the region, the insurgent threats from southern Thailand and southern Philippines continue to haunt the region.

The ideological and operational relationship between JI and Al Qaeda made JI the most hunted terrorist group in Southeast Asia. Its undisputed leader, Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, Indonesia's most notorious cleric was called the Osama bin Laden of Asia. Ba'asyir argued that Muslims must recognize that jihad is an individual obligation for all Muslims. Although many students of Ba'asyir's school were arrested for their role in Bali attack and subsequent attacks, the Government of Indonesia did not clamp down on either Pondok Pesantren al Mukmin in Ngruki in Solo or its network of affiliated schools. Known as the Ngruki, network, the school produced the bulk of terrorist leadership. Since the death of Abdullah Sungkar, one of the founding leaders of JI, on

24 October 1999, Hambali, the operational leader of JI continued the secret relationship with Al Qaeda. Al Qaeda's link to Southeast Asia was temporarily disrupted with the capture of Omar al Faruq, a Kuwaiti-Iraqi, in Bogor, Indonesia, on 5 June 2002.

Al Qaeda point man in Southeast Asia Hambali was arrested in Ayutthaya, Thailand by General Tritot Ronnaritvichai of the Thai Special Branch on 11, August 2003. Meanwhile, JI conducted and planned operations together with Al Qaeda in the region and beyond. These included a "second wave" of attacks against the U.S. The plot to hit the Bank of America (Library Tower) building in Los Angeles was disrupted with Hambali's arrest and his subsequent transfer to U.S. custody in Guantanamo Bay. Nonetheless, associates of Hambali continued to capture the imagination of salafi-jihadists by creating groups in the name of Al Qaeda. JI splinters created "Tandzim Al-Qaidah Indonesia" [Al Qaeda in Indonesia] led by Noordin Mohamed Top, Al Qaeda in the Malay Archipelago led by Mohammed Fadzullah and Tandzim Al Qaidah Indonesia Wilayah Serambi Makkah [Al Qaeda in Indonesia in the Gateway to Mecca] led by Dulmatin. The strategy of the Al Qaeda linked JI was not



Abu Bakar Ba'asyir (left) listens to the testimony of an Islamic Law expert witness during his trial hearing on 18 April 2011.

Photo credit: The Jakarta Post. <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2011/04/18/eyeing-witness.html>

only to mount attacks in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand, but also Maldives, Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Vietnam, and Cambodia.

Emergence of Jama'ah Ansharut Tauhid (JAT)

Until 2001, JI operated as the premier regional terrorist organization in Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines and in Australia. To respond to the Bali bombing in 2002, Indonesia set up a Bombing Task Force and subsequently established Detachment 88 (Densus 88). In response to their role in Bali, Indonesia executed three of the bombers – Mukhlas, Imam Samudra and Amrozi on 9, November 2008. D88 relentlessly targeted JI members, but not the group. JI support infrastructure survived, transformed and revived. Although Abu Rusydan, the new leader of JI leader, abandoned the strategy of violence due to internal conflict, a new group Jama'ah Ansharut Tauhid (JAT) emerged. Furthermore, new groups, some with overlapping membership with JAT emerged. The most active are Jamaah Tauhid Wal Jihad and Laskar Hisbah, groups with similar ideologies declaring non-Muslims as infidels and Muslims unlike them as apostates. The debate that followed the JI split demonstrated that Islamists were unwilling to compromise on their goal of creating Islamic states. JAT openly criticised JI, accusing the later of sitting around and doing nothing while others waged jihad. JAT accused JI of being sufficiently satisfied with just waging jihad by pen, by publishing books on jihad and distributing them to radical members only. The JI countered by stating that it was strategically preparing for jihad, focused on dakwah to make ordinary people understand that they needed to wage jihad against an idolatrous government. While JAT politicized, radicalized and mobilized the public, its secret cells conducted intermittent attacks.

What Next?

The future of the terrorist threat in the region would be based on past attacks and lessons learnt from those attacks. Working with JI, Al Qaeda planned several attacks in Southeast Asia but they were disrupted by regional governments. Although not widely publicized, KSM and Hambali planned to mount an operation to coincide with the attacks in New York and Washington D.C. Based on the debriefings, the 9/11 Commission reported; "The operatives would hijack U.S.-flagged commercial planes flying Pacific routes across East Asia and destroy them in midair possibly with shoe bombs, instead of flying them into targets." Using Yemenis, Al Qaeda also envisaged an alternate scenario of hijacking planes originating in "Thailand, South Korea, Hong Kong, or Malaysia" and flying them onto "U.S. targets, Japan, Singapore or Korea." However, to keep the operation involving planes simple, the East Asia component was vetoed by Osama bin Laden.

Throughout the 1990s several Al Qaeda leaders and operatives visited Malaysia and Thailand. This included Zacarias Moussaoui, the 20th hijacker for 9/11 attacks who visited Malaysia twice. Similarly, the planning meeting for the bombing of USS Cole in Aden, Yemen and 9/11 attacks was held in Thailand and Malaysia. Just before traveling to the US, the 9/11 hijackers, Khalid al Midhar and Nawaz al Hazmir, met with Tawfiq bin Attash, the head of administration of the operations committee of Al Qaeda in Yazid Sufaat's apartment in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Sufaat was the head of Al Qaeda's Anthrax project in Afghanistan prior to 9/11. In addition to re-energizing some existing conflicts, Al Qaeda and its associated group, JI, influenced and sustained multiple threat groups and conflicts in Asia.

Conclusion

In Southeast Asia, most insurgent and terrorist

groups are based in Indonesia, southern Thailand and southern Philippines. Due to effective operations by Detachment 88, Indonesia's elite counter terrorism force, the threat in Indonesia has dramatically declined. Nonetheless, the lack of a proper legal and judicial framework as well as the absence of a counter-extremist strategy perpetuates the threat. In the southern Philippines and southern Thailand, a few ethno-nationalist Muslim groups continue to fight their respective governments. While the Philippines government has been able to weaken the Al Qaeda linked Abu Saayaf Group (ASG) with U.S. and Australian collaboration, Indonesia remains vulnerable to sporadic attacks. Moreover, the groups in Indonesia have begun to target the local interests in the security and political establishment (the near enemy) together with targeting the US and other Western interests (the far enemy). In the absence of concrete and effective counter-measures, Thailand is likely to remain the most violent conflict zone in South-east Asia. As a whole, the governments in the region are doing well to prevent another Bali-style attack. But everything depends on how wider Asia-Pacific region in particular and the world in general deal with issues – particularly those with political and religious overtones – which are at the root of extremist, terrorist and insurgent threats.

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Re-empowering a Declining Movement?

By Arabinda Acharya

This article examines the impact of the attack on the US Consulate in Libya and the violent protests across the Middle East and other parts of the world against the anti-Islam movie on the extremists and the jihadist movement and relations between the West and the Islamic world.

The killings of Chris Stevens, the American ambassador to Libya and his colleagues in Benghazi and the outpouring of violent protests against the US in many parts of the world but Middle East in particular cannot just be explained in terms of the “legacy of tyranny” or the outcome of Arab world’s transition to democracy, a process which many political theorists believe, tend to be very turbulent. The events involve a cocktail of many complex issues. There is the residue of decades of anger against the West, particularly the US, created and sustained by the jihadist movement, the uncertainties and difficulties that accompanied the Arab Spring uprisings and an expectation that the Arab countries which shed their authoritarian rulers in particular and the Arab world in general could internalize the tenets of the Western standard democracy overnight. Moreover, the significance of the timing of the attack on the 11th anniversary of 9/11 and the fact that it followed a call by Al Qaeda leader al-Zawahiri to avenge the death of Abu Yahya al-Libi – a senior leader of the group of Libyan origin - cannot not be overlooked.

While the Arab Spring could have undermined the jihadist project on many fronts, it has also unwittingly created new spaces for the movement to regroup and reorganize particularly in those countries which have gone through the political transitions. As the new rulers in these countries remain preoccupied with the burdens of transition especially on the political and economic matters, the attention of the governments has been diverted significantly from security issues, specifically those dealing with the extremists and jihadists elements operating in their respective countries or regionally. Such countries, as emphasized by al-Zawahiri in the 11th anniversary video, provide

significant opportunities to demonstrate the feasibility of jihadist state-building of the kind pursued by Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in Yemen.

In this context, if indeed the attack on the US Consulate in Benghazi was a premeditated assault as is becoming increasingly evident, it raises serious concerns about jihadist infiltration and subversion of some of the key institutions of governments. The composition of post-revolution regimes in some of the countries is complex. Even during the protest movements, there was concern about the jihadists, who were on the margins or thrown out of the country, getting mixed up with the emerging political and security structures. Given the volatile post-revolution environment, the jihadist infiltration of the new regimes could not be entirely ruled out.

Second, the fact that the reaction or response of the governments of many of these countries was slow in coming and deficient is not surprising. The regimes are new and yet to master the art of statecraft especially those involving complex security issues. Moreover, given a shared experience of the revolution, differentiating a friend from the foe would not be a simple task – not in the short term. Consequently these regimes would remain vulnerable to jihadist infiltration and subversion.

Third, it is premature to expect that the regimes would react to the threats the same way as their authoritarian predecessors, especially when the threat is provoked by sensitive religious issues. There could be a natural empathy with the protestors or instigators of violence at least as an immediate reaction as was the case in Egypt

which could delay the response necessary to protect life and property. Inevitably, jihadists would always look for such opportunities and try to hijack seemingly innocent protests and turn them violent. For the jihadists, harming the enemy is important – not so much as how it is done. Protests moreover could be good covers to mobilize and carry out violent attacks. This is very important since direct acts of violence have made the jihadists and their movement extremely unpopular even within the Muslim communities.

Finally, the incident that triggered the crisis in the first place could have been avoided. Freedom is great. But it also implies a responsible conduct – to understand the consequences of one's action especially when freedom is taken to be a license. Given that the respective socio-political contexts are so divergent and faith is an extremely personal affair, reactions to such issues cannot be the same for all. It is also naïve to expect that everyone would accept actions which are insulting and derogatory to a particular religion as “essential parts of free and democratic societies.”

On the contrary such acts are like “political oxygen” in the hands of the jihadists to reenergize

and revitalize the movement which otherwise was becoming increasingly weak and was on the decline.

The current wave of violent protests spreading across the world is also putting additional pressure on already over-strained relations between the West and the Islamic world. In this context, both acts of bigotry and violence need to be universally condemned and stopped forthwith. While violence cannot be the standard response to blasphemy, the perpetrators of the same should not be allowed to shield themselves under the right to free speech veil. Ultimately, the balance between the freedom of speech and religious sensitivities is the key to avoid what could potentially be a clash of civilizations with explosive consequences affecting one and all.

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A man films the protests at the US Consulate in Benghazi, Libya on 11 September 2012.

Photo credit: Reuters/Esam Al-Fetori

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/libya/9537366/US-ambassador-to-Libya-killed-in-attack-on-Benghazi-consulate.html>

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The U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan: Implications for Pakistan's Militant Landscape

By Abdul Basit

The popular political belief that there will be a reduction in violence in Pakistan after the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2014. If the state does not respond with a comprehensive counter-terrorism policy, it will lead to a higher level of violence. The Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan's (TTP), involvement in anti-Shia killings and recent video messages of its leadership against the country's democratic political system clearly indicates that the creation of an Islamic Emirate in Pakistan is TTP's goal.

Popular Political Narrative about the Pakistani Taliban

The popular belief is that Taliban style movements and mushrooming of other similar terrorist and extremist groups in the Pakistani tribal areas is attributed to the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan which resulted in violence and insecurity spilling over to Pakistan. The sudden U-turn of General (Rtd.) Pervez Musharraf led military regime against Mullah Omar's Taliban and decision to become a coalition partner in the U.S. led war on terror contributed to growth of these terror groups.

It is argued before 9/11 the current wave of violence and suicide attacks were unheard of in Pakistan. Most of the explanations hold U.S. led drone strikes, the Pakistan army's counter terrorism operations against militant groups in Federally Administrated Tribal Areas (FATA), on American behest, and pervasive anti-American sentiments among the Pashtun tribes of FATA as the reason for high levels of terrorist violence in the country.

According to this school of thought Pakistan unnecessarily got involved in the American War on Terror (WOT) and alienated its Pashtuns tribes. The U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan will strip these terror groups of their legitimacy or *raison d'être*, which will lead reduced security threats inside the country and most groups could be reconciled through negotiations.

Problems with this Narrative

However, these groups cannot be pushed aside by simply branding them as a mere byproduct of the American invasion of Afghanistan and Pakistan's alliance with the U.S. in the WOT. This line of thinking is more or less similar to pro-jihad policies of the 1980s during the Russo-Afghan war. At that time, there was no attempt to dismantle the jihadi groups at the end of the war. In ten years' time, these unattended jihadis turned into a Frankenstein monster like Al-Qaeda posing threats to international peace and stability. A similar scenario with even more devastating consequences than those of 9/11, could emerge in the absence of a policy to manage after ISAF withdrawal in 2014.

In last few years, the proscribed Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the umbrella group of Pakistani Taliban, developed a strong political and ideological base within Pakistan. Its continued existence or elimination does not depend on circumstantial factors like the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan or disengagement of Pakistan's alliance with the former. Politically the group wants to be the sole champion of the cause of Pakistan's Islamization. Ideologically, it wants to introduce a Wahabi-Salafi brand of Shariah which is anti-US or West and promotes global jihad.

Why Home Grown Terrorism in Pakistan will not subside after the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan?

Recent developments indicate the ISAF with-

drawal from Afghanistan in 2014 will push Pakistan further into abyss of terrorist violence and unrest.

Prior to the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan the TTP had already started turning its guns against Pakistan. It has gradually shifted its focus from basing all its agendas, motives and interests on anti-US sentiments to cause of Islamization in Pakistan through jihad and various other indigenous issues.

With a few months left before the parliamentary elections in early 2013 in Pakistan, the TTP's bid to seek a fatwa (religious ruling) from the country's religious scholars against democracy as a system of governance points to transformation in its strategy to make its presence felt on Pakistan's political landscape. On 15 August 2012, the TTP wrote a four page open letter to country's religious scholars in which they maintained their struggle was not only against Pakistan's alliance with the U.S. in the WOT, but also against the democratic system of governance in Pakistan. The letter notes,

Pakistan's forefathers demanded a separate homeland for the Indian Muslims from the British Raj (rule) so that they could live their lives according to Islamic system. Hindustan (the United India) had a secular system so it was not possible for us to live with them. Pakistan was created in the name of Islam. This is why the Taliban raised the slogan of implementation of Islamic sharia system in Pakistan and opposed the current democratic system which not only negates the aspirations of our forefathers but also Islamic teachings...

The refusal of the TTP to sympathize with the cricketer turned politician Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehrike Insaf (PTI) to lead a protest rally to Waziristan in October 2012 against the U.S. predator drone strikes in FATA is another case in point. After taking back its initial life threats to Khan as a result of him calling for a protest, the TTP have maintained it did not need any support or help from liberals like him.



The chief of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Hakeemullah Mehsud, giving an interview to Pakistani and international media in 2009. Photo credit: Majasaja.com. <http://www.majasaja.com/ttp-chief-says-in-swa-baitullah-is-alive/4026.html>

The TTP's reaction shows how jealously it guards its political turf in Waziristan. The Shura council of the TTP made sure that Khan's party did not have any room to garner support for his party. The TTP is not giving his party any space to make inroads in the tribal regions, by issuing a statement directly to the PTI warning them not to visit Waziristan.

Moreover, in a video message released by TTP's Al-Umar Studio in May 2012 the TTP chief, Hakeemullah Mehsud, openly criticized religious political parties for paying lip service to Islam for the last 67 years and using it for their petty politicking and vested interests.

Mehsud specially criticized Qazi Hussain Ahmed, the former chief of the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), for his overtures to revive the Milli Yakjehti Council (MYC), an alliance of different religious sects to ensure sectarian harmony in the country, and offering his prayers alongside the Shia Muslims. He also lambasted Qazi for his fatwa (religious ruling) declaring jihad was allowed in Afghanistan, a Muslim land under non-Muslim occupation, and not in Pakistan.

Yet another factor which makes the TTP a force to reckon with post-2014, is the sectarian credentials of its current leadership. The terror group is as anti-Shia as the banned Sunni Deobandi terror outfit Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) or the Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), renamed as Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat (ASWJ). The TTP has a close nexus with these groups and the current leadership of the TTP has been part of the LeJ or SSP in the past.

In 2007, Hakeemullah Mehsud, who was the TTP chief for Khyber, Kurram and Orakzai tribal agencies from December 2007 to August 2008, spearheaded the Shia massacre in Parachinar, the administrative headquarters of Kurram Agency.. The former spokesperson of the TTP, Azam Tariq and head of the TTP Darra Adam Khel chapter, Tariq Afridi, also have strong anti-Shia backgrounds.

The TTP makes no bones of having open hostility and animosity towards various political personalities and parties across country's political divide. The long list of its political enemies includes the leaders of almost all the political par-



The deputy chief of TTP, Waliur Rehman Mehsud, giving an interview to Associate Press of Pakistan in Shakoti area of South Waziristan tribal region in 2011. Photo credit: Associate Press. http://newshopper.sulekha.com/waliur-rehman_photo_1828316.htm

ties. From liberal secular parties like the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and the Awami National Party (ANP) to parties situated at the center of political divide the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz and the Pakistan Tehrike Insaf (PTI) and far right political parties like the Jamiat-e-Ulama-e-Islam Fazal Faction (JUI-F) and the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) are in TTP's enemy list.

In the past, the terror group did not even spare the religious scholars who disagreed with its exclusivist and puritanical religious views and violent terrorist methods. In 2010, the TTP has carried out two suicide attacks against the JUI-F chief Maulan Fazlur Rehman in Charsadda and Swabi districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province. On 15 September 2007, the TTP also assassinated Maulana Hassan a renowned Sunni Deobandi cleric in Peshawar, capital of KP, for opposing its unbridled use of violence against civilians.

Why Negotiating with the TTP is not a Viable Option?

Some political parties and analysts, including Imran Khan, advocate a negotiating with terrorist and extremist groups in Pakistan, arguing that after ten years of relentless fighting the Americans are holding talks with factions of the Taliban in Afghanistan. However, the resistance groups in Afghanistan and the terror groups in Pakistan are qualitatively different in their context and nature. The former is a nationalist resistance movement fighting to what they claim as liberating their country from foreign forces, the latter is an assortment of rebel groups fighting against security forces and civilians inside their own country. The Afghan Taliban's main focus is internal, while the Pakistani Taliban groups are proponents of global jihad. Moreover, the Afghan Taliban have distanced themselves from Al-Qaeda, the TTP is closely allied to the global jihadist movement. So negotiations with the Pakistani Taliban will not only amount to appeasing the rebels but providing

sanctuary to Al-Qaeda affiliates on the Pakistani soil.

Allowing rebel groups like the TTP to exist will lead to further divisions and polarization in the country. In last few years the string of attacks unleashed at the revered Sufi shrines across Pakistan, targeting of Eid Milad processions (religious festival celebrating birth of Prophet Muhammad Peace be Upon Him) are just few reminders of things to come if TTP were allowed any room to champion the cause of Islamization in Pakistan.

At this critical juncture Pakistan stands at a cross road and the 'powers that be' need to make a hard choice. A cursory look at previous peace deals concluded with militants reveal all the peace agreements failed, save one. The 2007 peace agreement with Hafiz Gul Bahadur and Maulvi Nazir groups is still surviving but on very ephemeral foundations. A military operation in North Waziristan will scrap this peace deal as well. In almost all cases militants have used the peace deals as time buying tactics to regroup and reorganize themselves and called them off once they regained their strength. In the light of aforementioned facts it is abundantly clear that the TTP will not settle for anything less than Islamic caliphate in Pakistan.

Conclusion

As the war on terror has progressed the Pakistani Taliban have forged an alliance with Al-Qaeda and developed their long-term strategic interests inside Pakistan. The ISAF withdrawal from Afghanistan is not going to take the steam out of their wings. Rather it could further aggravate the threat of homegrown militancy and terrorism in Pakistan. The continuation of military operations alone will not be sufficient to control or eradicate the TTP. A political counter-narrative and ideological rebuttal of the militants' policies will also be required to limit and reverse their growth after 2014.

At the same time following the ISAF withdrawal from Afghanistan the domestic pressure will increase on the government to call back troops from the tribal areas or strike peace deals with the terror groups there. At this juncture media awareness campaigns educating the masses about the need and rationale to continue military operations in the tribal areas beyond 2014 is needed. Any failure on this count can push Pakistan down a precipitous path of endless unrest and volatility.

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For further inquiries regarding subscription and access to the Global Pathfinder database, please email Ms. Elena Ho Wei Ling at the following email address: isewlho@ntu.edu.sg

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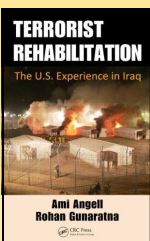
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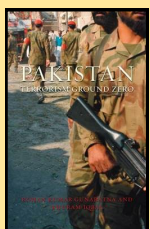
ICPVTR conducts research, training, and outreach programs aimed at reducing the threat of politically motivated violence and at mitigating its effects on the international system. The Centre seeks to integrate academic theory with practical knowledge, which is essential for a complete and comprehensive understanding of threats from politically-motivated groups.

The Centre is staffed by academic specialists, religious scholars, as well as personnel from the law enforcement, military and intelligence agencies, among others. The Centre is culturally and linguistically diverse, comprising of functional and regional analysts as well as Muslim religious scholars from Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe and North America.

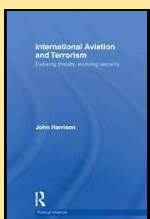
Events and Publications



- Terrorist Rehabilitation: The US Experience in Iraq (CRC Press Taylor and Francis Group, 2011) by Dr. Ami Angell and Dr. Rohan Gunaratna

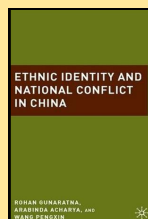


- Pakistan: Terrorism Ground Zero (Reaktion Books, 2011) by Dr. Rohan Gunaratna and Mr. Khurram Iqbal



- International Aviation and Terrorism: Evolving Threats, Evolving Security (Routledge 2009) by Dr. John Harrison

For upcoming events
at ICPVTR, visit
www.pvtr.org



- Ethnic Identity and National Conflict in China (Palgrave Macmillan 22 June 2010) by Dr. Rohan Gunaratna, Dr. Arabinda Acharya and Mr. Wang Pengxin



- Targeting Terrorist Financing: International Cooperation and New Regimes (Routledge 2009) by Dr. Arabinda Acharya