

Sectarianism; the players and the game

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Introduction

Sectarian violence or violence stemming from difference in religious beliefs has been witnessed in Pakistan in various forms since the partition of sub-continent in 1947 between India and Pakistan. In the united-India the phenomenon of sectarian violence was limited to a certain number of states¹ and was virtually non-existent in the areas that now form part of Pakistan. The Shia-Sunni relationship remained normal in the early years of independence except for occasional riots² or minor clashes during Muharram ceremonies.

The researches carried out over the years have brought forward several theories for the present violent state of affairs. Some argue that the sect-related war is not an outcome of difference of beliefs but due to economic disparity that existed in certain parts of the country at the time of independence and is found even today and the highhanded and inhumane treatment of the peasants by the feudal lords. There are others who blame it on the faulty policies of successive government in dealing with religious organizations and the influx of unchecked finances from foreign sources. Each and every factor has been researched and still exists a needs for each one of the factors to be thoroughly looked into again but for this study let us not get ourselves involved in the debate as to what were the factors responsible for making a non-issue an issue. Such a study would require us to encompass the role of every political and military government since independence, their faulty policies and also to study various religious and reformist movement of the sub-continent. It would require detailed accounts of movements against the Ahmadi community and as to how President Gen. Ayub Khan used religious parties and beliefs about a woman's competence to be a states head while contesting elections against Fatima Jinnah; how Zulfikar Ali Bhutto surrendered to the fundamentalists' demands

¹ Ambala, Rohtak, Karnal, Patiala, Hisar

² The first major anti-Shia riots took place in 1963 in Tahri, Khairpur district (Sindh) during Muharram. Posters were published in 1970 which incited Sunnis to takeover Pakistan with the slogan 'Jag Sunni Jag. Pakistan tera hai' (Wake up Sunnis, Pakistan is yours). The (Un) holy Nexus? Newslines September 1998.

and declared Ahmadi's as infidels; and certain other steps by governments taken to appease the maulavi.

The recent history of violence can be broadly divided into two periods. The first period which was less violent and even when inter-sect violence occurred it was not perpetrated in an organized manner. Such a situation existed before Gen. Ziaul Haq³ came to power in 1977 and the second period comprises years under the Zia rule when sectarian violence took a new dimension and it became organized and with the passage of time became far more violent as we find it now.

There cannot be two opinions about the fact that it was during the dark period of Gen. Zia's rule that people became acquainted with the term 'sectarianism'. The legacy of hate and violence Zia left behind still haunts the country and hundreds of people have been killed⁴ in the undeclared war between the Shias and Sunnis and the sectarian demon is growing stronger by the day.

The focus of the present study is on the state of affairs during the Zia's rule and the years that followed and where we stand today. The early years of Zia-rule was a period when a number of religious organizations with a limited agenda and spreading a specific brand of Islamic school of thought propped up everywhere like mushrooms and started indoctrinating the people in a way that affected the sectarian harmony at its roots. The promulgation of Zakat and Usher Ordinance⁵ reduced the dependence of maulavi on the public and his association with district and provincial administration made him a 'powerful' man. The situation moved forward and a new breed of 'donor' funded maulavis appeared on the scene. They were educated from various religious schools both within the country and abroad and even dressed up in a certain manner that would make it easy for the public to differentiate maulavi of one sect from the other. Where did this breed come from; who was funding them and what were the motives, are a few questions that need to be addressed at length.

³ General Ziaul Haq came into power in 1977 by removing the political government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and ruled the country for 11 years till 1988.

⁴ According to police records at least 1,000 people were killed in incidents of sect-related violence in the province of Punjab alone in the last decade.

⁵ Zakat and Usher Ordinance 1979, for the first time brought the collection and distribution of zakat under the state control and zakat was imposed in the form of a tax on bank accounts.

The policy of the Zia regime to turn a blind eye to the activities of sectarian and religious organizations and give them a certain level of importance and acceptance at the official level was among the important factors in making them larger than life groups that now threaten the very existence of the country.

To understand the dynamics of sectarian violence and parties involved therein one has to study each and every religious and sectarian organization that was and still is involved one way or the other in fanning sectarian hatred. One thing should be kept in mind that only those sectarian organizations would be studied here which are commonly known for their involvement in sectarian violence.

The agenda of the party, its sources of generating funds and support actually rendered to it by various individuals and organizations and similarly, the period during which it emerged on the scene and the conducive environment present at the time which helped the organization in establishing itself will also be discussed in this study. At the same level we also need to examine the common belief about the financial support to these organization by some foreign nations during this period to keep the fires raging.

The tree of sectarian hatred and confronting the rival in violent way was planted during the Zia regime and after his death what every successive government did to contain or allow it to spread unchecked cannot be ignored. The politically motivated decisions of the Sharif and the Benazir Bhutto governments and those of their allies in no way fall in line with their declared agenda to rid the country of the menace but they used it for their personal gains. And in some cases where the governments took strong steps against some militant organizations⁶, it remains to be seen whether they were genuine attempts to curb sectarianism or steps taken to ensure the personal safety of the rulers when they themselves came under siege.

It would be unjust not to put light on the role of the law enforcing agencies in the unholy war being waged by rival organizations for years. The nature of the job landed many a policemen, with very little support from the government, in trouble when they found themselves confronted with highly motivated sectarian activists and actually became a

⁶ In 1998-99 the Punjab police with Shahbaz Sharif as the chief minister killed at least 36 sectarian terrorists in police encounters.

potential target⁷ themselves. The dubious role played by the superior intelligence agencies has been, if not in public certainly in private meetings, a part of a debate both within the department and at other forums.

At present we have reached a stage where sectarian organizations are well rooted in the society and one thing apart from finances required for keeping them alive is manpower. How do such organizations develop and maintain their manpower? Who are the people joining these organizations? Is their message so strong that it attracts the youth to join them? Are the religious seminaries their only sources of increasing manpower?

The half-hearted attempts made by different governments to engage the warring factions in dialogue and the role of Jamaat-e-Islami in this regard also needs to be discussed. The development following the ban imposed by Pervez Musharraf government on the activities of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and Sipah-e-Muhammad and issued warning to the Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan and Tehrik-e-Jafria Pakistan also needs to be monitored. Will the militant organizations who had been killing people with impunity respect the ban imposed on their activities? or would this step be remembered as another childish attempt to make it look like that the government is doing something? Only time will tell.

⁷ At least 65 policemen have been killed by sectarian terrorists in the province of Punjab alone since 1990.

Profiles of sectarian organizations

Although, a large number of organization fall in this category but here we will be studying the profiles of such organizations which have had some role or are still a part of the sectarian warfare. A detailed study of each of the organizations and their internal structure and conflicts is necessary to develop an understanding about the dynamics of violence. In each organizations exists certain factors which tend to keep the violence going on and a moderate policy either gives birth to a new more violent faction or decline of the party itself.

- *Tehrik-e-Jafria Pakistan (TJP) formerly known as Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Fiqah-e-Jafria (TNFJ)*
- *Imamia Students Organization. (ISO)*
- *Pasban-e-Islam*
- *Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) formerly known as Anjuman Sipah-e-Sahaba (ASS)*
- *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LJ)*
- *Sipah-e-Muhammad Pakistan (SMP)*
- *Harkatul Mujahideen formerly Harkatul Ansar*

Tehrik-e-Jafria Pakistan (TJP)

In 1979 the then ruler General Ziaul Haq promulgated the Zakat and Usher Ordinance under the Hanfi law which led to immediate disapproval by the Shia community. They refused to accept the Ordinance and launched a movement against it under the banner of Wafaq-e-Ulema-e-Shia Pakistan. They claimed that the mode of collecting zakat in the Ordinance was not in conformity with the Shia beliefs and thus the people belonging to the community should be treated in accordance with their personal law.

At the time Mufti Jafar Husain was the head of the Wafaq-e-Ulema-e-Shia Pakistan which had almost all the important Shia scholars and religious leaders as its members. The platform had representation from all the four provinces, Northern Areas and the FATA but still lacked the manpower need to confront the then rulers if the need arise. This shortcoming was overcome with the support of the Imamia Students Organization. The students' body that had never been involved in any political activity since then played a key role in organizing protests rallies and ensuring participation of the Shia in large numbers.

The Shia leaders announced to lay a siege to the parliament house in Islamabad in July 1980⁸ and according to official record more than 50,000 people from all over country reached Islamabad. The government intelligence agencies had reported participation of a maximum of around 10,000 to 15,000 people and security arrangements had been made accordingly. The law enforcing agencies tried to stop the protestors and a clash took place leaving one person dead.

A martyr was all that was needed to add fire to the fuel and the mob laid a siege to the parliament house as the police took to its heels. The government called out army troops to prevent the protestors from entering the parliament house. The siege, which continued for two days, ended when Gen. Zia accepted the demands of the Shia leadership and exempted the community from the Zakat and Usher Ordinance.

The success achieved with the threat of use of force and fear that the Zia's anti-Shia regime might not tolerate Shias for long and declare Pakistani a Sunni state, the Shia leadership felt a need to set a platform to protect and raise voice for the rights of the community.

Soon after the July 1980 agitation the formation of Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Fiqah-e-Jafria (TNFJ) was announced and Mufti Jafar Husain became its first president. The successful agitation against Zia and the Islamic revolution in Iran had influenced the Shias of Pakistan to a great extent and they started organizing themselves as a more effective political force.

They started setting up offices of the TNFJ in every nook and corner of the country and from 1980 till his death in June 1984, Mufti Jafar Husain visited every part of the country laying down the network of the party.

The death of Mufti Jafar Husain resulted in the division of TNFJ into two factions. One group based in Rawalpindi declared Allama Hamid Ali Mosavi as its president and it later came to be known as TNFJ-Mosavi. However, a majority of the Shia scholars and heads of seminaries refused to accept Allama Mosavi as their leader. A meeting of Wafaq-e-Ulema-e-Shia Pakistan, Imamia Students Organization, Imamia Organization, Asgheria Organization and Asgheria Students Organization (which were very effective in rural Sindh) and several other Shia organizations held a convention in this regard in Bhakkar and elected Allama Arif Husain Al Husaini as the new party chief. Allama Husaini a Turi Pashtun from Parachinar, a Shia stronghold in the northern part of the country, had studied in Najaf and Qum before being sent back to Pakistan by the Iranian government in 1978.⁹

In the initial years of the TNFJ division attempts were made to reunite the two factions and a Shia convention was called in Dina, Rawalpindi, to resolve the differences but Allama Mosavi did not participate. It was of common knowledge that Allama Mosavi group had been approached by the then government which assured that they

⁸ The parliament house in Islamabad remained besieged for two days in July 1980 forcing the government to amend the Zakat and Usher Ordinance

⁹ According to his official autobiography Ariful Husaini studied in Najaf from 1967 to 1973 and later in Qum and was expelled from Iran in 1978.

(government) considered it the true representative of the Shias of Pakistan. The government recognition was considered a major factor that kept the two factions apart.

Allama Husaini's leadership gave a new colour and energy to the TNFJ and through its platform the Shia community started taking active part in politics and also took part in Movement for Restoration of Democracy (MRD), at the same time retaining its religious colour.

In July 1987, Allama Husaini announced that TNFJ would take part in active politics at Quran Sunnah Conference held at Minar-e-Pakistan in Lahore. However, in just over a year's time Allama Husaini was assassinated in Peshawar on August 5, 1988. The Shia leaders blamed the assassination on the then military government and the Iraqi ambassador to Pakistan. The participants of the funeral refused to allow Gen. Zia to attend the last rites and he had to leave the scene to prevent the situation from getting violent.

About a month later on September 3rd, the TNFJ supreme council elected Allama Sajid Ali Naqvi as the new president. Over the years the TNFJ under his leadership has taken active part in politics and formed political alliances with mainstream political parties and some of its members have been elected parliamentarians and members of the senate. The TNFJ was renamed as Tehrik-e-Jafria Pakistan in a convention held in March 1993, in Faisalabad. The change of name, party leaders say, was necessary as 'TNFJ' gave an impression that the Shias wanted the imposition of their sect on everybody whereas TJP aimed at representing the community on the religious and political front.

Allama Sajid Naqvi is still the chief of the TJP, however, the strength of the party has been considerably weakened. During the past few years several important leaders of the TJP developed differences with Allama Naqvi and left the party. Imamia Students Organization, which had played a vital role in developing the image of the TJP as a potent force, parted ways owing to difference with Allama Naqvi's policies with regard to the on going sectarian killings and disbursement of funds¹⁰. A number of small groups emerged from the organization. One such group elected Allama Fazil Mosavi, a close aide of slain ISO leader Dr Muhammad Ali Naqvi as its chief.

Allama Fazil Mosavi is currently living in the US and due to his inability to return to Pakistan the group failed to take off. The same group, which comprise some important Shia leaders and members of TJP central, held a meeting in Allama Sajid Naqvi's absence and removed him from the office. Allama Naqvi refused to accept the decision and formed his own faction.

However, he suffered a severe set back following the hanging of Shia activists Mehram Ali, who was found guilty by courts of being involved in the January 18, 1997, bombing at the Lahore Sessions Court which left 19 policemen and three SSP leaders dead.

The situation had turned hostile for Allama Naqvi when several other Shia leaders contended that Mehram Ali was innocent and the TJP should raise voice in his support. But Allama Naqvi refused to put pressure on the government to release a man found guilty by the courts. It was following these developments that several youths raised anti-Sajid Naqvi slogans at the funeral of victims of the Mominpura massacre¹¹ and no central leader of TJP was allowed to attend the funeral. Allama Naqvi's refusal was seen by a majority of the community as a self-centered move and blamed him of being more concerned about his own welfare than the community he claims to represent. The hanging of Mehram Ali and also Naqvi's refusal to help also reminded people of an incident when in 1990 Mehram was charged with possession of explosive devices. Dr Muhammad Ali Naqvi contested the case for Mehram Ali and he was acquitted on medical grounds by the Supreme Court of Pakistan. Following the hanging people started comparing the role played by Allama Sajid Naqvi and Dr Muhammad Ali Naqvi in helping a community member in distress and the odds certainly went in favour of Dr Naqvi.

Still, Allama Naqvi claims to have the support of a majority Shia community, the Pakistan government and the Iranian government. Allama Naqvi is the representative of the Iranian spiritual leader in Pakistan and thereby enjoys a diplomatic status.

The Tehrik-e-Jafria has been taking active part in politics and is often termed a natural ally of the Pakistan Peoples Party. Several important leaders of the PPP are Shias and it is considered natural that the community would follow them. But since the Iranian

¹⁰ ISO was receiving financial aid from foreign sources for its educational programs through TJP but Allama Naqvi refused to release the amount when ISO objected to his policies regarding sectarian militancy and dispensation of funds.

revolution and increase of ties of religious leaders with the institutions in Iran and Iraq the role of leading the community has slowly shifted to the religious leaders. Over the years the influence of Shia feudal lords and political leaders has diminished and now the community looks towards the clergy for the protection of its rights.

The TJP formed political alliances with the PPP and the PML governments and were also allies of the recently overthrown government of Mian Nawaz Sharif. Two leaders of the TJP – Allama Jawad Hadi and Allama Abid Husain Al-Husaini – were members of the Senate before it was suspended following the military takeover on October 12, 1999.

¹¹ On January 11, 1998, twenty-five people were killed in a terrorist attack on a religious gathering at Lahore's Mominpura graveyard.

Imamia Students Organization (ISO)

On May 22, 1972, a group of students at the Lahore's University of Engineering and Technology laid down the foundation of the Imamia Students Organization. The founders included Dr Majid Naroze Abidi and Ali Raza Naqvi and with Dr Margoob Zaidi as the first president of the organization and Allama Safdar Husain Najafi, Allama Murtaza Husain, Allama Agha Ali Mosavi and Maulana Sadiq Husain Najafi as the patrons.

The basic concept behind establishment of the organization was to watch the interests and provide the Shia students, hailing from various parts of the country and abroad, a platform to associate. One major aspect was the introduction of the education fund the purpose of which was to render financial support to the deserving students.

The numerical strength and organizational structure of the ISO came to light during the 1979-80 agitation of the Shia community against Zia-government's Zakat and Usher Ordinance. The role played by the ISO in arranging the protest demonstration and ensuring a large participation cannot be ignored. The main organizers and the brain behind the successful demonstration on July 6, 1980 in Islamabad were Ali Raza Naqvi and Malik Ejaz Husain of the ISO.

The organization had become effective when Dr Muhammad Ali Naqvi became ISO's central president in 1977. It was during this period that Shia students started relating themselves with their Iranian counterparts and the 1979 Islamic Revolution further strengthened this association. The leadership of the ISO during that period and years to follow took the center stage in raising issues related to the Shia community. In the late 1980s the ISO started developing differences with the TJP when it expelled Munir Husain Gillani from the party in the 1990 elections. Dr Muhammad Ali Naqvi, although was not the president anymore but still commanded the ISO, opposed the decision of the TJP leadership and on the issue differences developed between him and Allama Sajid Naqvi.

The rift that developed over a minor issue virtually divided the community into two factions as most of the student bodies opted to follow Dr Muhammad Ali Naqvi while Sajid Naqvi managed to retain his position in the TJP.

These differences, however, remained internal matters of the two parties and the ISO started playing an independent role till the assassination of Dr Muhammad Ali Naqvi in 1995. Dr Naqvi and five other people were killed in an ambush near Chowk Yateem Khana in Lahore.

With Dr Naqvi dead, the TJP leadership again tried to bring the young activists of the ISO in their folds but remained unsuccessful. Even with Dr Naqvi out of scene the people who had worked with him continued his policies and the rift further increased.

The financial assistance provided by the Iranian government for the ISO's educational fund was channeled through the TJP and in a bid to tighten grip on the body Allama Sajid Naqvi stopped releasing the funds. The step that the TJP leadership thought would force the students to bow down prove counter productive. The already strained relationship touched the lowest ebb and the youth, which initially opposed Allama Sajid Naqvi in private gathering went public and accused him of being an a King's man. On the other hand Allama Sajid Naqvi accused the ISO of being a disobedient lot with the sole agenda of creating troubles for the Shia community. At present though, the ISO has lost its effectiveness and has been reduced to a small group of college and university students, the state agencies still consider it a potent force.

Pasban-e-Islam

This organization was the brainchild of former president ISO Dr Muhammad Ali Naqvi. Dr Naqvi was among the most active leaders the ISO ever had. Like every other former office bearer and member of the ISO he joined the Imamia Organization, formed in 1979 wherein the membership was allotted only to the former office bearers and activists of the ISO. However, over the years Dr Naqvi developed differences with the IO and parted ways in 1992 to form Pasban-e-Islami.

According to the record compiled by police department the Pasban-e-Islami was a militant wing and several of its members were highly trained in the use of automatic weapons. The rival sectarian leaders saw the Pasban-e-Islam and the ISO as a threat and the Sipah-e-Sahaba leadership often accused them of targeting Ahle Hadith and Devband leaders.

The activities of Pasban-e-Islam did not become public till the assassination of Dr Muhammad Ali Naqvi. Like every group lacking well-developed hierarchal structure the Pasban-e-Islam also fragmented into two groups. One opted to join Allama Sajid Ali Naqvi's leadership while one group followed Rashid Abbas Naqvi, a former central president of ISO, who had replaced Dr Muhammad Ali Naqvi as the Pasban-e-Islam chief.

The network of Pasban suffered a severe blow when one of its former members Hammad Raza was arrested in Sahiwal in January 1996. The police recovered huge quantity of automatic weapons from his custody and also charged him with armed robberies. However, the Pasban record showed that Hammad was expelled from the organization about a year before his arrest due to activities opposed to the party's manifesto.

During interrogation he provided police with details of networking of the Pasban and also divulged the names of several active members of the group. The revelations led to the arrest of three most important members of the organization Fayyaz Haideri, Shabbir Jafri and Tauqir Husain alias Bawa from Lahore.

Fayyaz Haideri was detained at the Nawankot police station and severe torture during questioning resulted in his death. The policemen tried to hide the fact by staging a suicide but failed and became under-pressure and released the other two illegally detained members of the Pasban. Shabbir Jafri and Tauqir, who police claim were involved in a number of terrorist incidents still remain at large.

Hammad Raza was also released shortly afterwards for cooperating with the police. He was found killed in mysterious circumstances in Arifwala in 1997. The organization with the motive to counter terrorism against Shias got de-tracked and the two splinter groups started spending energies on proving the each other terrorist and forwarding information to the police. However, it turned out to be very beneficial for the police and several people were arrested.

A number of cases were registered against the leaders of both the factions of the Pasban – Rashid Abbas of Dr Naqvi group and Imran Chaudhry of Sajid Naqvi – and they left the country. Ultimately, Allama Sajid Naqvi dismantled the organization in 1997-98. At present the organization exists only in files of law enforcing agencies.

Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP)

The radicalization of Shias caused a great deal of apprehension among the Sunnis and soon after the formation of TNFJ two Ahle Sunnat conferences were organized by Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Pakistan (JUP) and Jamiat-a-Ulema-e-Islam to counter the ‘move of the this tiny Shia minority against what it called Sawad-e-Azam (i.e. the great Sunni majority)¹² On September 6, 1985, the then naib amir (vice-chairman) Punjab JUI Haq Nawaz Jhangvi parted ways with his organization and founded the Anjuman Sipah-e-Sahaba in Jhang that later became the Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan. The present leadership of the SSP claims that Haq Nawaz Jhangvi, Maulana Ziaur Rehman Farooqi, Maulana Esarul Qasmi and Azam Tariq were the founding members of the organization. However, independent sources and the record available with the police department show that it was created by a group of 18 businessmen from Jhang and Haq Nawaz Jhangvi was invited to join because they wanted to use the religious factor to fulfill their political ambitions.

Consequently, Jhang’s leading businessman Sheikh Yousaf became MPA in 1985 with the support of the SSP and later Mian Abid, younger brother of industrialist Mian Iqbal who was killed over a political dispute, was elected MPA unopposed.

The SSP differed from other Sunni religious organizations as it had a very hard-line anti-Shia agenda. Maulana Haq Nawaz Jhangvi, who was popular for his fiery anti-Beralvi speeches, shifted the focus to the Shias, the feudal families of Jhang and the Iranian revolution.

The year of formation of the SSP is also very significant as it coincided with the first elections held in 1985 under the Zia regime. Even with only a year into existence Maulana Jhangvi supported the call of Movement for Restoration of Democracy (MRD)

¹² Anti-Shia-literature was promoted in Pakistan and the Iranian revolution was presented as a Zionist conspiracy to capture Holy places of Mecca and Median. Allama Ehsan Elahi Zaheer, chief of Jamiat Ulema-e-Ahle Hadith, a Wahabi movement closely associated with Saudi Arabia wrote in 1980 in a book entitled ‘Shias and Shiaism’ which also denounces Shia Islam as heresy and accuses the Shias of being Zionist agents in Islamic countries. The book translated in Arabic and English was widely distributed by the Saudi government.

to boycott the elections, making the political aspiration of his religious organizations evident.

Maulana Jhangvi launched a virulent anti-Shia campaign with a declared agenda of defeating Syeda Abida Husain ¹³ in the elections and resorted to sectarian slogans. He contested the 1988 election for a seat in the national assembly but was defeated by Abida Husain.¹⁴The SSP remained associated with the JUI till 1989 when they split because of a completely different line of struggle.

Maulana Jhangvi was murdered in Jhang in 1990 that sparked violent protests, especially in the district of Jhang. The SSP leadership blamed the murder on local Shia feudal lords and the Iranian government and in the years to follow several prominent Shia leaders and an Iranian diplomat was targeted in what were termed as 'reprisal killings'. Maulana Isarul Haq Qasmi became the new party chief and also succeeded in winning a national assembly seat in the 1990 elections. He, however, was killed over a political rivalry a few months later in 1991 and owing to a fragile law and order situation in the district the government deferred re-elections to fill the seat for two years. Later Maulana Azam Tariq was elected twice as MNA from the same constituency in the 1993 and 1995 elections.

It is interesting to note, writes Mukhtar Ahmad Ali in his research paper 'Sectarian Conflict in Pakistan' that with the election of Maulana Azam Tariq as MNA in 1993 the level of violence in Jhang dropped both in frequency and intensity.

Maulana Azam Tariq, who had been termed as the 'General' of the SSP was, police reports suggest, among the most active leaders of the organization who rendered unconditional support to the party workers involved in acts of violence and also provided them with material support. Being elected to the national assembly Maulana Azam Tariq experienced the strength of the political system and he started considering the terrorist elements in the SSP as a liability. With this in mind and an attempt to acquire a much larger role for his party Maulana Azam Tariq announced that the restoration of law and order and peace in Jhang was the responsibility of the SSP.

In this period the SSP tried to put up a more political face but the extremist elements in the party accused the leadership of betraying the Jhangvi's mission and within a couple of

¹³ One of the most influential Shia feudal of the area.

years time a much violent breakaway faction of the SSP emerged on the scene by the name of `Lashkar-e-Jhangvi.

One police report on the subject termed the formation of the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi a brainchild of the SSP leadership. The report says that the spate of sectarian violence at the time had pushed the government to a corner and it was seriously considering imposing a ban on the parties involved in violence. If the government had gone through with the idea the names of the SSP and the TJP would have been on the top of the list. But both the organizations made cunning moves with SSP granting the militant role to the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi while the Shia militancy shifted to the cadres of the Sipah-e-Muhammad. Another reason for shifting the role of militancy to the LJ was to save the SSP leadership from the reprisal attacks by the Shia militant groups.

The aggressive nature of the SSP and the support it enjoyed from other anti-Shia religious organizations helped in making it a mainstream political party and it started entering into electoral alliances with the Pakistan Peoples Party and the Pakistan Muslim League. In 1995 the Punjab government of Arif Nakai appointed two leaders of the SSP – Riaz Hashmat Jangua and Shiekh Hakim Ali – as provincial ministers and released several arrested SSP activists to gain the party's support in the provincial politics against the PML.

In the last government of Mian Nawaz Sharif, the SSP was on the receiving end as at least 36 of its activists who were involved in incidents of sectarian violence were killed by the police in encounters and the party chief remain detained for over one year.

The SSP lost its Chairperson Maulana Ziaur Rehman Farooqi in a bomb blast at the Lahore Sessions Court on January 18, 1997 where he had been brought from the jail in connection with a murder trail. As many as 19 policemen and two passersby were also killed in the incident. One Mehram Ali, a close associate of slain ISO leader Dr Muhammad Ali Naqvi, was arrested by the police and in the subsequent trial that followed the courts found him guilty of terrorism and awarded capital punishment. Hanged at the Faisalabad prison Mehram Ali became the first person ever to go to the gallows for committing sect-related murder.

¹⁴ Maulana Jhangvi received about 39,000 votes as compared to Abida Husain who won by securing about 48,000 votes

The SSP was among those parties that stood to gain from the removal of the Sharif government in October 1999. Apart from a hard-line stand against sectarian militancy the then Prime Minister Mian Nawaz Sharif had gone public in naming Afghanistan as the country providing shelter and training to the sectarian terrorists of the Sipah-e-Sahaba. Sectarianism was the toughest challenge faced by the former government and it had initiated the policy of striking back with all the force. The police were allowed free hand to deal with the terrorists and the Taliban government in Afghanistan was asked to handover the SSP terrorists living and operating military training camps there.

Since the military takeover, the present government has eased pressure on the SSP and Maulana Azam Tariq was released from detention. Up till a few months ago he was allowed to attend meetings, both within the country and abroad, and organize the party in such an unchecked manner that even the police intelligence agencies were taken aback by the freedom with which the government had allowed him to create unrest. According to one report he called a meeting of about 200 affluent traders of Jhang and Faisalabad in December 2000, in which he asked them to sever ties with the businessmen following the Shia beliefs to alienate the Shias and turning them into a submissive minority. At the same meeting he managed to accumulate about RS 60 million in the form of donations from the business community.

The Musharaf government had not given much importance to the issue of sectarian violence but it felt the heat for the first time in January 2001, when the SSP directly confronted the government demanding the commutation of the an SSP worker, Sheikh Haq Nawaz, who had been awarded capital punishment on charges of murdering director Iranian Cultural Centre, Lahore, in 1989 and was due to be hanged in the last week of January. The pressure mounted on the government which delayed the hanging by a month giving time to the SSP to reconcile the matter failing which Haq Nawaz was hanged at the Mianwali prison on February 28. Thus becoming the second man after Mehram Ali to be hanged in a case of sectarian crime.

However, before the hanging was carried out law enforcement agencies detained hundreds of activists of the SSP from throughout the country and also detained Maulana Azam Tariq.

The irony is that on one front the police and other law enforcement agencies are working to bring the sectarian militant organizations under control while the government is directly providing them support. The appointment of Tahir Ashrafi as advisor to the Punjab governor on religious affairs is seen as one such move. It is of common knowledge in the government circles that Tahir Ashrafi has been appointed to the post on the intervention of the Saudi Arabian government ignoring that fact that he was a member of the Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan.

Lashkar-e-Jhangvi

Lashkar-e-Jhangvi can easily be termed as the most violent sectarian militant organization that has ever existed in Pakistan. A breakaway faction of the SSP, the Lashkar has an even more violent anti-Shia agenda. Although, it claims to be a separate entity, whatever the Lashkar do furthers the cause of the SSP. It is, perhaps, the only militant terrorist organization in Pakistan that openly claims responsibility for terrorist activities. The leadership of the SSP, maintaining a distance from the LJ, is often found pleading the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi's case.

The entire leadership of the Lashkar is made up of people who fought in Afghanistan and its chief, Riaz Basra, even contested elections to the provincial assembly in 1988 from Lahore on an SSP ticket but lost. The Lashkar-e-Jhangvi rhetoric is much more anti-Iran rather than just anti-Shia and it keeps on accusing the Pakistan government of being under the influence of the Iranian government.

The name of the organization hit newspaper headlines on March 7, 1995, when it claimed the killing of former leader of Imamia Students Organization Dr Muhammad Ali Naqvi and five other people on the congested Multan Road in Lahore.

The organization was set up by former information secretary of the SSP, Riaz Basra, soon after his escape from a court in Lahore in late 1994. Basra was arrested on charges of being involved in a number of sect-related killings including the high-profile murder of Iranian Diplomat Sadiq Gunji. There were several reports on his escape from the police custody suggesting that it was all a staged event carried out on the behest of the then chief minister Punjab Mian Manzoor Ahmad Wattoo.

In at least one intelligence report it was pointed out that after fleeing from the court's premises Basra went straight to the official residence of the chief minister where he spent about a month as a special guest.

In his tenure as the chief minister Mian Manzoor Wattoo also issued around 400 arms licenses for Kalashnevoks to the SSP and enjoyed a cordial relationship with the militant organization. The support rendered to the SSP seemed more as a preventive attempt on

part of Manzoor Wattoo to deter maligning campaigns of the religious organizations as he belonged to an Ahmadi community.

The Lashkar accused the leadership of the SSP of straying from the path of Haq Nawaz Jhangvi's mission and falling prey to the power games of the politics. However, reports by intelligence agencies suggest that in the wake of increasing sectarian killing and fearing a ban on the political activities of the organization, the leadership of SSP, asked the more extremist elements in the organization to form a separate platform and continued the 'holy war.' The idea was that firstly it would save the SSP leadership from reprisal killings by the Shia militant organizations and second to change the image of the SSP from a religious militant organization to a religio-political organization.

Over the years the Lashkar has become a nightmare for the law enforcement agencies. Enjoying close association with the JUI and other extremist religious organizations the Lashkar has succeeded in finding hideouts for its terrorists throughout the country and in Afghanistan.

In Pakistan the activists, offices and strongholds of SSP, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, Harkatul Ansar, Jaish-e-Muhammad, Majlis Tehaffuz-e-Khatam-e-Nabuwat and some other organizations serve as hideouts for the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi terrorists and in Afghanistan they are provided shelter and training at military camps run by the Harkatul Ansar and enjoy full patronage of the Taliban government.

The organization operated very successfully with law enforcing agencies failing to arrest any of its wanted terrorists till 1997 when it targeted the Iranian cultural centre in Multan. The then Multan SSP Ashraf Marth carried out several raids and managed to unearth several hideouts of the organization exposing its links to the CIA and other foreign agencies. Ashraf Marth, brother-in-law of the then interior minister Chaudhry Shujaat Husain, was gunned down by the Lashkar terrorists but the information he had gathered in the course of investigations led to the arrests of several key members of the Lashkar. Police reports on the organizational structure of the Lashkar reveal that its members use the most primitive methods to operate. Each group of terrorists operates independent of the other and is more like airtight compartment. Most of the hitmen travel on public transport or hitchhike on trucks from one city to the other. Almost all the Lashkar

terrorists belong to such families that fall below the poverty line and are mostly illiterates.

The former government and the Lashkar became fierce enemies following a tough stand of the Nawaz government against sectarian terrorism and shortcut methods to deal with the situation. For example, when courts specially set up to deal with sectarian terrorism failed to produce the desired results the government tacitly approved the killing of sectarian terrorists in police encounters.

The death of 36 training terrorists, some of them considered best in their field, was a severe blow not only to the Lashkar's working but also to the morale of other terrorist organization. Similarly, Maulana Azam Tariq was kept in detention for almost two years at the Police Chuhng Detention Cell. Thus the Lashkar decided to hit back and target the most important personality of the country at the time.

In January 3, 1999, the Lashkar attempted to assassinate the then Prime Minister Mian Nawaz Sharif by planting a bomb underneath a bridge on Raiwind Road from where the prime minister was expected to pass. However, the bomb went off prematurely killing three people and destroying the bridge. About two months later an activist of Lashkar was arrested in Sheikhpura with a shoulder-fired rocket launcher hovering around the area where the helicopter with the prime minister onboard was to land shortly afterwards.

The failure of the Lashkar in its designs brought a much tougher action from the government and from an SSP-Shia war it became an SSP-Government conflict. However, with the military takeover in October 1999, the Sharif family was detained and subsequently went in exile but the LJ has vowed to hit the Sharif family whenever an opportunity arise.

Sipah-e-Muhammad Pakistan (SMP)

The politicization of the TJP and resistance of senior religious leaders to adopt non-violent means to counter terrorism against Shias led to the creation of a group within the TJP which actively advocated for a head-for-head policy. It would rather appear that the SMP was created for purely internal reasons. Some Shia radicals think that the TJP politics of waging a political fight against the SSP had not brought anything to the Shias who were feeling more and more insecure and that an organization had to be created to safeguard the Shia religion.

In 1993 the Jhang district president of TJP Ghulam Raza Naqvi parted ways with the leadership and announced the formation of the SMP. Ghulam Raza Naqvi with a handful of highly trained activists had a violent agenda like the SSP and vowed to protect the Shia community against Sunni extremism and hit the SSP leadership.

The SMP held its first public gathering at the Mochi Gate Bagh where according to police reports at least 2,000 participants were armed with AK47 rifles and they fired shots in the air as Ghulam Raza Naqvi appeared on the scene to address the gathering.

Initially the SSP leadership disregarded the threats of the SMP as mere rhetoric and the law enforcement agencies also considered the new organization unable to create much trouble. However, the SMP made its designs clear in 1994 when a small group of armed men led by Ghulam Raza Naqvi attacked the SSP chief Maulana Azam Tariq, who was an MNA at the time, on Khushab-Sargodha Road. Azam Tariq survived but three other people were killed and two vehicles were destroyed. The attackers even used rocket launchers to hit the target.

By the end of 1994 the SMP had established its headquarters in Thokar Niaz Beg, a suburban locality of Lahore with a sizable Shia population. It was a time when much of the Shia community was unhappy with the role of the TJP in dealing with the issue of sectarianism and was looking for an alternative force to balance the SSP highhandedness. The SMP fitted in the role and promised the community a befitting response to every move of the SSP. There were reports that the SMP apart from its own system of

collecting money from the general public in the form of small donations also received financial support from affluent Shias living in Kuwait and United Arab Emirates.

Major (retired) Ashraf Husain Shah, an influential personality of Thokar Niaz Beg, was the strength behind Ghulam Raza Naqvi which helped him in turning the stronghold into a no-go area for the law enforcing agencies. In December 1994, a heavily armed contingent of the district police raided the SMP headquarter to arrest its leaders but had to face the wrath of the activists and the locals as well. At least five police vehicles were burnt and policemen had to escape from the scene crawling on ground to avoid gunshots. From that day onwards all the routes leading to the locality were manned by armed policemen who would subject every person entering or leaving to checks but would not dare to enter the locality. The scene on the inside was a totally different one. On the streets leading to the SMP headquarters youths holding automatic weapons without any fear of being recognized stood guard with a duty to inquire about the purpose of any outsider entering the area.

The SMP had a very weak organizational structure but it soon acquired a political dimension of its own. The ambitions of Ghulam Raza Naqvi became more global with time then just protecting the Shias; he wanted to raise an army comprising both Sunnis and Shias to liberate Jerusalem.

In the late 1995 the party was divided into two factions following a dispute over the role of the party in the Milli Yekjehti Council. The party's chief Allama Murid Abbas Yazdani was accused by his colleagues of being too lenient in dealing with the SSP and reconciling on religious beliefs. One faction was led Ghulam Raza Naqvi and the other by Allama Murid Abbas Yazdani. The groups united a few months later but bade farewell to the MYC.

The party suffered a severe blow in August 1996, when Allama Murid Abbas Yazdani was assassinated in Rawalpindi. The SMP held violent protest rallies and a gun battle between the religious activists and the police in Lahore left at least six people, including three policemen, with bullet wounds. However, the organization was virtually fragmented when police arrested one of its hitmen, Musa Khan, about a month later and he confessed to the killing of Allama Murid Abbas Yazdani. The murder, he told police investigators, was committed on the command of Ghulam Raza Naqvi.

The people of Thokar Niaz Beg turned against the SMP leadership and Major (ret'd) Ashraf Shah also withdrew his support. On the other front Major Shah was also under pressure from his sons, one of them a senior police officer while others senior military officers, to withdraw support of the militant organization as it was badly affecting their professional careers.

The murder of Murid Abbas Yazdani turned those who were protecting the SMP leaders and activists from the police against the SMP and they wanted them to be arrested. Consequently, a crossfire ensued between the SMP activists and the locals led by one of Major Ashraf Shah's sons who was also an SMP activists and still is a fugitive from the law.

The crossfire continued for about two days which forced Raza Naqvi and his group to escape from the locality. The people who had forced the police out of the locality only three years ago welcomed them in 1996 and the SMP office was turned into a police post. Once out of his hideout it was all a matter of time for the police to track down Raza Naqvi. In a few months time Ghulam Raza Naqvi and several of his trained men were arrested and sent behind the bars.

The SMP of today is different from what it was in the past. Such workers of the organization who played the role of mole for the police while staying within the party ranks are now among the leaders and finding most of them regularly visiting the police intelligence offices should not come as a surprise.

Senior police officers are of the view that the SMP still enjoys support of a large number of people and a considerable number of activists still remain at large. It has a strong support base in Balochistan and the Northern Areas.

Harakatul Mujahideen formerly Harkatul Ansar

Although none of the Harakatul Ansar (HUA) activists have ever been arrested or charged with sectarian terrorism, the organization enjoys close association with the SSP and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and provides shelter and military training facilities to the aforementioned and to other anti-Shia movements. After the emergence of the Taliban in Afghanistan the camps which once belonged to Hizb-e-Islami and Jamaat-e-Islami were handed over to Harakatul Ansar, which some writers define as a Deobandi anti-Shia movement fighting for the accession of Kashmir to Pakistan. It appeared on the scene in October 1993 in central Punjab after the merger of Harakatul Jihad-e-Islami, formed in 1980, and Harakatul Mujahideen, its splinter group, which had separated in 1985. These two groups were getting CIA and ISI backing to help the Afghan Mujahideen.

The organization was renamed as Harakatul Mujahideen (HUM) in 1997 when the United States declared the Harakatul Ansar as a terrorist organization. Similarly, the name of training camp run by the organization was changed from Salaman Farsi Camp to Hazrat Amir Moavia Camp which points towards the anti-Shia ideology of the organization.

HUM apparently receives financial support, directly or indirectly, from rich businessmen in Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the Gulf and collects donations from Pakistanis and Kashmiris settled in Britain. According to one source the HUM is linked Osama Bin Laden and is provided training, expertise and funding by the ISI.¹⁵

The HUM's office in Peshawar was inaugurated in July 1997 by Maulana Muhammad Ajmal Qadri of the JUI in the presence of Maulana Samiul Haq, chief of his own faction of the JUI and head of the prestigious Darul Aloom of Akora Khattak, often described as center of gravity of the Taliban.

Although, it claims to be a non-sectarian organization and insists on its affiliation with the Tabligi Jamaat, the HUM is closely associated with the SSP and LJ. It was alleged in 1995 that activists of the SSP in Karachi had taken shelter in HUM offices and camps. One of the recruits was quoted as saying "Both SSP and HUM are working for the same

¹⁵ ISI provides funds to radical terrorists, says report Dawn May 17, 1999, This article refers to a report parts of which were published by the Sunday Telegraph (London)

goals, except HUM does not believe in launching a militant movement against Shias and believes that the Hindus and Jews are their biggest enemies."

The HUM provides training facilities and Islamic teachings and also a safe haven to the SSP and LJ activists. Sanctuaries are provided to terrorists wanted in Pakistan especially those who were involved in attack on Iranian cultural centre of Multan in March 1997 and escaped from Dera Ghazi Khan jail in December 1997 before perpetrating the Mominpura massacre in Lahore in January 1998.

Riaz Basra, absconding chief of the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi who carry five million rupees head money, is believed to take regular shelter in HUM camps in Afghanistan.

After the US strikes, Maulana Fazlur Rehman Khalil, leader of HUM, claimed during a press conference in Islamabad that 21 members of the group were killed in a camp near Khost.¹⁶

A number of those killed belonged to South Punjab, namely Bahawalpur, Bahawalnager and Leyyah cities, which are strongholds of the SSP. The three Lashkar-e-Jhangvi activists involved in the Raiwind bomb blast in January 1998 were closely associated with the HUM and one of the terrorist was a trainer at an HUM camps inside Afghanistan. According to intelligence reports issued about a year ago at least 800 Pakistani's were under-training at the HUM's Khalid Bin Waleed camp in Afghanistan, most of whom had linkages with the SSP and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi. The Mominpura massacre was also committed by HUM trained personnel

Thus, apart from its original objective of jihad in Kashmir, the HUM is involved, though not directly but by providing an infrastructure, in sectarian activities and in takfir i.e to purge the community from the Shias,¹⁷

¹⁶ The Lizah camp near Khost was managed by Qari Saifullah – who succeeded as amir Maulvi Irshad Ahmad killed in Afghanistan – has been absconding since a plot for a military takeover was foiled in 1995. The HUA was involved in the plot and the existence of a faction of the Tabligi Jamaat advocating jihad bil saif was revealed at that time.

¹⁷ Ejaz Haider. Price of Kashmir-Afghanistan policies. The Friday Times, July 3-9, 1998 and Ejaz Haider. Have your cake and eat it too. The Friday Times, July 10--16,1998

Emergence of Violence

The element of violence among different Muslim sects to settle disputes of sectarian nature existed in the early years of independence of Pakistan but it was not by any means as violent as it stands now. The first major anti-Shia riots took place in district Khairpur in the province of Sindh during Muharram in 1963. Later, in the 1970s a poster campaign was launched throughout the country inciting Sunnis to takeover Pakistan with the slogan 'Jag Sunni Jag Pakistan Tera Hai'. However, the last two decades have been the most violent in the history of Pakistan leaving hundreds dead and a much higher number of people with serious injuries. The gravity of the situation can be gauged from the fact that the activities of terrorist organization have not been affected even with the military in power. Since the military takeover on October 12, 1999, as many as 223 people had been killed and over 200 injured up till August 14, 2001, in some 84 incidents of sectarian violence in 30 cities of Pakistan.

The sectarian groups with narrow religious agenda and a particular bent of mind that had cropped up during Gen. Zia's years' in power enjoyed impunity for all unlawful activities and by the time Zia's era ended, organized killing in the name of religion had become a norm of the day.

The anti-Shia sentiments had existed in the Deobandi school of thought and the followers of the sect always maintained a belligerent attitude towards the Shias and years back in the 1940s the Deoband Darul Alum issued a fatwa (religious decree) which declared shias as infidels.¹⁸ Deobandi scholars in Pakistan later endorsed the fatwa. Throughout the 70s several Deobandi journals¹⁹ in Pakistan printed inflammatory articles against Shiaism going as far as demanding a separate electorate for the Shias.

According to one study the politics within the Deobandi community was the main factor for pushing it in the direction of anti-Shia sectarianism and competition for power between various factions of Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam had grown tense in the early 1980s and the main players sought to establish their credentials and claim to power within the

¹⁸ Muhammad Munir: From Jinnah to Zia).

¹⁹ Al-Haq (Akora Khatak) Al-Bayyanat (Karachi) Al-Balagh (Karachi) Tarjuman-e-Islam (Lahore) and Khuddamuddin (Lahore)

JUI through harsh condemnation of Shiaism. It was this vacuum created owing to factional rivalries in the JUI which opened the door for the rise of a militant sectarian organizations from amidst the Deobandis.

The foreign players moved in at a very early stage and in 1983 Deobandi Sawad-e-Azam-e-Ahl-e-Sunnat led by Maulana Samiullah and Maulana Isfandyar launched anti-Shia movement in Karachi with the financial support from Iraq²⁰ However, the movement was overshadowed with the establishment of Anjum Sipah-e-Sahaba (later named as Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan) by Maulana Haq Nawaz Jhangvi, a Deobandi scholar of lower rank and naib-amir of JUI Punjab.

The present spate of violence according to some analysts started with the killing of Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan's founder Maulana Haq Nawaz Jhangvi in December 1989. However, others put it back to August 5, 1988 when TJP leader Allama Ariful Hussaini was assassinated in Peshawar. This by no means implies that sect-related killings started towards the end of Gen. Zia's era. To put it in a much simpler way we can say that the epidemic of sectarian violence had started during the Zia's period and it became uncontrollable with the departure of the country's longest military ruler.

Earlier during the rule, the then military government was often accused of taking such steps which added to the sectarian hatred and even went to the extent of patronizing and sponsoring certain groups in committing acts of violence against the other. For instance during the Afghanistan war the Pakistan government provided financial and military support to only non-Shia Afghan groups fighting against the Russian forces while the Shia groups were ignored in this regard. In 1986 some Afghan groups complained to the military government about the difficulty faced in crossing into Afghanistan through the tribal area of Parachinar inhabited by the Shia Turri tribes. According to official sources the military government was advised by the intelligence agencies to set the Turri's right by giving a free hand to the Afghans to settle the issue. A few months later fighting broke out between the Afghans and the local Turri tribes and when some journalists tried to reach the trouble area they were stopped by the military which had laid a siege to the area but were not making any efforts to control the situation. The clashes left about 500 Turri tribesmen dead and property worth millions of rupees destroyed.

²⁰ Daily Aghaz: Karachi, March 26, 1983.

The purpose of the military siege which continued for more than two weeks was not to stop the clashes from spreading to other parts of the tribal belt but to allow the Afghans sufficient time to deal with the Turri's properly and establish might of the Deobandi forces in a Shia dominated area.²¹.

The steps taken by the Zia government drew harsh criticism from the Iranian government and it was for the first time that Iranian spiritual leader Ayatullah Khomeni made public condemnation of acts of violence committed by the Pakistan's military government against the Shias. Similarly in 1988 at least 150 Shias were killed in Gilgit in attacks by Sunni mobs. The incidents of state sponsored sectarian terrorism also occurred in Quetta, capital of Pakistan's mineral rich province of Balochistan, where over a 100 people were killed.

The record available with the police shows that the incidents of target killings started in mid 1980s. In the three years from 1987 to 1989 the province of the Punjab witnessed some 102 incidents of violence during which 22 people were killed and over 263 were left with severe injuries. The year 1990 witnessed an alarming rise with 32 people killed and 528 injured in 274 incidents. The graph of sectarian killings has always been on the rise even in the initial months of the formation of Milli Yakjehti Council in 1995 when hopes had arisen of finding a peaceful solution to the sectarian differences.

The incidence of sectarian violence has been on a constant rise since the 1990s and the killings which started with a few isolated cases gained momentum till a record 200 people fell prey to the 'holy war' in 1997 in Punjab alone.

The gravity of the situation was brought home to the government in August 1997, when separate attacks carried out over nine days left 45 people dead in the Punjab. The Rangers were called out to help police combat terrorism, and a ban was imposed on pillion riding that remained continued for more than two years.

The tightening of security measures and a ban on pillion riding apparently had some effect on the situation as only seven sect-related incidents took place in the remainder of 1997. The decline in such incidents continued during 1998, during which 78 people were reported killed in 36 incidents. In 1999, till September 30, there had been only 12 incidents in which 42 people died giving an impression that the law-enforcing agencies

²¹ Interview conducted with Mazhar Turri, leader of Turri tribe, in Parachinar..

had finally won the war against sectarian terrorism. But the monster reared its head again when in the first 10 days of October; at least 39 people were killed in 21 incidents across the country bringing the already frail law and order situation to its knees. (Annex: A).

It did not fail to surprise the law enforcers when the situation returned to normal overnight and acts of violence stopped as if they had never occurred the day military stepped in and General Pervez Musharraf became the chief executive of the country.

Over the years the networks of sectarian militant organizations have become so strong that now they strike at will and in several incidents the government failed to prevent them from materializing their threats.

Take the example of carnage that occurred in October 1999. The government had received reports²² in early August that a terrorist group was reorganizing itself to start a new wave of sectarian violence, but it failed to take preventive measures and perceive that the group had gained far more strength than the law enforcers believed. The effectiveness of the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi's attacks can be gauged from the fact that the militant activity that started on October 1 left 18 people dead across the country in less than 24 hours.

The killings coincided with a six-month deadline - which expired on September 30 - given to the government by the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi's arrested leader Malik Ishaq²³ to introduce a law regarding derogatory remarks against revered personalities of Islam.

The SSP leadership was quick to condemn the attacks but held the government responsible for the ill-fated attacks as it failed to introduce the law according to the demands of the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi leader²⁴.

The post-Zia era had seen various trends in sectarian killings. In the early 1990s the target of sectarian militancy were leaders of the rival organizations, in the later years it shifted from the leadership to the massacres of followers of the rival sect who had no affiliation with any religious or sectarian party. From 1996 onwards apart from large-scale massacres the militant organizations developed a policy of targeting intellectuals, professionals and prominent government officers belonging to the rival sect.

²² Dawn October 3. Wait and see policy proves fatal.

²³ Ibid

As a result we witnessed the killing of Sargodha Commissioner Syed Tajammal Abbas, provincial secretary Osama Maud, Khanewal Deputy Commissioner Syed Ali Raza, Gujranwala SSP Ashraf Marth, Faisalabad Range Crime SP Sardar Ali Muhammad Baloch, Judicial Magistrate Gujranwala Syed Fida Husain, DSP Tariq Kamboh and a large number of other valuable people whose only fault was that they either belonged to the rival sect or the acts taken by them in official capacity came in direct conflict with the interests of the terrorist organizations.

Since 1990 as many as 65 policemen, including an officer of the rank of SSP, have been killed by sectarian terrorists in 27 incidents (Annex: F). Similarly, there were such killing sprees where terrorists from rival organizations targeted doctor-for-doctor, lawyer-for-lawyer and trader-for-trader with impunity from the law enforcing agencies and the horrific aspect was that in most cases the score was settled within hours.

The easy access to arms coupled with training facilities at military training camps along the Pak-Afghan boarder and in Kashmir provided activists of militant organizations ample opportunities to master the use of light and heavy weapons and also making and detonation of explosive materials as and when required. Thus we see that the terrorists not only resorted to the use of semi-automatic or automatic weapons to carryout attacks but shoulder-fired rockets, hand-grenades and highly explosive devices were also used as a means for achieving the goals.

The bomb blast at the Lahore Sessions Court on January 18, 1997, still remains an event where police suffered maximum casualties ever in the history. As many as nineteen policemen and three religious activists, including Sipah-e-Sahaba leader Ziaur Rehman Farooqi, were among the people killed. The SSP leaders had been arrested in connection with a murder case and were brought to the Lahore Sessions Court for hearing where a bomb planted on a motorcycle exploded killing several and injuring over 50 people.

The police investigations revealed that it was for the first time in the history of the country that plastic explosive was used in the making of a bomb. A similar type of material is used by Lebanon's Hizbullaha organization in its operations against the Israeli armed forces. One of the alleged bombers, Mehram Ali, was arrested from the scene and

²⁴ Daily Jang The view is borne out of a statement by Sipah-e-Sahaba's arrested leader Azam Tariq, who stated that the government should be blamed for failing to meet the deadline, which led to the revival of

was awarded capital punishment by the courts. On August 11, 1998, Mehram Ali went to the gallows becoming the first person ever in the history of Pakistan to be hanged for a sectarian crime. His suspected co-accused, Dr Qaisar Abbas, a medical graduate from the prestigious Allama Iqbal Medical College, still remains at large. The government has announced a reward of RS 500,000 for any information that might lead to his arrest.

The same year a bridge was blown up in Sargodha on October 3, by a time-bomb when the car of anti-terrorist court judge, Zavar Husain Shah, was passing through it. The judge survived with minor injuries but the incident revealed that both the warring parties had bomb making expertise and easy access to material required for making bombs. A similar attempt was foiled a few months later when police defused bombs planted underneath a bridge in Bahawalpur from where a funeral procession of victims of sectarian terrorism was about to pass. Several central leader of the Tehrik-e-Jafria were leading the funeral procession.

The latest incident of sectarian terrorism where a bomb was used occurred on January 3, 1999, when an explosive device planted underneath a bridge on Raiwind Road from where the then prime minister, Nawaz Sharif, was expected to pass exploded. The bridge collapsed under the impact of the explosion and three passersby were killed. Police investigations revealed that the bomb was planted by Lashkar-e-Jhangvi terrorists and was aimed at the Prime Minister but it exploded prematurely. The explosive device was made using urea fertilizer and other simple ingredients. The police succeeded in arresting the terrorists and it was learnt that the group leader, Noor Gul, was a trainer at a camp run by Harkatul Ansar in Afghanistan. He was an expert in making bombs from items of daily use that are available at every other general store.

An important aspect of the history of sectarian violence has been the attacks on Iranian diplomats and cultural centres. The Sipah-e-Sahaba and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi had claimed responsibility of all such attacks the first of which came with the killing of Director General Iranian Cultural Centre Lahore Sadiq Gungi two days before his return to Iran in 1989. Gungi was gunned down in front of a hotel on The Mall where he had gone to attend a reception in his honor. One of the alleged attackers was arrested shortly afterwards when his motorcycle slipped due to speeding near Qartaba Chowk and his gun

sectarian killings.

went off injuring him in the face. The four other accused, including country's most wanted terrorist Riaz Basra, were arrested a few months later but later escaped from police custody. Jhangvi was awarded capital punishment by the trial court and was upheld by the appellate courts. He was hanged at the Mianwali prison on February 28, 2001, becoming the second person to be executed for committing a sect-related crime. The government, fearing a backlash from the Sipah-e-Sahaba and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, had to make special security arrangement for the hanging that came more than 10 years after conviction from a court. The Sipah-e-Sahaba and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi had threatened reprisal attacks on Shias if Haq Nawaz was hanged and as a preventive measure the police arrested over 1,000 workers and leaders of the organization from all over the country.

In another incident the Khana-e-Farhang Iran on The Mall Lahore was set ablaze on January 19, 1997, by enraged Sipah-e-Sahaba activists protesting against the Lahore Sessions Court bombing. The facility was used as an institute for teaching Persian and calligraphy and also had a large collection of valuable books, all of which was reduced to ashes in the presence of law enforcing agencies acting as silent observers.

About a month later on February 20, 1997, the Iranian Cultural Centre in Multan was attacked by Lashkar-e-Jhangvi terrorists leaving seven people including the centre's director dead. The Lashkar-e-Jhangvi claimed responsibility for the attack and termed it a retaliatory attack for the Lahore Sessions Court bombing.

A few months later on September 17, five armed men gunned down five Iranian cadets and their Pakistani driver in Rawalpindi. The victims had been receiving training in Pakistan for several weeks and their killing was considered a severe blow to the Pak-Iran relations. The police later claimed the arrest of the terrorists involved in the killing and all the five accused were awarded capital punishment. However, the police operations against sectarian militants suffered a severe blow when an appellate court exonerated all the accused from the charges and ordered their release.

The militant organizations require huge funds for carrying out their operations and in most cases their activists get involved in unlawful activities to generate finance. The involvement of the SSP activists in money extortion and landgrabbing in Faisalabad and other cities is of common knowledge.

A police report²⁵ prepared on the issue of sectarian violence states that activists of religious organizations are often involved in unlawful activities and in a number of cases criminal wanted by the police take shelter under the garb of workers of religious organizations. There are several examples of religious activists committing armed robberies, kidnapping people for ransom, smuggling and sale of illicit weapons and extorting protection money.

The aforementioned report states that in the early years of formation the sectarian groups had a relatively smaller network with a fewer number of workers and whatever they received in the form of donations from foreign sources or collected from the public was sufficient to run their activities.

The involvement of activists of sectarian organizations in criminal activities started in the mid 80s when millions of rupees pouring in from various foreign and local sources as donations failed to meet the increasing cost of running the organization and funds received by central leaderships failed to trickle down to the lowest ranks. Thus the leadership of religious organizations asked the party workers to arrange finances on their own to meet the cost of maintaining an office and other facilities, including weapons. As a majority of the workers belonged to the economically impoverished class they found it convenient to arrange funds in the form of extortion money or by committing armed robberies or providing shelter to wanted criminals and narcotics dealers.

In one such incident in early 1990s four men were arrested in Sargodha during a robbery attempt at a school on salary day. The investigations revealed that they had been tipped off by one of the school employees about the presence of around RS 150,000 in cash drawn by the school administration to disperse staff salaries. All the arrested were members of the Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan and during interrogations by the police confessed to their involvement in innumerable house and highway robberies in several cities. At the time the Sipah-e-Sahaba was an ally of the ruling party in the provincial government of Punjab and the then Chief Minister Ghulam Haider Wayne was under tremendous pressure to order the release of the robbers and in fact he did direct the Sargodha police to exercise maximum restraint in dealing with the members of religious organizations.

²⁵ The said report was prepared by police Special Branch in late 1980s

Meanwhile, the police had gathered enough information from the accused and for the first time in the recent history it dared to raid religious seminaries and mosques to recover looted items. During several successful raids the police recovered from mosques and seminaries in Jhang and some other cities motorcycles snatched away at gunpoint, large cache of sophisticated illicit weapons and arrested a number of fugitives from the law who had taken the cover of religious workers²⁶.

However, before these raids could leave a long-lasting impact on the situation Chief Minister Wayne gave way to the pressure exerted by the SSP and its ally organizations and the half-hearted political will to expose the reality behind religious sectarian organizations fizzled out with the police operation coming to a halt.

Although, the operation to round up the outlaws and suspects present in the ranks of the SSP stopped but it proved fruitful for the police department which started gathering details about the people working for such organizations. According to one of the reports prepared as a follow up to the operation it was revealed that a number of drug dealers donated large sums of money to the religious and sectarian outfits and subsequently some had been named even as office bearers of the organization. Similarly, a long list of outlaws who had joined sectarian parties to enjoy impunity from law enforcers was also prepared.

The SSP activists are not the only ones committing unlawful acts as in 1996, four members of a Shia militant organization looted a cash delivery van of a private security company on Jail Road. During the robbery two people were killed and three others, including a woman, sustained serious injuries. The robbery case still remains unsolved in police files.

Of several incidents where sectarian militants kidnapped rich businessmen for ransom the most tragic was the abduction of an Ahmadi leader from Rabwa on April 14, 1999. A gang of four wanted terrorists of the Sipah-e-Sahaba led by Ejaz alias Jajji Tarar, who carried a reward of RS 2 million headmoney, and accompanied by terrorist Tariq Virk carrying a reward of RS 200,000, abducted an Ahmadi community leader from Rabwa for ransom. The kidnapped person was a computer engineer and had returned to the country only a few months ago. The kidnappers were moving towards Chiniot Road as

²⁶ The Special Branch report prepared in early 1990s

they stopped the car near a culvert allowing a passenger bus to cross, the kidnapped person managed to get out of the car and run for his life. The terrorists did not waste any time and shot dead the man at some distance. The baffled bus passengers started shouting for help and the unnerved driver got stranded in the middle of the culvert blocking the road. The terrorists fired several shots at the bus killing five people, including a lady teacher, and injuring several others before speeding towards the Chiniot-Jhang Road. The incident occurred in the early hours of the day and several police officers in the adjoining districts were on their way to offices the message about the firing incident was aired on the police wireless. A police mobile squad set up a picket near Chiniot City with an intention to intercept the terrorists who reached the spot shortly afterwards and immediately fired a rocket at the police making clear their intentions of not giving up without a fight. After about a chase of an hour the police managed to block all the routes and the terrorists took refuge in a mosque and engaged the police in a five hour long shootout that ended with the death of all the four terrorists.

Following the military takeover it was hoped that the terrorists won't dare operate with the all-powerful military at the helm of affairs but the sectarian killings still continue at an alarming rate. Since the military takeover on October 12, 1999, incidents of sect-related violence have occurred everywhere in the country. The difference this time it that the center of activity has shifted from the province of Punjab to Sindh with the metropolitan city of Karachi suffering the major burnt.

The Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, which has further been divided into two groups each led by wanted terrorist Riaz Basra and Qari Asadullah alias Abdul Haye, carrying reward money of RS 2 million, has become even more violent. The Qari-group had Karachi as its stronghold and police reports suggest that Basra-group has specially increased its activities in Karachi to establish themselves as more organized than the Qari-group. The irony is that to establish their superiority each of the groups is targeting more and more Shias and the government seems more helpless than ever before.

On August 14, 2001, the military government, which had been put to grave humiliation by terrorists who had targeted several important personalities across the country, imposed a ban on the activities of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and Sipah-e-Muhammad. The act to ban one Shia and one Deobandi militant organization was seen by many as an attempt by the

government to appear as dealing both the parties even handedly. However, those aware of the ground realities feel that the government wanted the people of Pakistan to get an impression that it was serious in dealing with sectarian militant organizations without being actually sincere to the cause.

The SMP was rendered incapable of carrying out any militant operation years ago and police intelligence have sufficient presence in the ranks of the organization, which has off late started making itself recognized as a political party. The LJ has been operating in the country for years and it never sought government's approval for carrying out attacks. The imposition of ban on publishing the statements issued by the two 'underground' terrorist organizations is also ironic as this way instead of sending a response via fax or phone they might hit important people with intensity to show their response to the government action.

The State response

Over the years we have seen various governments' approach the issue of sectarian warfare in different manners. In the late 1980s and early 90s it appear that sectarianism did not even qualify in the eye of the decision makers as an important issue and consequently no policies were devised to counter the menace. During the military governments of Gen. Ayub Khan and Gen. Ziaul Haq and later in the political governments till early 1990s the rulers brushed aside the sect-related incidents of violence by alleging involvement of foreign hand which none of the successive government to-date succeeded in exposing.

The indifferent attitude of the successive governments allowed the religious militant groups to multiply in numerical strength at an alarming rate and by turning a blind eye to the criminal activities the governments tacitly let all such groups raise armies to kill each other in the name of religion.

The first serious initiative to resolve the issue came in March 1995 when various religious organizations gathered at a platform later named 'Milli Yakjehti Council' to bring an end to the incessant sect-related killings in the country. All the religious organizations including the hard-line groups like the Sipah-e-Sahaba and Sipah-e-Muhammad were a part of the Council.

Milli Yakjehti Council was founded at a time when religious groups and parties were facing the most serious crises in their entire history. Amid growing disgust in the masses the government had started a large-scale action against the religious organizations and had arrested more than 200 religious activists and put restrictions on seminaries.

Religious leaders were well aware that while the West applauded these actions of the Pakistan government against the 'fundamentalists', the supporters of these organizations from outside Pakistan were not in a position to go public in support of the religious militant organizations and pressurize the government to stop the onslaught.

There were equally serious threats for the religious organizations from within the country as the war among the sectarian groups had reached a point where credibility of religious parties and lives of the top leadership were more at risk than the ordinary worker. The

religious parties and groups had finally come to realize that they themselves were becoming the worst casualties of the existing sectarian situation. The same year people had undergone the worst Ramzan ever when praying at a mosque had become a life risking activity.

It appeared more out of desperation rather than a genuine change of heart that Sipah-e-Sahaba proposed mediation with the rival groups and named Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan Chief Qazi Hussain Ahmad as the mediator. By April 15, Qazi had scored the largest success of his political career by bringing together an alliance in which almost all the important religious parties and groups were represented.

Milli Yakjehti Council had provided the Jamaat with a unique chance to materialize the aspiration of uniting the religious parties and thus turning them into an invincible force against the 'equally corrupt Peoples Party and the Muslim League.' For the first time in the past several years there was no incidence of violence anywhere in the country during Muharram and shortly afterwards Qazi Husain Ahmad started hinting at the future political role of the Council²⁷. The central leadership of the Council started making statements¹ about turning the Council into a political alliance thus digressing from the initial manifesto of finding a just solution of the sectarian warfare through a process of dialogue.

It was perhaps one of those rare periods when one found rival organizations, which had in the past spent time thwarting each other even to the extent of using bombs and assault rifles, were engaged in forestalling the possibility of a mishap. They also succeeded in finalizing a 17-point code of conduct for religious organizations which banned calling anyone infidel, using derogatory remarks towards revered personalities of Islam and granting full respect to companions of the Prophet and Ahl-e-Bait.

While parties like Jamaat and Jamiat-Ulema-e-Pakistan were keen on getting some political mileage out of the alliance, militant sectarian organizations were not willing to become somebody else's stooge and vehemently opposed any such move which amid at

²⁷ Dawn May 1995 'We will soon give the nation a big news'. Qazi Husain Ahmed.

²⁸ The News June 1995 'No party will be able to get 41 percent votes in presence of the Milli Yakjehti Council which is a non political party but its members include big and important political parties.' Maulana Shah Ahmad Noorani

converting this forum into a political alliance²⁸. It was one of the few issues relating to the MYC on which both the Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan and Shia militant organization Sipah-e-Muhammad Pakistan leadership were in complete consonance.²⁹

Although, there was much resistance from within there was no doubt in the minds of many that the organization was slowly taking a political colour and the Jamaat would not let the opportunity to fulfil its political ambitions go wasted at a time when it had succeeded in bring almost all the religious and religio-political parties on one platform.³⁰

For the same reasons the Council started falling apart and a day after the June 2, 1995, meeting in Peshawar Professor Tahirul Qadri's Tehrik-e-Minhajul Quran parted ways stating that the alliance had shown signs of political and electoral ambitions and had started moving towards acquiring a political role.

As the alliance gained popularity it started taking up issues which initially were not in its ambit. For example in one of its resolutions the Milli Yakjehti Council threatened to launch a movement like the 1977s Tehrik-e-Nizame Mustafa, if any amendment was made in the blasphemy law. Any such attempt, the Council said, would be viewed as 'hypocritical and aimed at pleasing the West'.

Thus owing to the apparent insincerity of Jamaat-e-Islami and some other organizations and attempts to turn the forum into a political alliance, an important opportunity to settle the religious disputes through a process of dialogue was wasted and one-by-one the parties to the conflict left the alliance leaving it ineffective to resolve the sectarian disputes.

Another serious attempt came during the second term of Mian Nawaz Sharif as Prime Minister in 1997 with his younger brother, Shahbaz Sharif, as Punjab chief minister. A government sponsored Mutahida Ulema Board was set up to identify and remove from the market literature fanning sectarian hatred.

The government issued a list of books which it termed were objectionable and launched a campaign against those involved in printing and selling them. However, the efforts came

²⁹ The News June 5 'We will not support such a move' Murid Abbas Yazdani Chief of Sipah-e-Muhammad.

³⁰ Daily Jang June 2 'It is bound to take a political turn' Agha Murtaza Poya Chief of Hizb-e-Jehad.

to a halt owing to differences between the members of the Board and demarcation of some religious books written by people who were among the family members of Prophet Muhammad³¹, as objectionable. The Sharif brothers took the issue of sectarian violence very seriously and considered it the only threat to their government. For the same reason attempts were made on their life and on January 3, 1999, an attempt was made to assassinate Mian Nawaz Sharif in Lahore. A bomb was planted underneath a bridge from where the prime minister was expected to pass shortly afterwards but it exploded premature leaving three passersby dead.

Another attempt by the same government was the setting up of the anti-terrorist courts solely to ensure a speedy disposal of cases of sectarian nature. However, owing to various unavoidable reasons the courts failed to deliver and when the Sharif government was sent packing in October 1999, at least 109 of the 187 cases sent to the anti-terrorist courts were still pending.

Although, the court proceedings moved at a turtle pace some important cases were decided in a relatively shorter period only because of the government's interest. For example the Lahore Sessions Court bombing accused Mehram Ali was awarded capital punishment by a speedy trials court on September 15, 1998 and the decision was upheld by appellate courts. Mehram was hanged at the Faisalabad jail on March 14, 1999.

Similarly, 14 terrorists involved in Iranian Cultural Centre Multan killings activists of the Lashkar-i-Jhangvi and in the Masjidal Khair Multan massacre activists of the Sipah-i-Muhammad were awarded death sentences by an anti-terrorist court. However, these convictions by the courts failed to deter the terrorists and the sectarian militancy continued unabated. In a daring step that was never acknowledged as an official one at any stair of the government hierarchy it was decided to give the terrorists a taste of their own medicine and the government decided to kill the wanted terrorists in an extra-judicial manner.

The Punjab police have always been notorious for killing suspected outlaws in dubious encounters but in the past it had never dare lay a hand on activists of sectarian organizations. During the Sharif government it was granted tacit approval to deal with the

³¹ Nahjul Balagha written by Hazrat Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet and fourth caliph of the Muslims was among the list of objectionable books. It was later removed from the list by a Supreme Court order.

sectarian militants involved in terrorist activities in a conventional way and for the first time police stopped giving sectarian militants preferential treatment and started dealing them like other criminals.

As a result from September 1998 till the removal of the Sharif government by the military the Punjab police killed as many as 36 sectarian terrorists belonging to the Sipah-e-Sahaba and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi in what the police termed were shootouts. However, both the organizations alleged that the shootouts in which their militants were killed were dubious. The step though unlawful turned out to be a great success and a marked decrease was witnessed in the number of sect-motivated incidents of violence.

This hard-line policy of the government redefined the Deobandi-Shia conflict and it became a confrontation between Deobandis and the government. On September 25, 1998, the SSP Sheikhpura secretary general, Asgher Mujahid, became the first sectarian militant to be killed in a shootout near Sharakpur Sharif. He was arrested by the police about 10 days earlier while escaping after targeting one Zaigham Bokhari, at the Lahore General Hospital.

The police officers in public denied staging fake encounters but in private accepted the facts blaming the deteriorating law and order situation on the 'faulty' judicial system which they alleged was exonerating the highly motivated sectarian terrorists increasing troubles for the police.

The situation became almost farcical, when the police would kill terrorists in custody in unofficial retaliation to sectarian strikes. Noor Gul, a close aide of Riaz Basra and an explosives' expert, Sarfraz and Mohammed Arshad, were killed on the Khanewal road to Multan on January 30, 1999. They had been arrested on charges of involvement in the Raiwind bombing, and had been detained in Lahore till January 28, when five policemen and a civilian were killed in Gulistan Colony, Multan. Subsequent investigations proved the involvement of the Lashkar-i-Jhangvi in the killing, and apparently to settle the score, Noor Gul, Sarfraz and Mohammed Arshad were sent to Multan, a journey which they never completed. The police stated that they had died in a shootout resulting from an attempt to rescue the prisoners.

Similarly, on May 26, three policemen were gunned down near Gulgasht Colony, Multan and the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi claimed responsibility for the act. The police retaliated about a

week later on June 2, by killing alleged hitmen Abbas alias Billa and Asim Irfan. The police stated that they had been arrested for involvement in the killing of nine policemen and 13 members of a rival sect and were being shifted to a police lockup when some accomplices of the terrorists tried to rescue them near Sher Shah Chowk, Multan. A crossfire that ensued between the police and rescuers left both the terrorist with fatal bullet wounds.

Among the most active members of the Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi killed were. Khurshid Ahmed alias Maulvi Bumb, with a headmoney value of one million rupees, in Vehari on October 3, 1999. On October 7, two terrorists remanded into police custody were killed in Gulshan-e-Ravi. Mulazim Mohana, involved in innumerable killings and massacres in Shorkot and Karam Dad Qureshi, was killed in Muzaffargarh the same day. On October 9, 1999 Mohammed Arshad, accused of killing nine people, was himself killed in Multan.

As a result of the reprisal killings the incidents of target shootings by sectarian groups dropped drastically but the terrorists struck back in October 1999 with full force simultaneously killing followers of the rival sect across the country.

Earlier the reports regarding military training camps run by the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and other organizations in Afghanistan were ignored by the government, but the October resurgence of violence forced a response and the then Punjab chief minister Shabaz Sharif, in a news conference alleged that terrorists were being trained in camps in a neighbouring country.

These allegations were endorsed by the then prime minister Nawaz Sharif who went a step further and asked the Taliban authorities in Afghanistan to close down a camp run by Riaz Basra, Pakistan's most wanted sectarian terrorist. This was for the first time ever the government had directly held the Afghanistan government responsible for providing shelter and training facilities to terrorist groups operating in Pakistan.

The military takeover on October 12, 1999 brought all government action against militants to a halt and the terrorist activities also stopped. Like many previous governments the issue of sectarianism was not on the priority list of the Musharraf government and it was brushed aside as a routine law and order situation. Meanwhile, the terrorist organization after lying low for a couple of months resumed their activities and

till August 2001, as many as 223 people had been killed and over 200 injured in 84 in some 30 cities across the country.

Senior police officers attribute this high number of killings to a very relaxed policy of the military rulers during their first year in power. Appeals in number of cases in which the government had succeeded in getting the terrorists convicted were accepted and the courts asked the law enforces to release the sectarian militants. The accused of high-profile cases like the Iranian Cultural Centre Multan and Iranian cadet case in Rawalpindi were exonerated and in an attempt to seeking support of Deobandi religious organizations the government released SSP chief Maulana Azam Tariq.

The government became aware of its faulty policies in June 2001, when terrorists targeted Shaukat Raza Mirza, managing director Pakistan State Oil, and his driver, Sulaiman Mustafa Shah, in Karachi. Mirza's high-profile murder was followed by the target killing of Syed Zafar Husain Zaidi, Director Research Laboratories, Ministry of Defence, on July 30 and in both the cases Lashkar-e-Jhangvi claimed responsibility for the act. This prompted the government to act and in a surprising move on August 14, Gen. Musharraf clamped a ban on the activities of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and Sipah-e-Muhammad.— a move seen by analyst as an attempt to appear dealing with both the rival sect evenhandedly. Only time would tell how effective the government action would be, but for the time being incidents of sect-related violence have continued even after the imposition of the ban and it appears to be having no effect on the operations of the sectarian militant organizations.

Seminaries; breeding grounds for terrorists

The religious schools or madrasahs of today are seen as breeding grounds for sectarian terrorists and they have undoubtedly played an important role in providing the sectarian militant organizations with fresh blood, a necessity for the survival of any militant movement. It is of common practice throughout the country that every mosque houses an adjoining seminary and these schools imparting religious education are divided sharply on the basis of sectarian beliefs.

The government has very little control over what is taught at these institutes and there is virtually no check on the sources of funding. In addition a large number of seminaries receive funds from government's social welfare and Auqaf departments and unspecified foreign donors. Ironically, there is no single government department that has all the relevant details about such institutions or the number of students enrolled. However, the reports prepared by state intelligence agencies provide an insight into the vast network of seminaries, their role in increasing militancy, widening the sectarian divide and economic importance for the poor.

The phenomenon of militant sectarianism, especially among the Sunnis, is closely associated with the proliferation of the seminaries across the country and particularly in the province of Punjab. Increasingly, seminary students have become active in local and national politics and more ominously they have also become prominent in militant movements. Ramzi Ahmad Yousf's International Islamic Movement; Harkatul Ansar renamed Harkatul Mujahideen's campaign in Kashmir; the Taliban in Afghanistan; Lashkar-e-Jhangvi; Sawad-e-Azam-e-Ahle Sunnat; Sunni Council; Sunni Jamiat-e-Talba; Pakistan Sunni Ittehad; Tahaffuz-e-Khatm-e-Nabuwwat; Pakistan Shariat Council; Sipah-e-Sahaba and many other similar organizations had begun in and around militant seminaries and recruit from among their students and graduates.³²

Although, no government made any serious attempt to impose a check on what goes on in and around a seminary, there have been instances when the roles of seminaries regarding sectarian militancy came under severe criticism from public and the state. The reports

³² S.V.R Nasar; University of San Diego; The rise of sunni militancy in Pakistan

prepared by the police Special Branch and the provincial home department term a significant number of the religious schools synonymous to breeding grounds of sectarian terrorists.

In 1997 Punjab CID and Multan police conducted a joint raid on one of country's largest Deobandi seminary, Madrasah Ghausia, in Jahanian to arrest terrorists wanted innumerable incidents of sectarian terrorism. However, the terrorists escaped, reportedly with the help of seminary administration. This incident alone is sufficient as an evidence of association between seminaries and sectarian terrorists.

With the negative aspects in view we cannot ignore the vital economic importance of these institutes in the eyes of the poor masses. Independent surveys conducted over the years have shown that these facilities provide food and shelter to a large number of students and don't charge a single rupee. Thus large families with meager resources are tempted to send their children to such facilities with the only consideration that the child would be fed well at someone else's expense and they are least moved by the fact that he might be indoctrinated and transformed into a religious fanatic.

In many cases families of such children considers themselves lucky if the child grows up to become a prayer leader or a sermon giver and in case the child becomes a mujahid (holy worrier) and ends up dead on some unknown war front, it is considered a special blessing from the God.

During the Zia era the religious seminaries became politicized and in a bid to find support in the masses the military rulers granted preferential treatment to religious leaders allowing them to amass wealth in the name of religion. The studies conducted on the issue in the past point towards the phenomenal rise in the number of religious seminaries in the country during the Zia period.

According to statistics available with the police department at the time of partition of the sub-continent there were around 150 religious schools in the areas that became part of Pakistan. The number went up to 210 in 1950 and since then there has been a constant rise in the number and it reached 401 in 1960 and by 1971 went up to around 563.

The number of seminaries estimated by a committee set up by Gen. Zia in 1979 stood over 1,000 in Punjab alone. A similar exercise carried out about five years ago estimated the number of religious seminaries in Punjab alone at 2,500 with a combined student

population of over 200,000. Of these, 750 seminaries were identified as actively imparting military training while 1,700 were receiving funds from foreign sources. Since the last estimation the number of both the seminaries and the students have gone up and at present the government officials put the figures of religious seminary students around 300,000.

One of the major factors for the sudden rise in the number of seminaries was the decision of the Zia government in 1984-85 to induct graduates from seminaries in the education department as Arabic teachers. The only condition was possession of a degree issued by Wafaqul Madarris, central administrative committees of the seminaries. It is interesting to note that there is no official regulation or government monitoring systems for these administrative committees and seminaries belonging to different sects have their own Wafaq and the degrees are granted without any formal examination.

The Afghan war in the 1980s was also an important factor in the increase of madrasah culture in Pakistan. The threats of communism reaching the Gulf states prompted Arabs to provide generous support for all sorts of Islamic activities to strengthen the Islamic identity in Pakistan. The funds found their ways to the seminaries already functioning at the time and also helped create a new breed of seminaries which were more interest in foreign funding than jihad.

Soon after coming into power the Musharraf government announced its plans to regulate the curricula of the religious seminaries and gather details about the number of students, the number of teachers and their academic qualification and the source of funding. The government distributed specific forms to the administration of a large number of seminaries to fill in the relevant details but none of the seminaries cooperated terming it an attempt on the part of the government to interfere in affairs of the religious schools.

On the other hand the provincial government of NWFP in July 2001 started disbursing funds to various religious schools and its religious minister Qari Roohullah Madni announced that his government plans to provide RS 10 million to seminaries in aid. Of the allocated amount the provincial minister distributed a sum of RS 1.3 million to representatives of various madrasahs in a meeting on July 13.³³ Thus it still remains unclear whether the Musharraf government is sincere about riding these institutions of

³³ Dawn July 13; Religious schools to get RS 10 m in aid.

militancy and sectarianism or like Ziaul Haq is trying to ensure that the religious organizations and their affiliate seminaries know that they have no option but to support the present military government.

Annex: A

Sectarian killings from 1987 till August 14, 2001 in Punjab

Year	Incidents	Killed	Injured
1987	25	11	155
1988	10	01	16
1989	67	10	102
1990	274	32	528
1991	180	47	263
1992	135	58	261
1993	90	39	247
1994	162	73	316
1995	88	59	180
1996	71	83	210
1997	97	200	175
1998	36	78	80
1999	22	66	45
2000	22	53	70
2001, Aug 14	17	43	64

Annex: B***People killed in sect-related violence during the present military government from October 12, 1999 till August 14, 2001***

Name of city	Incidents of sectarian violence	Number of people killed	Number of people injured
Karachi	34	55	21
FATA	07	61	20
Dera Ismail Khan	06	10	19
Lahore	05	14	08
Multan	03	04	03
Mailsi	02	04	00
Vehari	02	02	02
Chishtian	02	01	09
Hyderabad	02	00	28
Attock	01	17	10
Sheikhupura	01	16	15
Haripur	01	13	04
Sialkot	01	05	09
Sargodha	01	05	15
Faisalabad	01	03	00
Tank	01	02	00
Sukkur	01	02	10
Charsadha	01	02	00
Kabirwala	01	01	02
Khanewal	01	01	00
Toba Tek Singh	01	01	00
Okara	01	01	00
Peshawar	01	01	00
Shorkot	01	01	01
Gujranwala	01	01	00
Chakwal	01	00	15
Chitral	01	00	07
Rawalpindi	01	00	01
Kohat	01	00	01
Nawshera	01	00	01
Total: 30 cities	84	223	201

Annex: C

Seminaries in eight divisions of the Punjab

Division	Number of seminaries
Lahore division	323
Gujranwala division	140
Rawalpindi division	169
Faisalabad division	112
Sargodha division	149
Multan division	325
Dera Ghazi Khan division	411
Bahawalpur division	883

Note: The statistics are from a home department report prepared in 1996.

Annex: D***Breakup of seminaries and number of students according to religious affiliations***

Division	No. of seminaries	Deobandi S/S	Brelvi S/S	Ahle-Hadith S/S	Shia S/S
Lahore	324	143/17,892	136/18,336	41/5,524	4/373
Gujranwala	140	36/3,632	87/7,400	13/1,712	4/373
Rawalpindi	169	83/8,367	64/8,307	6/417	16/417
Faisalabad	112	47/1,168	39/5,027	18/3,141	8/700
Sargodha	149	68/6,158	64/7,427	9/1,318	8/341
Multan	325	127/1,888	159/10,798	27/2,620	12/660
D. G Khan	361	133/8,816	174/9,595	24/1,829	19/746
Bahawalpur	883	335/32,204	498/29,308	36/2,319	19,746
Total	2,463	972/80,120	1,216/95,196	174/18,880	101/4,304

S/S: Number of seminaries/number of Student

Annex: E

A chronology of police encounters in which sectarian terrorists were killed

City and Date	A brief about the police encounter
Sheikhupura September 25, 1998	September 25, 1998: Asgher Mujahid, secretary-general of Sipah-e-Sahaba Sheikhupura district was arrested on September 15, from the Lahore General Hospital. He and another accomplice had killed an LGH employee, Zaigham Abbas Bokhari, on hospital premises and were escaping when public nabbed Mujahid. Police claim that he was being shifted to Sheikhupura for further interrogations when his accomplice made an attempt to rescue him near Sharkpur Sharif. The crossfire that ensued left Mujahid with fatal bullet wounds.
Rahim Yar Khan October 9, 1998.	October 9: Abdul Aziz Katana, one of the five terrorists who escaped from Dera Ghazi Khan jail in 1997, and wanted in innumerable cases killed in Rahim Yar Khan. He had courted arrest two days before being killed in what police claimed was an attempt to rescue him from police custody.
Lahore October 15, 1998	October 15: Khalid alias Bholla of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, allegedly involved in five sectarian incidents, killed in an 'encounter' with police in Batapur, Lahore.
Lahore October 15, 1998	October 15: Four terrorists of Sipah-e-Sahaba killed in a shootout with police in Sanda, Lahore.
Sheikhupura January 15, 1999	January 15, 1999: Hafiz Zahoorul Haq of the SSP, allegedly in the killing of eight people in Warburton in 1997, killed during a rescue attempt in Ferozewala.
Gujrat January 15, 1999	January 15, 1999: Lashkar-e-Jhangvi hitman, Abdul Majeed alias Nadeem Butt killed in a shootout in Gujrat.
Multan January 30, 1999	January 30: Lashkar-e-Jhangvi activists, Noor Gul, Sarfraz Ahmad and Muhammad Arshad, killed during a rescue attempt from police custody on Khanewal Road, Multan. Noor Gul and Sarfraz were allegedly involved in the January 3, bomb blast on Raiwind Road from where the then prime minister was expected to pass shortly afterwards.

Lahore January 30, 1999	January 30: Lashkar-e-Jhangvi activist Abid Raza killed during a rescue attempt in Allama Iqbal Town. He had also snatched away the car from President Rafiq Tarar's son at gunpoint.
Okara February 12, 1999	February 12: Masoodur Rehman and Muhammad Azam Gull of Sipah-e-Sahaba, accused of killed Faisalabad Range Crime SP Ali Muhammad Baloch and 17 other people, killed in a rescue attempt in Okara.
Khanewal February 14, 1999	February 14: Gul Muhammad of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi killed in a shootout with police in Khanewal. Two constables were also killed.
Muzaffargarh February 17, 1999	February 17: Tauheed Khan and Habibullah Haideri of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, allegedly involved in the killing Muzaffargarh massacre, killed in a shootout when an attempt was made to rescue them in Muzaffargarh.
Sargodha April 4, 1999	April 4: Azizur Rehman and Shahzad Warraich of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi killed in a shootout in Sargodha.
Chiniot April 14, 1999	April 14: Terrorists Ejaz Jajji (headmoney RS. 2 million), Tariq Virk (headmoney RS. 500,000), Hafiz Ghulam Shabbir and Mumtaz Bhatti killed in a four-hour-long shootout. They had kidnapped and subsequently killed an Ahmadi leader and five others in an attempt to escape.
Gujranwala April 20, 1999	April 20: Muhammad Rafiq of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, allegedly involved in the killing of Judicial Magistrate Fida Husain Shah, his daughter and driver, killed in a shootout in Gujranwala.
Multan June 2, 1999	June 2: Abbas alias Billa and Asim Irfan of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, allegedly involved in the killing of nine policemen and 13 members of rival sect, were killed in a shootout when an attempt was made to rescue them from police custody.
Lahore June 13, 1999	June 13: Lashkar-e-Jhangvi hitman Muhammad Kashif killed in an encounter in Baghbanpura, Lahore.
Lahore October 3, 1999	October 3: Hafiz Muhammad Afzal and Hafiz Muhammad Ramzan, alleged hitmen of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, killed a rescue attempt on Bund Road, Lahore
Muzaffargarh October 3, 1999	October 3: Mulazim Husain Mohana of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi involved in massacres in Shorkot, Karam Dad Qureshi and Kot

	Adu, killed in a rescue attempt in Muzaffargarh.
Multan October 9, 1999	October 9: Lashkar-e-Jhangvi hitman Muhammad Arshad killed during a rescue attempt on Multan-Bahawalpur Road some 30 kilometres from Multan.
Layyah December 31, 1999	December 31, 1999: Akram alias Gunji of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, allegedly involved in the killing of Pir Sabir Sultan and five others in Shorkot, killed in a shootout in Layyah. (He is the only terrorist to have been killed since military takeover in October 12, 1999.

Annex: F

***A chronology of incident occurred during 1990- August 14, 2001
in which police officials were killed by sectarian terrorists in
Punjab***

City & Date	Brief about the incident
Jhang May 9, 1990.	Constable Ejaz Husain, Police Station Jhang City, killed by SSP activists. He was part of the police party that had raided homes of the SSP activists following sectarian clashes in the city.
Jhang July 27, 1990	Constable Muhammad Yousaf killed when the SSP activists hurled crackers and fired at a religious procession in Garh Mahraja.
Jhang May 20, 1992	District Jail Superintendent Zainulabidin Abbasi killed by the SSP activists for not granting concessions to their arrested members. The SSP activists led by one Saleem Fauji held the SP and other staff hostage at his house. The SP was taken to an SSP-dominated locality and shot dead in public.
Jhang June 16, 1992	Police Station Kotwali SHO Inspector Umar Hayat, ASI Muhammad Bashir and constables Allah Yar, Ghulam Abbas and Muhammad Husain, killed when SSP activists fired a rocket at the police van.
Attock October 26, 1992	Constable Ejaz Ahmad deployed as guard at a Sipah-e-Sahaba gathering killed when unidentified gunmen opened fire at the participants.
Shorkot August 22, 1994	Constable Imtiaz Ahmad, guard of SSP leader Maulana Azam Tariq, killed in an attack on the leader by activists of Sipah-e-Muhammad.
Lahore September 19, 1994	Kot Lakhpat Jail Superintendent Syed Sibtain Hasan Naqvi and a constable killed in Model Town Central Park at around 4:50pm. The SSP leadership had accused him of not granting concessions to the SSP's arrested workers.
Khanewal October 22, 1996	Constable Muhammad Rafiq, gunman of Khanewal DC Ali Raza, killed in an attack by two motorcycle riders along with the DC near his official residence.

Bahawalpur October 30, 1996	Inspector Sajjad Haider, killed by three armed men at the doorstep of his house in the early hours of the day. The attackers knocked at the door and as the inspector opened the door he was shot dead.
Mianwali December 2, 1996	Constable Khan Zaman killed when the SSP activists opened indiscriminate fire on being stopped from holding 'Mission Jhangvi' conference.
Lahore December 31, 1996	Constable Muhammad Ilyas, deployed as guard with TJP leader Syed Zulfiqar Husain Naqvi, killed along with Naqvi and two others by armed terrorists near Kot Lakhpat jail.
Lahore January 18, 1997	Nineteen policemen, including three sub-inspectors, killed when a bomb exploded at the Sessions Court where Sipah-e-Sahaba leader had been brought in connection with a murder case.
Okara April 14, 1997	Constable Liaquat Ali, bodyguard of Dr Hadi Husain, killed along with the doctor by two motorcycle riders.
Gujranwala May 6, 1997	SSP Ashraf Marth and his driver, Head Constable Tabassam Zamir, killed in an ambush. The SSP was brother-in-law of the then interior minister, Chaudhry Shujaat Husain.
Vehari July 19, 1997	SI Muhammad Riaz Gujjar shot dead by two armed intruders at his Muslim Town residence.
Bahawalpur September 25, 1997	CIA Inspector Muhammad Saddiq and three constables, Muhammad Akram, Muhammad Naveed and Muhammad Zafar, killed in an ambush shortly after they left the inspector's residence for office. The attackers were present at some distance in the guise of fruit vendors.
Multan July 4, 1998	Shujaabad DSP Allah Nawaz Khan Niazi and his driver, Constable Ghulam Murtaza, attacked near city Ghala Madi by four terrorists riding in a car. Both the policemen died on the spot.
Sangla Hill July 18, 1998	Faisalabad Range Crime SP Ali Muhammad Baloch and his driver, Constable Liaquat Ali, killed by two armed men riding on a motorcycle.
Kabirwala August 29, 1998	Constable Maqbool Husain, a member of Khanewal police's anti-terrorist cell, killed by three motorcycle riders while going towards his 'dera'

Multan October 9, 1998	Constable Samiullah, deployed at Iranian Cultural Centre, killed and one constable injured by two unidentified terrorists.
Multan January 1, 1999	ASI Mumtaz Ahmed and four constables, Zulfiqar Ali, Muhammad Hayat, Muhammad Saleem and Muhammad Shafiq, killed when three motorcycle riders attacked a police picket set up near Gulistan Chowk.
Khanewal February 14, 1999	Two constables killed and two others, including a DSP, injured in crossfire with proclaimed offenders of the Sipah-e-Sahaba in village Daulatpur.
Multan May 26, 1999	SI Muhammad Bilal and two constables, Riaz Husain and Ali Akbar, of Gulghasht Town Flying Squad intercepted pillion riders who opened fire with automatic weapons killing the three policemen on the spot.
Attock (Pindi Ghabe) May 12, 2000	Constable Mukhtar Ahmad and fourteen other people killed when unidentified terrorists attacked a religious gathering.
Multan August 13, 2000	ASI Ghulam Rasool and Constable Muhammad Arshad of Flying Squad killed by pillion riders in the jurisdiction of Police Station Steel Mari.
Lahore December 16, 2000	DSP Tariq Kamboh and his driver, Constable Muhammad Yaseen, killed by three terrorists near Doctors Hospital in Johar Town.
Sheikhupura March 4, 2001	Constables, Ishtiaq Ahmad and Abdul Ghafoor, killed while attempting to nab the three terrorists who were escaping after killing fourteen people.

Ends/