

Naom Chomsky Intellectual
Everybody's worried about stopping terrorism. Well, there's a really easy way: stop participating in it.

perspective

SWAT analysis

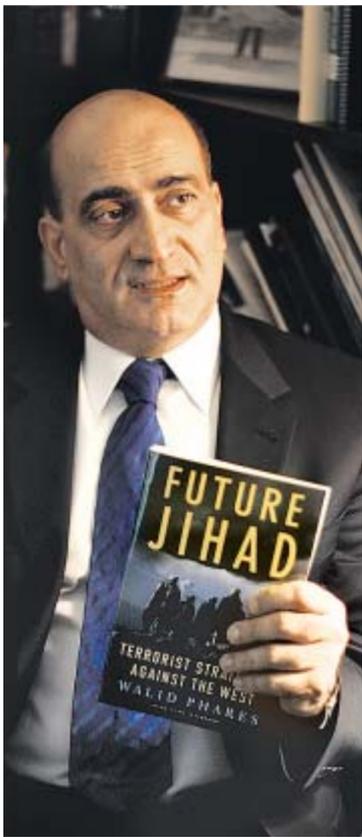
Pakistan expects its deal with the devil in Swat Valley will drive a wedge between moderate and extreme elements of the Taliban. At risk is the future of children who can be indoctrinated into extremism



Swat's switch to Sharia: In Afghanistan the Taliban stripped women of all their rights —AP

Q&A Jihadi penetration of Pakistan's armed forces is at the centre of all concerns in any new strategy

'They will use the deal to spread their version of jihad'



The deal between the Pakistan government and pro-Taliban forces in the Swat valley is an ominous portent of Pakistan's slide into jihadism, with strategic implications for India and other countries, warns **Walid Phares**, a counter-terrorism expert and director of the Future Terrorism Project at the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies in Washington. Excerpts from an interview he gave to **Venkatesan Vembu**

Will the Obama administration's strategy in Afghanistan and Pakistan succeed or will this become 'Obama's Vietnam'?

The success of the strategy hinges not only on the military actions inside Afghanistan and Pakistan but rather more on the regional strategy the administration devises. It can succeed if it offers support to Afghanistan and crafts a campaign to isolate jihadists politically and broaden the anti-terror coalition in the subcontinent.

The argument about 'Obama's Vietnam' was advanced by the jihadi propaganda machine. But Afghanistan could become a Vietnam if the Taliban wins the hearts and minds of Afghans and if Pakistan falls to jihadists. So far, that's not the case. To avoid a Vietnam-like situation, the US and NATO must ensure that Afghans reject the Taliban's ideology and Pakistan doesn't fall into the jihadists' hands.

The Pakistani military and power structure has already been infiltrated by jihadists.

The jihadi penetration of Pakistan's armed forces is the centre of all concerns in any strategy. Pakistani high officials, particularly those who view the jihadi forces as a threat, know that many sectors have been penetrated, but they say this situation has been inherited from previous years and decades.

How serious is the recent proclamation of

Sharia law in the Swat Valley?

It's a setback to democracy and pluralism, and shows the power of jihadi movements. The Yousuf Raza Gilani government inherited a situation from past decades. The spread of fundamentalism in Pakistan is half-a-century old. If the Swat valley agreement is a prelude to a retreat by the government from jihadists, the future will be dark.

What are the implications of this deal for Pakistan?

It will empower radical Islamists and jihadi movements to create a large pool of jihad-indoctrinated people. The jihadists are unstoppable: once they have Sharia control over a province, they will use it to spread their version of jihad and entice youth into the Taliban and other groups. Other provinces in the frontier areas will fall. Eventually, it will bring down the government.

Is the 'war on terror' blind to the terrorism infrastructure in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir?

Washington's first priority is to help Islamabad counter jihadists operating on the western border, because they can turn the situation in Afghanistan nasty. The Pakistani government can barely deal with one front at a time, so priority is given to the Taliban/al Qaeda. But in the long run, the US can't consider these jihadi forces as a "blind zone" because eventually these "zones" will be used against all countries involved: India, Afghanistan, the US and eventually even Pakistan.

There are concerns about Pakistan's earnestness in dismantling the India-directed terrorism infrastructure.

The architects of the Mumbai attack left a trail pointing to Pakistan. They wanted a clash between India and Pakistan so (the jihadists) can grab power in Pakistan. There is

evidence that the terrorists had support in Pakistan, even from people inside the intelligence and defence apparatus. Perhaps one of the reasons the Pakistani government didn't unleash a massive crackdown on these circles is this internal problem in Pakistan.

India should be patient regarding the situation in Pakistan, and for now should encourage the counter-jihadi movement in Pakistan to grow. It is more important for India to get a world consensus against terrorists than to expect higher results from counter-terrorism operations in Pakistan.

A post-election BJP government might launch pre-emptive strikes against terrorist camps in Pakistan. Would that be the right response?

If India strikes at Pakistan in retaliation against cross-border jihadi acts, it will lead to a takeover of Pakistan by jihadists with access to nuclear weapons. The jihadists' aim is to drag the two countries into confrontation, at the timing of jihadists: India must not grant them that wish. If it does, the Pakistan military, incited by radical elements, will move its forces from the Afghan border to the India border. Moderates in Pakistan will be isolated. It will free the Taliban to operate against the US and NATO in Afghanistan.

India — under any government — should act smartly by mobilising against jihadists first inside its own borders. Second, India can wage a 'war of ideas' with broadcasts and on the internet in languages the West has little skills in. Third, India should convene an international conference against the spread of the jihadi ideology, inviting Muslim moderates, the US, Russia and the rest of the international community. India will always have the military option open, but after a strong international coalition is up and running.

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TALKING POINTS

It's going to be long and hard and tough.



Senator **John McCain**, says that the US will have to commit much more than the 17,000 troops being sent to Afghanistan. And he forges an American military presence there for at least a decade.

The movie was beautiful and the music became the crowning jewel.

A R Rahman, speaking to journalists after returning to India with two Oscars

I recall sitting on seat number 512 and listening with awe to some memorable speeches.



Somnath Chatterjee, Lok Sabha Speaker, in an emotional farewell speech after a 39-year stint in the House

I had returned from Supreme Court and it was raining heavily when my officers told me that the cash recovered was Rs50 lakh, which kept on mounting every 10 minutes. I had never seen so much cash.

Joginder Singh, former CBI director, remembers investigating Union Minister Sukh Ram in 1996 for disproportionate assets. Sukh Ram was sentenced to 3 years imprisonment last week

India's fiscal position has deteriorated to a level that is unsustainable in the medium term. The government has implemented various policies that have increased the stress on its fiscal policy.

Rating agency **Standard & Poor's** in a report stating that India faces the risk of having its credit rating lowered. If this happens, Indian companies will have to pay a higher interest rate on loans taken from international sources

CAPTION THIS!



Match your wits with **DNA's** cartoonist Manjul. Email your caption for this cartoon to thinksunday@gmail.com with 'Caption This' in the subject line. The best entries will be featured here next week.

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A totalitarian ideology vs democratic forces

Venkatesan Vembu

In his novel *Kim*, Rudyard Kipling rapturously describes the Grand Trunk Road, the arterial highway that in its prime linked the mercantile destinies of India, Pakistan and Afghanistan, as "such a river of life as nowhere else exists in the world".

Today, however, that macadam marvel — or at least, such portions of it that run through Afghanistan and Pakistan — is associated more with death than with life. According to the latest 'Afghanistan Index', a measure compiled by researchers at the Brookings Institution to gauge the security environment in post-9/11 Afghanistan, civilian fatalities in 2008 from the "war on terror" were twice as high as in 2006.

More strikingly, the theatre of war in this new Great Game is spreading across the border and deeper into Pakistan, where Taliban forces, which have enjoyed sanctuary for long, have now legitimised their presence by securing for themselves a space in the Swat valley in Pakistan's lawless North West Frontier Province. Last fortnight, the Pakistan government effectively ceded more than a third of the NWFP to the Taliban, ended military operations in the Malakand division, and agreed

to impose the Sharia, the regressive 9th-10th century system of Islamic jurisprudence, as a concession to the Taliban's pledge to abide by a ceasefire. This is fraught with "tremendous implications," points out **Walid Phares**, director of the Future Terrorism Project at the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies in Washington. "It is as if Islamabad has conceded the establishment of an Emirate in Swat! It will empower radical Islamists and jihadist movements to create a large pool of jihad-indoctrinated people."

The Pakistan government has embarked on a "dangerous path", avers **Zi-uddin Sardar**, a Pakistan-born, London-based scholar who writes on the future of Islam. "Wherever the Taliban rules, it creates a fertile breeding ground for jihadi culture." The slide into Sharia is also a slippery slope, he points out. "Fundamentalist groups in other parts of Pakistan will now start demanding the Sharia."

In the month and a bit since US President Barack Obama took office, his administration has signalled that it is refocussing the "war on terror" on Afghanistan and Pakistan with a surge in the number of troops there, and simultaneously announced a phased withdrawal from Iraq. US forces have also expanded the

missile attacks on suspected terrorist hide-outs on the Pakistani side of the border.

It remains to be seen how the US strategy evolves after the additional forces begin engaging the Taliban and Al Qaeda. One possibility, reckons Phares, is that the Obama administration may "think of opening a dialogue with the weakened Taliban."

There's even speculation that the US gave its tacit support for the Swat valley deal with the Taliban on the strength of the argument that some of them are "good". But according to Phares, "The jihadists will perceive it as a victory and will be emboldened to do the same elsewhere, including in Afghanistan."

Phares also dismisses the notion that there is a "good Taliban" and a "bad Taliban". That, he adds, "is a myth created by those in the West who advocate engagement with jihadists. It reflects a poor understanding of the ideology and nature of the Taliban movement." The Taliban, he points out, is totalitarian and does not recognise international law.

Jihadist supporters "manoeuvre their 'enemies' into believing that they can do business with some members of the Taliban, and sadly many in the West have fallen into that trap... The Obama administration must be

wary of this trap."

The other challenge for the Obama administration is the fact that the Pakistani military, intelligence and power structure all stand deeply infiltrated by jihadists, and have been playing a 'double game' with the US in the war on terror. "Many high-level Pakistani officials admit that many sectors have been infiltrated by jihadists, but claim this situation has been inherited from previous decades," says Phares. The Obama administration, he adds, must identify and support those elements that are confronting the extremists.

India, which has already faced down countless terror attacks originating from Pakistani soil, could be more severely tested as Pakistan slides further into radicalism. But India needs to act with restraint and not play into the jihadists' war-room strategy of seeing India and Pakistan at war, reasons Phares. That, he adds, would be a cue for a jihadi takeover of the Pakistani government. "This is an opportunity for India to form a global coalition against jihadi forces." Phares reckons the process of "creeping Talibanisation" in Pakistan can be reversed only by a secular and democratic process. That process is a long and winding road — much like the Grand Trunk Road — and there are no short-cuts.

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INSIGHT

Last week's best



You have nothing left in right hand and have nothing right in left hand.

— **Manish J Chauhan**

You stand a good chance of winning the election, since both the head and heart lines are missing.

— **Amitav Banerjee**

This hand will not do anything good until you hold the right 'hand'.

— **Jay Cena**