

# CHILDREN AFFECTED BY ARMED CONFLICT IN PAKISTAN



Family in Azad Kashmir shelter from shelling  
Photo: Reuters

**Discussion document prepared for  
UNICEF Regional Office South Asia  
&  
Save the Children Fund (USA),  
Pakistan and Afghanistan Field Office**

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## Executive Summary

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This paper results from the UNICEF ROSA Children Affected by Armed Conflict (CAAC), Part One Project. It suggests that research into CAAC in Pakistan is a matter of urgency, given that there is political violence manifest throughout the country but little systematic attention to how families and children are affected. With the Kashmir dispute Pakistan is home to one of the longest running conflicts in the world. Levels of conflict-induced deaths in Karachi are greater than in Bosnia. As yet, however, the plight of children affected by these conflicts has received little international attention, monitoring or advocacy.

The paper acknowledges the difficulties of conducting research into CAAC in Pakistan: problems such as the sensitivity of the topic, the complexity of the conflicts, the lack of access to conflict prone regions. Nevertheless the paper argues that since the rights of children are violated through armed conflict and since the Pakistan government has ratified the CRC and committed itself to the protection of the rights of all Pakistani children, this area cannot be ignored. In such a sensitive area the need for research and monitoring is even greater, in order to inform appropriate and well planned intervention.

The paper is committed to looking at CAAC in political and historical context. It analyses conflict in Pakistan as arising from chronic political instability on an international and national level. Pakistan's involvement in both the Afghan war and Kashmir dispute has had profound effects on the internal stability of the country. These effects include the high priority given to defence spending, the growth of Islamic fundamentalist parties and the prevalence of small arms. The history of internal conflicts - intra-ethnic violence in the NWFP, ethnic based violence in Sindh, sectarian violence and criminal violence – is given.

Although the existing literature on CAAC in Pakistan is very sparse, some important trends emerge as to how families and children are affected. Not only are civilians killed in fighting, their social and economic life is disrupted. Many families have been displaced. Particular concerns for children include the number of child casualties of fighting, children's exposure to violence, the role of schools as a place of socialisation to violence, the impacts on girls and issues of juvenile justice.

The paper concludes with ways in which engagement with CAAC can be improved. As well as a need for further research, there can be benefits from the following: a regional rather than country-based approach to CAAC in Pakistan, a holistic perspective in which the relationship between conflict and other child protection concerns is investigated, the commitment to advocacy for the rights of children affected by violence, support for those human rights groups and press who persist in keeping the awareness of armed conflict in Pakistan alive, training of security forces in the upholding the rights of the child.

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## Acknowledgements

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The work was completed with the help of staff at the Pakistan Country Office of UNICEF (PCO) and the Pakistan, Afghanistan Field Office of Save the Children Fund – US (PAFO). Particular thanks are due to: Serap Maktav, Raana Syed, Shiona Hood and Andrew Wilder for all their work in facilitating the field trips within Pakistan, arranging meetings and encouraging the work.

Reiko Nishijima of UNICEF ROSA co-ordinated the project and must be thanked for her commitment and backing. The paper was produced as part of an ongoing research programme on war-affected children at the Refugee Studies Centre (RSC), Oxford, sponsored by the Andrew Mellon Foundation. Colleagues from RSC, Jo Boyden, Jason Hart and Tom Feeny, provided a supportive team, their insight and advice were invaluable.

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## Abbreviations

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CAAC	Children Affected by Armed Conflict
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
DfID	Department For International Development, UK
PCO	Pakistan Country Office of UNICEF
ISI	Pakistan Inter-Services Intelligence Agency
J&K	Jammu and Kashmir
JKLF	Jammu Kashmir Liberation Force
JSQM	Jeay Sindh Quami Mahaz
LOC	Line of Control
MQM	Mohajir Muttahid Qaumi Movement
FATA	Non Administered Tribal Areas
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NWFP	North West Frontier Province
PCO	Pakistan Country Office of UNICEF
UNICEF ROSA	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund Regional Office South Asia

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## Part One: Introduction

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### Background to the Project

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) provides a global charter for the protection of children's survival, development and well being. Armed conflict creates conditions under which many of the rights laid out in the CRC are undermined. As the 1996 Graca Machel/UNICEF report on Children Affected by Armed Conflict pointed out, war increases the threats to children and clearly contravenes the mandate for their protection laid out in the CRC.

The international community has therefore a special duty of care and protection with regard to children exposed to armed conflict, civil strife and displacement. This duty requires agencies involved in preventative and emergency efforts to understand how children are affected by such adversities and to develop measures that mitigate the impact on children. Acknowledging the urgent need to improve child-focused emergency responses in the context of conflict, the UK government's Department for International Development (DfID) has provided financial support to UNICEF globally, through the Children Affected by Armed Conflict (CAAC) Project to raise the capacity of child-focused interventions in armed conflict.

As part of this initiative the Regional UNICEF Office in South Asia (ROSA) has undertaken the Children Affected by Armed Conflict Part, One Project. The premises of the project are:

- Child protection during emergencies involves more than simple service delivery. The project seeks to develop a conceptual and practical framework to move forward policy, practice and advocacy on CAAC. This entails the development of new methods of information gathering and analysis, new approaches to programming and policy development and new ways of thinking about and working with children and their families during conflict.
- Working with and supporting children, their families, communities and other local stakeholders implies the need for in-depth understanding of the particular context, dynamics and impacts of armed conflict in South Asia.
- Building the capacity of UNICEF and partner organisations to respond more effectively to war-affected children requires the development of new training approaches that enhance not only individual learning, but also institutional memory. Current training practices that rely on 'training events' and the production of manuals are not the most effective way of meeting these objectives. The Project will therefore develop interactive and distance learning methods and produce learning modules and materials that will be made available on the UNICEF website.

- Children's rights can be protected by promoting leadership and accountability for violations of children's rights and by ensuring that internationally agreed standards of child protection become accepted throughout the region and are sustained during conflict. This entails lobbying, advocacy and information dissemination on general human/children's rights instruments, with a focus on principles and issues that are of particular relevance to war-affected children.

## **Establishing the Knowledge Base**

To initiate the project UNICEF ROSA commissioned consultants at the Refugee Studies Centre, Oxford, to map out: 1) the existing knowledge on children affected by armed conflict in the South Asia region 2) the existing institutional capacity for intervention on CAAC. Between January and April 2001 two consultants travelled throughout India, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Afghanistan collecting existing secondary information on CAAC and meeting informed experts, particularly those involved in child-focused intervention in areas of conflict. The UNICEF country offices provided logistical support in Bhutan, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka. In Pakistan and Afghanistan the project was facilitated by the UNICEF Pakistan Country Office and Afghanistan Country Office in partnership with Save the Children Fund (US) Pakistan and Afghanistan Field Office. A complementary study on children in the Chittagong Hill tracts and Cox's Bazaar of Bangladesh was funded by the British Council Bangladesh.

The findings of the research will constitute two regional discussion papers to be presented at a workshop in Kathmandu 9-14<sup>th</sup> July 2001. Country specific reports have also been compiled. These use existing material and insights from interviews with informed experts to promote conceptual and practical frameworks to move forward policy, practice and advocacy on children affected by armed conflict.

## **The Pakistan Country Report**

Pakistan is a challenging case study for this project: although political instability has resulted in armed conflict throughout the history of the country and hundreds of thousands of children have been affected, the issue has received little systematic attention. It is difficult enough to find information that addresses children's experiences of conflict, let alone examples of intervention for their protection.

Pakistan is not alone in this, for it is only in recent years that moves have been made to improve the quality and quantity of work worldwide that focuses upon children's experiences of conflict and war. Yet in Pakistan there are particular obstacles to child-centred agencies addressing CAAC:

- Trying to find a workable definition of 'conflict' is problematic. Although outbreaks of violence are less prevalent today than they have been in the past, especially during the 1980s, the range and variety of political violence in Pakistan is still vast. It involves everything from the international border dispute with India (a fellow nuclear power) over Kashmir, to local level violence along ethnic or religious lines, to interpersonal disputes resolved through the use of firearms. It is difficult, therefore, to establish a programmatic focus on 'conflict'.<sup>1</sup>

- Human Rights groups and the Press in Pakistan have faced persecution for reporting sensitive areas.<sup>2</sup> In the light of this NGOs may place themselves in jeopardy by tackling an issue such as CAAC. A free and open climate for discussion of the causes of armed conflict in and involving Pakistan and the impact on children, does not appear to exist.
- Previous attempts to carry out investigation into CAAC have faced logistical difficulties in conducting such work. Not only may government agencies embargo research into CAAC, so too might families and children themselves be wary of getting involved. They may fear drawing attention to themselves and the risk of targeted on the basis of collaborating with a research project.<sup>3</sup>
- Access to conflict affected communities in areas such as the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Azad Kashmir is extremely difficult. Travel to these areas requires long and careful negotiation, thus curtailing the possibilities for investigation.
- CAAC is not seen as a priority. Some argue that the proportion of children affected by conflict within the country is small and that the needs generated by poverty, poverty-related disease and ill health or exploitative forms of labour, are more worthy of being addressed.<sup>4</sup>

Yet the case for raising the profile of CAAC as a child protection issue in Pakistan is strong:

- The Government of Pakistan is a signatory to the CRC. The government has accepted a mandate for and global accountability on the welfare of children throughout their country, irrespective of whether these children live in an area of conflict not. There are, in addition, special provisions within the CRC for the care of conflict-affected children.
- There are significant numbers of children affected. Pakistan is party to one of the longest running unresolved armed conflicts in the world. The border dispute with India over Kashmir has continued since 1947 putting it in the same league as the Israel/Palestinian and Northern Ireland disputes. Several generations of children in Azad Kashmir have been born into and grown up under the influence of this situation.
- Evidence from other parts of the world suggests that conditions of conflict directly contribute to other child protection concerns such as sexual abuse, HIV/Aids, child labour, child trafficking. Campaigns on these issues would benefit from understanding the relationship of conflict to these conditions.
- The majority of conflict in Pakistan appears to be so called ‘low-intensity’ conflict. Since the numbers of casualties are not very high, some might not see this as a cause for concern. Yet, as the report will show, the impacts on children of even low intensity violence are many and profound.

This report aims to start the process of more systematic and comprehensive discussion on CAAC in Pakistan. It includes:

**1. A conceptual framework for understanding conflict in Pakistan.**

The UNICEF ROSA project is committed to looking at the impacts of conflict on children in historical and social context. It is important that research into CAAC goes beyond the impacts on children and addresses the inequities in which the conflicts are set. For this information is crucial both for advocacy and for devising appropriate intervention. Unless these wider structures, systems and tensions are addressed it is likely that violence and loss will continue to mark the lives of children.

The report provides insight into the causes and characteristics of political violence in Pakistan. It draws attention, for example, to deep rooted instability within Pakistan's history and present day politics. It points out inadequacies in systems of governance, which result in armed conflict.

**2. A Review of Current Knowledge on CAAC In Pakistan.**

The report collates the existing information on CAAC in Pakistan, so that significant trends on how children are affected can be highlighted. Sources on CAAC in Pakistan were collected during the visit to India and from archives on the web and in libraries. Informed experts such as members of the media, employees of NGOs and UN agencies, government officials and academics were also consulted. Given the politically sensitive nature of the subject it was important to use multiple sources to validate the information, however the lack of thorough and unbiased reporting in this field made the task problematic. Given this, there is also attention paid to the inadequacies of the existing information and priority areas for further work.

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## Part Two: Conceptualising Conflict in Pakistan

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This section identifies the history, characteristics and causes of armed conflict in and involving Pakistan. The framework analyses armed conflict as arising from the country's chronic political instability on both an international and national level.

### International Instability

With the proximity of the Afghan war and the international border dispute between Pakistan and India over Kashmir, two of Pakistan's three international borders are defined by armed conflict.

### The Afghan War

Pakistan has been deeply involved in the 22-year old war in Afghanistan. During the 1970s Pakistan served as a conduit for American aid to mujahideen forces. The body known as the Interservices Intelligence (ISI) was used to channel this aid. In the process the ISI underwent huge expansion and began to play a significant role in Pakistan's internal and international political relations.<sup>5</sup> During the 1990s, as CIA funds for Afghanistan dried up, the ISI turned its attention to fuelling the Kashmir insurgency but links between the Pakistani government and the Taleban forces remain. Pakistan is one of only three governments to recognise the Taleban as a legitimate power. In 1997/8 the Pakistani government reportedly gave \$30 million in aid to the Taleban, much of which went directly into the war effort. Pakistani-backed militants in Kashmir receive sanctuary and training in Afghanistan.

Some commentators suggest that the extent of current Pakistan's involvement in Afghanistan amounts to a proxy war to promote her strategic interests in the region. Others, however, point to the ambiguities in the relationship between Pakistan and the Taleban and the high price Pakistan has paid for the war, including political destabilisation within her own borders (see below) and playing host to millions of Afghan refugees.<sup>6</sup> Indeed there is suggestion that the relationship between Pakistan and the Taleban may be strained by Taliban's international isolation and the influence of the Afghan crisis on Pakistan's own internal conflicts.<sup>7</sup>

### The Kashmir Conflict

The kingdom of Jammu and Kashmir was a creation of the British who, in 1846, transferred the region to the Hindu Dogra ruler, Gulab Singh, as reward for services rendered to the British. Gulab Singh was installed as maharajah (king) of Jammu Kashmir and the region remained as a 'princely state' outside the centralised government of India. At independence two problems persisted in Kashmir: the distinct status of the kingdom outside the government of India, and the disjunction between the religious identity of the ruling administration, who were largely Hindu, and the Muslim majority indigenous population. The process of partition exaggerated these anomalies. The kingdom of Jammu Kashmir was geographically contiguous to both

India and Pakistan, was ruled by a Hindu but had a majority Muslim population. Its position was therefore uncertain. The ruler declared his intent for independence. In October 1947, however, after large numbers of tribesmen from Pakistan's North-West Frontier invade the state, he finally agreed to join India. His decision was immediately contested by Pakistan on the basis of the state's majority Muslim population. Pakistan and India went to war over the issue until 1949 when a UN ceasefire gave each country a part of Kashmir to administer, pending a popular vote. The region was divided along the Line of Control (LOC). Since then India has repeatedly avoided calls for a referendum and Pakistan and India have remained at loggerheads over the issue. Fighting has continued along the LOC intermittently for the last 50 years and two major wars have been fought over the region (in 1965 and 1971) with a near third war in 1999.<sup>8</sup>

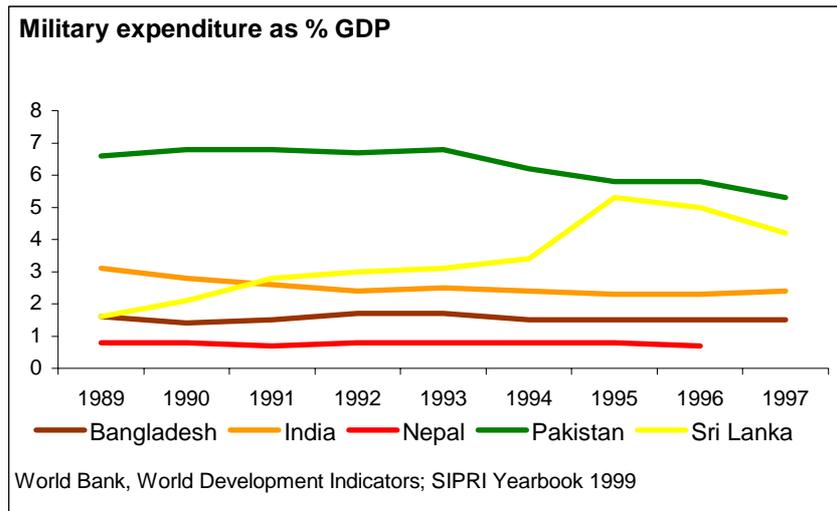
The insurgency within Indian-held Kashmir began on 31 July 1988 when a pro-independence group called the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Force (JKLF) launched an armed campaign against India rule. The roots of this militancy lie in India's attempts to control the state through rigged elections, which fuelled resentment amongst the state's Muslim political leaders and led to the emergence of Muslim militant groups committed to Independence for Kashmir. Within two years, however, the JKLF had been marginalized as pro-Pakistan groups like the Hizbul Mujahadeen (HM) took over the campaign, supported by the ISI. An ISI campaign to control the militancy and deny pro-independence elements a role within the militant movement was largely successful. By 1994 the JKLF had split several times and the biggest remaining JKLF group called a unilateral ceasefire. In the mid-1990s other Islamic groups such as the Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) and the Harkat-ul-Ansar (HuA) began emerging. These consisted of a mixture of Kashmiri and international militants. Today the militant groups are divided between those who believe the territory should become part of Pakistan and those who believe that Kashmir should be an independent state.<sup>9</sup> All, however, are united in fighting against the control of the Indian central government over the state. The reaction by Indian governments to the insurgency has been extreme. Fearing any moves to succession and the influence of Pakistan, the state has responded with heavy handed and highly militarised counter-insurgency operations. There are an estimated 350 000 – 450 000 Indian police and army troops stationed in Kashmir making it the heaviest ratio of military personnel to civilians in the world. Due to the insurgency the human cost of the conflict has been heaviest in the Indian held part of the territory.<sup>10</sup> There are, however, an estimated 30 000 people who have been displaced along the LOC into Pakistan.

## **The Impact of International Conflict on Pakistan's Internal Stability**

The results of international stability for the internal politics of Pakistan have been threefold:

### **The importance of Defence and the Army**

The continuing border dispute between India and Pakistan over Kashmir has kept defence and the strength of the army in Pakistan as a national concern. Defence spending has remained high and has been prioritised over and above spending on social services. Indeed the proportion of the defence spending as compared to GDP in Pakistan, is the highest in South Asia:



Hand in hand with high defence spending, the Pakistani government army is large and influential. The army has become an entrenched player in Pakistani politics as revealed in the military coups and periods of martial law that have characterised Pakistan’s history since 1947, including the latest in 1999. The dominance of the army in Pakistani politics has meant that internal instability has generally been resolved with resort to militarised security operations, rather than through dialogue and accountability to local populations. In 1973, for example, Prime Minister Bhutto sacked the Baluchistan provincial government, accusing them of wanting to succeed. 10 000 people died when the resulting Baluch uprising was put down by the army.

Political activism continues to be criminalized. The Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) allows members of security forces to make preventative arrests. It affords a high degree of power and means that the range of events that can be construed as a threat to security is large. The army and state security forces continue to act in harsh ways against dissenters and are commonly guilty of violating the civil and political rights of those detained. Yet they are accorded considerable impunity, since the track record of enquiries into human rights abuses by security forces is poor.<sup>11</sup>

### Growth in Islamic Fundamentalist Parties

Islamic fundamentalist parties involved in both the Kashmir and Afghan conflicts, have been based in Pakistan. Indeed the Taleban movement arose in the madrassas, Islamic educational establishments, closely allied to fundamentalist parties in Pakistan such as the Jamaat-e-Islami and Jamiat-e-Ulema Islam (JUI). In turn such groups have become a significant, if small, force in Pakistan’s own internal politics. The Taleban, for example, have also armed and supported the most extremist Sunni groups operating in Pakistan and responsible for the killing of Shia Muslims.<sup>12</sup>

### The Prevalence of Small Arms

Although the NWFP, FATA and Baluchistan regions of Pakistan have a long tradition of a cottage industry production of small arms, domestic production increased dramatically following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Supplies captured from the

Soviets often ended up on sale in the NWFP and local producers started copying available Kalashnikovs, bazookas and rocket launchers.<sup>13</sup> This production continues today. It is not under any state supervision, free from taxation and state licensing. This makes the small arms cheap and easy to acquire.

Arms also flooded into the Pakistan via the so-called 'Afghan Pipeline'. This was the US-funded arms supply route to the mujahideen during the Afghan conflict. America initiated a hands-off policy on the supplies, preferring to channel them through the ISI. Extremely poor accountability on the pipe line meant that the opportunities for leakage into the black market were rife. An estimated 70% of the arms were siphoned off by ISI and Afghan leaders as well as field commanders, and found their way into commercial channels.<sup>14</sup>

Today Pakistan is referred to as the 'arms bazaar' of South Asia, reflecting the prevalence of small arms. There are 1 998 600 licensed weapons in the NWFP of Pakistan alone.<sup>15</sup> Indeed almost any kind of weapon can be acquired in the NWFP. Purchasers are not only non-state actors who buy weapons in bulk but also law enforcement agents, influential politicians, feudal and tribal landlords. Weapons are a part of every day life in Pakistan and the tendency to act on grievances, protests and inter-personal conflicts with the use of firearms is a matter of concern.

### **Internal Instability**

When Pakistan came into existence in 1947, there were three colonial legacies that were to undermine political stability from the beginning. First, the ill-defined status of Kashmir and tensions over its alignment at Partition took Pakistan and India to war almost immediately. Second, Pakistan was handed an extremely fragile territorial arrangement. Pakistan inherited an area that included regions, such as the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), that had only a tenuous relationship with the state. The reach of the state into matters of law and order in these regions has been constrained ever since.

Third, the political and constitutional inheritance was extremely weak. Indeed wrangling over the constitution lasted until 1956, by which time the Pakistan Muslim league, the only nation-wide political organisation, had disintegrated and a tradition had been set of executive dissolution of both provincial and national governments. In this climate the democratic parliamentary system was unable to establish deep roots and tensions developed between control located at the centre, identified with the Punjabi civil service, and the provinces, especially in East Pakistan. It was the lack of full political representation established at this stage of Pakistan's history that has been behind the internal political instability ever since.<sup>16</sup>

In effect, the failure of representative democracy in Pakistan has left central power as a valuable prize for those with enough influence to gain it. Two main players have emerged for this power; the army and political parties based on partisan (ethnic or religious) support. Each in turn has been guilty of the abuse of power through corruption, favouring certain groups over and above others resulting in deprivation and disparity amongst the population.<sup>17</sup>

As with the dominance of the army, the existence of ethnically-biased or sectarian entities vying for regional and national power has fostered conflict within Pakistan, as they have sought to increase their support base and to quash opposition. Local levels tensions, such as ethnic tensions in Sindh, have been supported or adopted by political parties, to stress their legitimacy.<sup>18</sup>

Details of the conflicts arising from internal political instability, are given below.

### **Intra-ethnic Violence Amongst the Pathan in the NWFP**

Violence in the NWFP exemplifies conflict arising from a lack of state control, aggravated by international instability. There are some important principles in Pathan culture (known collectively as Pukhtunwali), which involve the rapid mobilisation of clan or segments of clan to defend the interests of a kinsman, and the notion of vendetta – the mobilisation of violence in the face of insult, that predilect to conflict. Yet violence amongst the Pathan is also linked to wider political circumstances. Attempts by the British to turn the frontier into a closed border under their control, for example, increased the levels of conflict in the region.<sup>19</sup> Conflict and violence in the NWFP must therefore be seen not so much as a fundamental part of the Pathan culture but in relation to wider historical and political events.<sup>20</sup> Likewise today, the ongoing use of violence to resolve inter-personal debates is influenced by the wide prevalence of arms from the Afghan war and the competition over drugs and smuggling resources. Since the region continues to be beyond the control of the state, violence goes unregulated.

### **Political-ethnic Violence, Sindh**

The history of the province of Sindh exemplifies a case of armed conflict arising from Pakistan's internal political instability. The demographic make-up of the Sindh province of Pakistan was radically altered at Partition with the immigration of Indian Muslims, 'Mohajirs'. Better educated and resourced than native Sindhis, with their own linguistic and cultural identity, the Mohajir population tended to take up government and bureaucratic posts within in the local administration, to the detriment of Sindhis. At the same time, both Sindhis and Mohajirs faced the dominance of Punjabi interests in national politics. A lack of relative investment in Sindh, as compared to the Punjab, created many tensions and grievances. The lack of investment was particularly noticeable in the urban centres of Sindh, especially Karachi, where rapid urbanisation placed acute pressure on existing infrastructure.

During the 1970s, however, there was a gradual shift to pro-Sindhi and Mohajir political leaders within the government of Pakistan and the ethnic groups benefited from political patronage on an individual level. The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) of Bhutto courted support amongst the Sindhis and when in power between 1972 and 1977 introduced a domicile-quote policy that differentiated between Mohajirs and Sindhis in the province. This policy was at the heart of growing ethnic violence between Sindhis and Mohajirs, for example in the so-called language riots of 1972. The late 1970s and 1980s saw more growth of ethnically based political parties: the Sindhi Jeay Sindh Quami Mahaz (JSQM) and the Mohajir Muttahid Qaumi Movement (MQM). President Zia, in power between 1977 and 1988, firmly backed the creation of the MQM. Their influence was sufficient that when the PPP returned

to power in 1988 they formed a coalition with the MQM. Yet the sustained say of such parties on a national level was severely curtailed by the dismantling of political institutions during extended periods of martial law and the repression of existing legitimate political representation in Sindh. Increasingly, frustration over the lack of political representation translated into the growth of strident ethnic identity, the militarisation of ethnically based parties in Sindh and inter-ethnic conflict. In 1986, for example, Karachi was paralysed by the violence between Mohajirs and Pathan groups.<sup>21</sup> Such conflicts have continued to greater or lesser extents to the present day. Since the 1990s the army and security forces have been used to quell such violence, in the course of which they have been accused of grave human rights abuses. In 1995, for example, Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto ordered a harsh crack-down on the MQM in which 1500 people were killed. Many of the movement went underground. More recently violence between the MQM and authorities has died down but conflict has arisen between two factions of the MQM (the Altaf and Haqiqi groups). In 1998, 700 people were killed in violence involving these two groups.<sup>22</sup>

### **Sectarian Violence**

Increased sectarian violence has occurred hand in hand with the growing power of so-called fundamentalist Muslim groups within Pakistan. Islamic parties, such as the Jamaat-e-Islami, have existed in Pakistan since the creation of a new state. They have gained ground in relation to the Afghan and Kashmir conflicts. Their internal force was deepened with the rising trend of regional and ethnic identification in Pakistani politics, as some groups especially the Punjabis and Mohajirs used Islam to strengthen their ethnic identity and interests. The Islamic lobby received a strong boost under the regime of President Zia and has remained a minority but powerful force in Pakistani politics ever since.<sup>23</sup> They increasingly invest money into their particular and often sectarian cause. Extremist Sunni and Shia parties in Pakistan are increasingly well organised and armed, the largest recruit private armies. They attack opposition groups as well as members of the rival community.<sup>24</sup>

### **Criminal Violence**

Many regions of Pakistan are characterised by low intensity but ongoing violence perpetrated by criminal gangs. Criminal conflict became entrenched during the 1980s when, as a response to state attempts to control political opposition, many activists went underground. At the same time, rapid urbanisation resulted in the growth of slum areas, beyond the control of police and security forces and the increase of crime as a way of life. The two forces merged with the appearance of large gangs who practised kidnapping, theft and murder. Their power was consolidated through connections to the drugs and gun smuggling trade. By the early 1990s 'dacoit' groups were in effective control of whole regions. Their continued existence has been ensured through collusion with members of the police force. Increasingly landlords hire private armies as their own protection against attack from gang activities but rivalries between these local forces also result in violence.

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## Part Three: Impacts on Children

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Having identified the causes and characteristics of conflict in India, the paper now moves to identifying evidence in the existing literature on how children have been affected.

### Impacts on Communities and Families

#### Life in a 'Grey Zone'

Armed conflict in Pakistan is not confined to battlegrounds nor does it only affect members of conscripted armies. Even along the LOC the fighting runs through areas of civilian habitation. In times of active hostility the scale of the physical damage on both sides of the LOC is large.<sup>25</sup> Entire villages and towns are deserted or destroyed, lands are filled with bunkers and trenches.<sup>26</sup>

The use of landmines in conflict also takes its toll on civilian life. The NGO 'Human Survival and Development' suggest that landmines were deliberately laid in the FATA by Soviet forces during the 1980s, as a means to undermine the support, supply routes and arms bases for the mujahideen in the tribal areas. Mines may also be common in the region as a tool in inter and intra ethnic violence.<sup>27</sup> These mines continue to injure civilians in the FATA and prevent them from using some areas for cultivation.<sup>28</sup> There has also been a high use of landmines along the LOC with costs to the civilian population.<sup>29</sup>

Similarly the violence of local ethnic, sectarian or criminal conflict takes civilians into its path. Victims and enemies are attacked in their homes or places of work. Political messages are sent through the use of indiscriminate bomb attacks, often in public places. The violence is both unpredictable and likely to occur amongst the day-to-day routines of people living and working in the area. Thus innocent bystanders, as well as intended personnel, may be killed.

Generally then the civilian population in conflict-affected areas in Pakistan lives in a 'grey zone', where no one side has total control but where violence might erupt at any time and in any place. Such a situation means that civilians not only face the risk of death and injury but their entire social, economic and political lives are affected. Conflict can entail the transformation of community and family structures, either through the loss of members, through dislocation and displacement, the destruction of social services or through impoverishment and the loss of property. These changing structures have detrimental consequences for the relationships and emotions of family members. This is the context in which children affected by armed conflict in Pakistan live and negotiate, which has implications for their own survival, development and well being.

## Loss of Life

Figures for conflict-related deaths reflect the patterns of killings and loss of life of civilians as well as political targets:<sup>30</sup>

<b>Breakdown of Crime in Karachi</b>		
	<b>1999</b>	<b>1998</b>
Killed in Sniper Fire and by Bandits	155	587
Tortured to Death and Bodies Found	130	238
Killed in Police Encounters	89	74
Law-enforcing personnel killed	30	65
Woman Burnt to Death/Killed by Relatives	53	107
Children Killed	45	37
Others Killed in Bomb Blasts etc	44	34
Deaths in Police Custody	NA	36

<b>Deaths</b>		
	<b>1999</b>	<b>1998</b>
Murder - Punjab	4715	4705
Death in Rioting – Punjab	223	248
Sectarian Violence - Punjab	18	30
Sectarian Violence – whole country	69	119
Ethnic Clashes – whole country	98	129
Terrorist Explosions – whole country	62	110

Whilst these figures may not look too serious, it is telling that in 1998 more people were killed in Karachi than in Bosnia as a whole. In one survey of 200 households in Sindh, 35% had lost of family member through armed conflict, an extremely high figure.<sup>31</sup>

## Economic Impacts

Families who lose a member through armed conflict, may suffer economic consequences as a result. In Sindh, for example, the loss of an economically male household head bought considerable impoverishment for their widows and families left behind.

Other economic impacts of conflict on families include the loss of property, which can be destroyed in an attack and needs to be replaced.<sup>32</sup> Having a family member detained by security forces can also prove a costly experience since legal charges and bribes are expensive.<sup>33</sup> Similarly medical charges for a relative injured in armed conflict can place extra strain on a household.

Although there is little information to substantiate this in Pakistan, evidence from other conflict regions shows that the impoverishment of families in times of violence is often closely linked to growing dependence on children's remunerated work.<sup>34</sup> This may expose children to hazards. The economic circumstances of conflict-affected

families and the implications of this for their children, is an area for further research in Pakistan.

### **Social Impacts**

In Karachi, practitioners working with widows who had lost a husband in violence were dismayed at the social ostracism and isolation they often suffered. Single mothers are, generally, accorded an anomalous position in Muslim societies. Since public life is largely in the hands of men, widows may face added social pressures as they try to cater for their families and rebuild their lives after violence. On top of this friends and relatives feared to associate with them, suggesting that to do so would invite suspicion and police attention.<sup>35</sup>

Indeed conflict-affected areas in Pakistan are marked by high levels of interpersonal distrust.<sup>36</sup> This narrows the range of inter-personal relations that people can use in their support networks. In the survey of 200 families in Sindh, a quarter of the sample talked of mistrust and suspicion towards their neighbours.<sup>37</sup> This mistrust is exaggerated where ethnic identities are mobilised in conflict.

### **Displacement**

Conflict in Pakistan has often involved the displacement of families and children. Some move from a scene of rioting or upheaval for a short time. Others move with no hope of return. Currently there are an estimated 10 – 30 000 people permanently displaced from along the LOC.<sup>38</sup> They live in 15 Pakistani government administered settlement camps in Azad Kashmir. The experience of displacement is generally detrimental in terms of access to health and educational facilities for children, as they are taken out of schools and may settle away from infrastructural support.

Families and communities in Pakistan have also encountered the impacts of displacement by playing host to the Afghan refugees. There have, at times during the Afghan war, been up to 6 million Afghan refugees living in Pakistan, mainly in the North West Frontier Province. Opinions differ as to the impact of this vast influx of people on the lives of indigenous Pakistanis. Some commentators point to the shortage of essential items, the devaluing of the labour market, the rising rent prices due to shortage of accommodation, the rise in communicable diseases, disturbance to law and order, land encroachment and resentment by the local population. The true picture, however, is more complex than this – the refugees have also bought a boost to the economy and infrastructure of the NWFP. There have been large profits made in the property, construction, handicraft and transport markets.<sup>39</sup>

### **Children at Risk**

#### **Casualties**

Children have been and continue to be killed in armed conflict in Pakistan. During three months in 1997 in the NWFP in 1997, for example, 30 children were killed in the course of local disputes and vendettas. In the same months 106 children were reported as missing, presumed kidnapped for ransom in inter-personal disputes.<sup>40</sup>

Of 600 recorded victims of landmines in the FATA, 27% are under the age of 18.<sup>41</sup> Children are particularly vulnerable to land mine accidents when: working in the fields, taking short cuts to school, collecting fuel, playing, tampering with mines, collecting fodder for livestock, hunting. In other words it is both children's socio-economic roles and their recreational activities that may bring them into contact with mines.

#### Six Children Killed, One Injured in Blast

Six children were killed and one was injured in a bomb blast in village Sapari Tehsail Mamound, Bajaur Agency. The bomb (Anti tank landmine M2) went off when the children were playing with an old tank mine on 14.12.2000 at 3pm. The landmine had been in the house of one Kakim Jan for 16 years and was considered as defused. The children always used to play with the device but it exploded on 14<sup>th</sup> December in Bajaur, one of Pakistan's tribal areas bordering Afghanistan eastern province of Kunar. Bajaur was a strong hold of mujahideen during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. The following children were killed:

- Dost Muhammad, son of Wazir, aged 8 years
- Jan Muhammad, son of Hakim Jan, aged 9 years
- Bacha uhammad, son of Hakim Jan, aged 7 years
- Mustali, son of Bakhtedar, aged 5 years
- Bibi Gul daughter of Hazarat Shab, aged 5 years
- Mirzada son of Jandol, aged 7 years

And the child injured was Khaista Khan, son of Kashmir Khan, aged 7 years

Press release from SPARC

#### Exposure to Violence

Children in conflict-affected areas of the country are not shielded from exposure to and learning about violence. In Sindh, for example, half of the children interviewed were familiar with weapons and how to use them. A small percentage actually owned their own guns. Even more significant, the same report contained evidence that young people who had lived through violence became rapidly disillusioned with the police and security forces and stated greater confidence in militants groups to restore peace and order. They also became aware of the importance and implications of their ethnic identity. Some of the children interviewed showed deep hatred for rival ethnic groups, especially when a member of their family had been killed.<sup>42</sup> Together these factors raised the admiration that young people had for militant activity, perhaps even motivating them to take up arms. Certainly parents in Karachi noted that boys who had been exposed to violence were more likely to get involved in armed conflict. They suggested that factors such as poverty, under-employment, social pressure and a lack of parental guidance, compounded the situation and made young boys more likely to fight.<sup>43</sup>

The propensity of children exposed to violence to turn to violence themselves is sobering for it suggests that cycles of violence are being created in Pakistan. Unless present conflicts are resolved, yet more generations of children will become frustrated over the lack of progress and will feel compelled to fight to air their grievances. The legacy of today's fighting will pass on. This alone justifies the need for further intervention in this area and engagement of young people in the process of peaceful rather than violent means of resolving political conflict.

## Socialisation to Violence

One clear trend that emerges from the literature in Pakistan is of schools as a place of socialisation of boys, in particular, to violence. In Sindh, for example, boys said that they were exposed to and learnt about violence in schools since political parties both promoted their cause and recruited members from amongst pupils.<sup>44</sup>

The link between schooling and training for active combat is most clearly seen within the 'madrasa' system. Madrasas are privately funded educational establishments, often with a strongly political and sectarian basis, grounded in religious teachings. Many, although certainly not all, have a militant character and have been behind the training of fighters for the Afghan and Kashmir conflicts. They proliferated amongst Afghan refugees and provided the bulwark of mujahideen and Taliban war-training. Today the Coalition Against the Use of Child Soldiers state that: "the situation of children educated in many of Pakistan's Islamic schools is a matter of concern."<sup>45</sup>

- No accurate figures exist for the number of madrasas operating in Pakistan. This lack of monitoring is evident in the sheer range of figures proposed, which put the number of madrasas in Pakistan from 1 400 to 25 000.<sup>46</sup> The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRC) suggest that there are 7000 madrasas operating in Sindh province alone.
- This lack of monitoring reflects the poor regulation over madrasas, who in the main have independent sources of income, by the Pakistani government. The 'ulama', who run these madrasas, are against any control by the government as these madrasas provide them a power base. The ulama refuse any attempt by the government to integrate the courses that are taught in the madrasas with other educational institutions. Besides, the political and ideological differences among these madrasas make it impossible for the government to bring them under one roof.
- The popularity of madrasa education in Pakistan has been related to factors of poverty and the poor and corrupt standards of formal education. These make madrasas an attractive alternative for parents, especially amongst the poor since many madrasas offer free accommodation and food.<sup>47</sup>
- Not all madrasas directly educate their pupils in jihadi violence. About a third provide military training, the rest may send their pupils on to other establishments for training in the use of weapons and insurgency tactics.<sup>48</sup> Thus whilst there is a strong link between madrasas and militarisation, with madrasa pupils being fed into military training camps, it cannot be assumed that all madrasa pupils will end up as combatants.
- In addition, not all young fighters for the Kashmiri jihad or the Afghan war are recruited through madrasas. Some volunteer straight to training camps.<sup>49</sup> The reasons behind their volunteering are both economic - an interview with a young carpenter in Karachi, for example, revealed his dissatisfaction over his earnings of 300 rupees a day and his intent to earn better money through fighting in Afghanistan<sup>50</sup> - and ideological.

- There have been a few reported cases of the recruitment of children in madrassas in Pakistan to fight in Afghanistan without their or their parents' knowledge of where they were heading.<sup>51</sup>
- The relationship between ISI support for militants in Kashmir and madrassa education in Pakistan is unclear. There are, however, reports that the ISI is active in recruiting from schools in Indian-held Kashmir and bringing boys over the border to receive military training in Pakistan. Other Pakistan-based militant outfits may offer large cash inducements for boys to go for military training. An estimated 600 young Kashmiri men crossed the border into Pakistan for militant training in 1998.<sup>52</sup>
- There are reports that the military training camps being corrupt and abusive.<sup>53</sup>

### **Girls**

There are certain risks that may befall girls rather than boys amongst children affected by armed conflict in Pakistan, although this area has received little systematic attention. One suggestion is that, without a father to protect them, the girl orphans of families who have lost a male household head in violence, may be more vulnerable to sexual exploitation and rape. Besides this, in Sindh the survey found that conflict-created widows bringing up daughters alone, were prone to marry their girls at a lower age than they might have done had their husband been alive. Widows also tended to have constrained options in finding sons-in-law, often marrying their daughters to the sons of widows, families in a similar position to themselves. Without any father or father-in-law these young couples suffered from a lack of social capital and could be prone to the same isolation and ostracism as their mothers.<sup>54</sup>

### **Juvenile Justice**

Practitioners working in Karachi have noticed a link between families impoverished through violence and their increased reliance on the income of adolescent boys. One of the more worrying offshoots of this is the tendency for the boys to become involved in criminal activities as a source of money. This may well bring them into conflict with law enforcement agencies and to be arrested and detained. The NGO SPARC suggests that 80% of under-eighteen years olds arrested in Karachi are detained for the illegal possession of guns.

Once in prison children may have little recourse to justice and or be afforded little special protection alongside the adults with whom they are incarcerated.<sup>55</sup> The human rights record of security forces in Pakistan is poor and children may be adversely affected.

“Police torture continued and, with rare exceptions, few official steps were taken to curb it. Violent protests following the custodial killing of a fourteen-year-old boy in Mansehra, in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), and the police crackdown that followed drew attention to the pervasive problem of torture in police custody. The boy, Ghulam Jilani, was pronounced dead on May 12 in a Mansehra hospital, where police had taken him hours after arresting him on theft charges. In a first information report filed immediately after Jilani’s hospitalisation, the police alleged that Jilani had tried to hang himself. According to the autopsy report, however, he died of head injuries. In the riots that followed, mobs attacked the local office of the PML, other government offices, and private businesses. On May 13, police and paramilitary rangers exchanged fire with armed demonstrators, resulting in two official casualties (five by unofficial accounts), as well as over one hundred injuries. A heavy deployment of police, rangers, and the Frontier Constabulary quelled the protests by May 15. In the riots’ immediate aftermath, Muhammad Nawaz, the head constable of the Mansehra police station, was arrested on murder charges. At the same time, the NWFP government established a tribunal of inquiry into Jilani’s death, headed by District and Sessions Judge Syed Yahya Zahid Gilani. As of August, the tribunal’s findings had not been made public.”

Human Rights Watch, World Report 1999: Pakistan

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## Conclusion

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It is indicative that the section of this paper that deals with existing information and known trends about CAAC in Pakistan, is minimal as compared to that which covers the history and characteristics of the conflicts. There is chronic political instability manifest in low intensity conflict through the country and the lives of families, communities and children are influenced. Yet the subject has received only the most cursory of attention. Despite the volume of political and historical analysis of the Kashmir conflict, even the affects of this 50 year old dispute on children in Azad Kashmir have barely been touched.

The lack of information should be addressed. The mandate to protect the lives of children provided by the CRC, the responsibility of the global community to fulfil these rights of children, whatever context they live in, does not exclude children affected by armed conflict in Pakistan. However sensitive the subject, there is no clause in the CRC that allows for complacency or diplomatic avoidance. In such a sensitive area the need for research and monitoring is even greater, in order to inform appropriate and well planned intervention.

What evidence exists suggests that children in Pakistan are socially and economically affected by armed conflict. The adversities they experience include material impoverishment, the disruption of family relationships, loss of family members, displacement, lowering of status and social ostracism of their family. Young people who experience violence may suffer the consequences for years to come. Sons of victims of violence in Karachi, for example, whose mothers are socially isolated may become the main bread-winners in their families and turn to crime as a source of income. Children are threatened by the unpredictability of the violence, which can erupt at any time and in any place. Their exposure to violence is high and they themselves may become victims or perpetrators of attack.

Children in Pakistan are not passive victims of such adversities. Not only do they actively assist their families in confronting hardship and maintaining livelihoods but many are very politically aware. They understand the politics of their identity from an early age and may, later, join militant or protest groups as the result of disenchantment with formal political processes to express this identity. It is striking that an experience of violence often serves to create disillusionment amongst children and young people with structures of authority and control such as the police, army, government and political process. This may cause young people to seek redress through armed insurgency or political protest. This is a sobering thought for it indicates that cycles of violence are being created, in which the adversities children suffer in conditions of conflict, may in turn perpetuate the violence.

As well as conducting further research in this area the following areas need strengthening:

- First, given the heavy involvement of Pakistan in two conflicts beyond its own borders and the impact of these situations on the country's own internal

stability, an approach to CAAC that entails regional co-operation would be beneficial. Child-focused agencies are beginning to intervene in Indian-held Kashmir. A regional rather than country-based approach to this area, would ensure that such agencies do not appear to favour one side over and above the other.

- Second, there is a role for child-focused information to be used in political advocacy. The growth of Islamic fundamentalist parties, the prevalence of small arms, then entrenchment of madrasas, all continue without state regulation or control. These are political trends that have direct impacts on children. The mantle of child protection may be a way of addressing these issues.

Indeed this paper and the project from which it stems is insistent that the focus of research should go beyond investigation of the impacts of conflict on children with an eye to instrumental use in advocacy for change, intervention for the support of those affected and devising means for conflict prevention. The conflicts outlined stem from deep rooted instabilities within Pakistani politics. A focus on the impact of conflict on children should not only be concerned with the short term abuses of rights and well being of children, to the detriment of understanding the wider human rights abuses and inequities in which these conflicts are set. Unless these wider structures, systems and tensions are addressed, it is likely that the violence and loss will continue to mar the lives of children in Pakistan.

The press and human rights groups offer an important ally in this strategy. There should be support given to the monitoring they conduct in these areas and, in turn, sensitisation of such agencies to the place of children in order to improve the quality of the information they produce.

- Third, in a country like Pakistan where it is difficult to legitimise research on conflict, a holistic perspective, in which the links between the issues outlined and other child protection concerns are explored is important. This will enable new research to be integrated into existing child protection concerns. A case where this kind of integrated approach could be especially effective is in the case of juvenile justice. Practical steps could include the further training of security forces in the CRC.
- Fourth, it is noticeable that to date little work has been based upon the long-term participatory involvement of young people in monitoring and investigating situations of conflict, despite their implicit understanding of and involvement in violence. It is rare to hear children's voices at all on this subject. A commitment to children's participation in research processes is important in order to capture their opinions and grievances.
- Fifth, there should be commitment to looking at the different experiences of children living in the same area. It has already been shown that boys and girls might undergo unique events; boys are more prone to being recruited into armed groups, girls may face early marriage. Age, gender, ethnicity and class will all influence the way children are affected by conflict and their relative

vulnerabilities. For example, the impact of conflict may be particularly profound on adolescents. They are aware of the politics of the situation they are living through and their families often depend upon their contribution to the domestic income. In many regions of conflict in Pakistan the adolescent generation will have spent their whole life under conditions of violence. As yet, however, no serious work has tackled the role and relation of young people to conflict.

- Finally, there are ethical and political dilemmas in investigation into CAAC in Pakistan. The way in which research is conducted, the people and means employed to conduct the work, the safety of researchers and their subjects can have ramifications for the results, success and applicability of the findings. There needs to be consideration of who the relevant stakeholders are in the research projects, how their interests and point of view might be represented, what are the most appropriate means and tools for research and who the most effective actors are in conducting this work.

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<sup>1</sup> This report makes no attempt to narrow down a programmatic focus on conflict. The case studies used will reflect the broad manifestation of armed violence in Pakistan. Priorities and foci can be decided upon later, the aim of the report at this stage is to raise awareness of the problem and the range of the issues that need further monitoring and analysis.

<sup>2</sup> Amnesty International. 2000. *Pakistan Country Report 1999*.

<sup>3</sup> Raasta Development Consultants. 1994. *Situation Analysis of Children in Armed Conflict in Sindh*. Volume I: A Qualitative Study report. Volume II: A Survey report. Volume III: Executive Summary. Prepared for UNICEF Pakistan.

<sup>4</sup> Discussion within UNICEF PCO suggest that this is the approach that has been taken to CAAC to date.

<sup>5</sup> The existence of the ISI lends a particular flavour to conflict involving Pakistan. Effectively members of the ISI bridge the formal army structures, where some of the highest ranking generals are members of the ISI, and militant groups ranging from the Taliban to Kashmiri combatants. The influence of the ISI works on two levels – through institutional links with militants groups and through personalised links, often corrupt, between individuals involved in conflict. In 1993 the US threatened to add Pakistan to its list of countries supporting terrorism. This stance was repeated in 2000. Pakistan is accused of supporting and harbouring terrorist groups operating in the USA, Jordan, Afghanistan, India, Chechnya and Tajikistan. Certainly Pakistani labelled weapons have been recovered in Kashmir and the Punjab. The ISI is the key player in these links and is accused of supplying weapons and providing military personnel for training to militant groups: Human Rights Watch. 1994 *Source of Weapons for Militia in Punjab and Kashmir*

<sup>6</sup> Rashid, Ahmed. 2000. *The Taliban. Islam, Oil and the New Great Game in Central Asia*. London: I.B. Tauris.

<sup>7</sup> The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2000. *Pakistan Country Profile*.

<sup>8</sup> Schofield, Victoria. 2000. *Kashmir in Conflict: India, Pakistan and the Unfinished War*. London: I.B. Tauris.

<sup>9</sup> Evans, Alexander 2000 The Kashmir Insurgency: As Bad as it Gets, in *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 11 (1): 69

<sup>10</sup> See Indian Country Report

<sup>11</sup> Amnesty International. 2000. *Pakistan Country Report 1999*.

<sup>12</sup> Mohammad, S. Chand. 1994. *Contemporary Conflicts in Pakistan*. Jaipur: Institute of Secular Studies

<sup>13</sup> Malik, S. 2001. Domestic Production, Illegal Manufacture and Leakage of Small Arms, A Case Study of Pakistan. In Banerjee, Dipankar (ed). *South Asia at Gun Point. Small Arms and Light Weapons Proliferation*. Colombo: Regional Centre for Strategic Studies.

<sup>14</sup> Human Rights Watch. 1994 *Source of Weapons for Militia in Punjab and Kashmir*

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<sup>20</sup> Banerjee, Mukulika. 2000. *The Pathan Unarmed*. Oxford: James Currey.

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<sup>22</sup> Human Rights Watch, 1999, *World Report 1999: Pakistan*

<sup>23</sup> Rashid, Abbas. 1992. 'Pakistan: The Politics of Fundamentalism'. In *Fundamentalism and Secularism in South Asia*. Lahore: Shirkat Gah.

<sup>24</sup> Jalalzai, Musa Khan. 1998. *The Sunni-Shia Conflict in Pakistan*. Lahore: Book Traders.

<sup>25</sup> Bannerjee, Dipankar. 1998. *Kashmir Today – A Trip Report*. Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies No 143. New Delhi.

<sup>26</sup> Margolis, Eric. 2001. *War at the Top of the World. The Struggle for Afghanistan, Kashmir and Tibet*. London: Routledge.

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