

Nuclear Weapons, Terrorism and South Asia What are the risks and what can be done?

Hassan Abbas
MTA Seminar
March 20, 2007

Questions & Issues

- Al-Qaeda's interest in acquiring nuclear weapons
- Safety of nuclear installations & weapons in Pakistan
- Capabilities and potential of religious extremist groups in South Asia
- Policy Recommendations for Pakistan and the United States

Al-Qaeda's Nuclear Interests

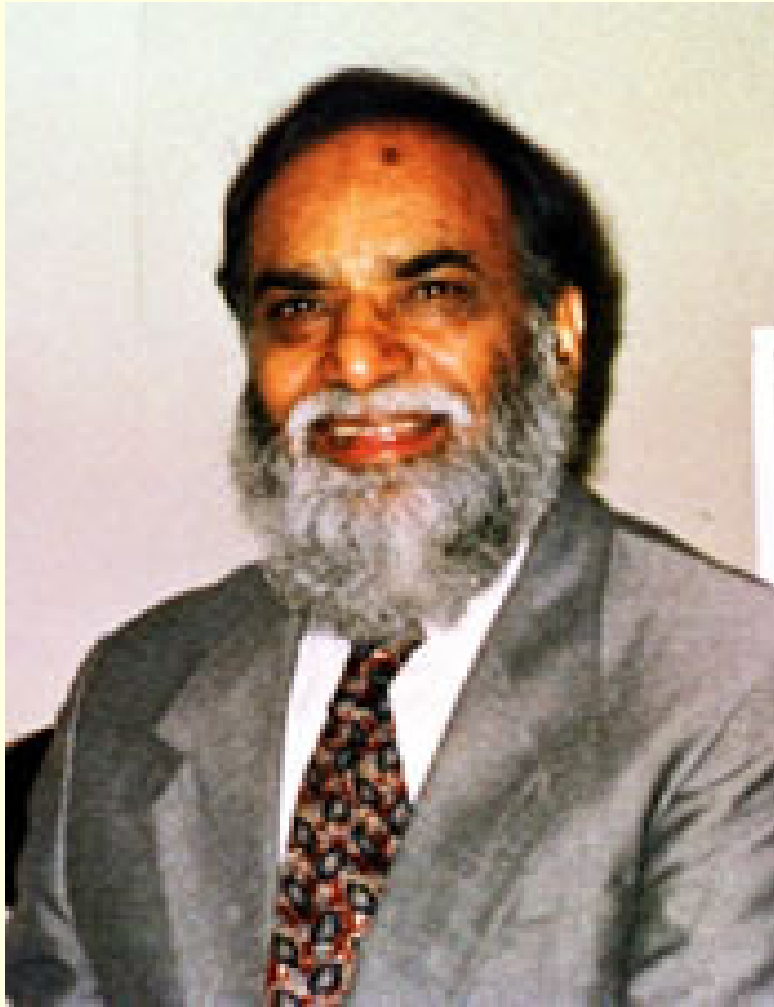
KSM on planning for 9/11 attacks: "We first thought of striking at a couple of nuclear facilities but decided against it for fear it would go out of control...anyway it was eventually decided to leave out nuclear targets for now."

Reference: Khalid Sheikh Mohammad's interview to Yosri Fouda of al-Jazeera channel – April 21, 2002 (Quoted in Guardian – March 4, 2003)

Al-Qaeda's Nuclear Interests

- Credible evidence that OBL acquired religious injunction (fatwa) for the use of nuclear weapon (dirty bomb) – Ref: Michael Scheuer's *Imperial Hubris*
- OBL told Pakistani journalist Rahimullah Yusufzai in 1998: "I would say that acquiring nuclear weapons for the defense of Muslims is a religious duty". Ref: Michael Scheuer's *Through Our Enemies' Eyes*

Example: Bashiruddin Mahmood Case



- Senior scientist at PAEC till 1999 – former boss of Dr. AQ Khan
- British trained – expert on gas centrifuge; designed Khushab reactor
- Consulting with Al-Qaeda/Taliban 1999-2001
- Debriefed by Pak/US

Some Quotes of Bashiruddin Mahmood...

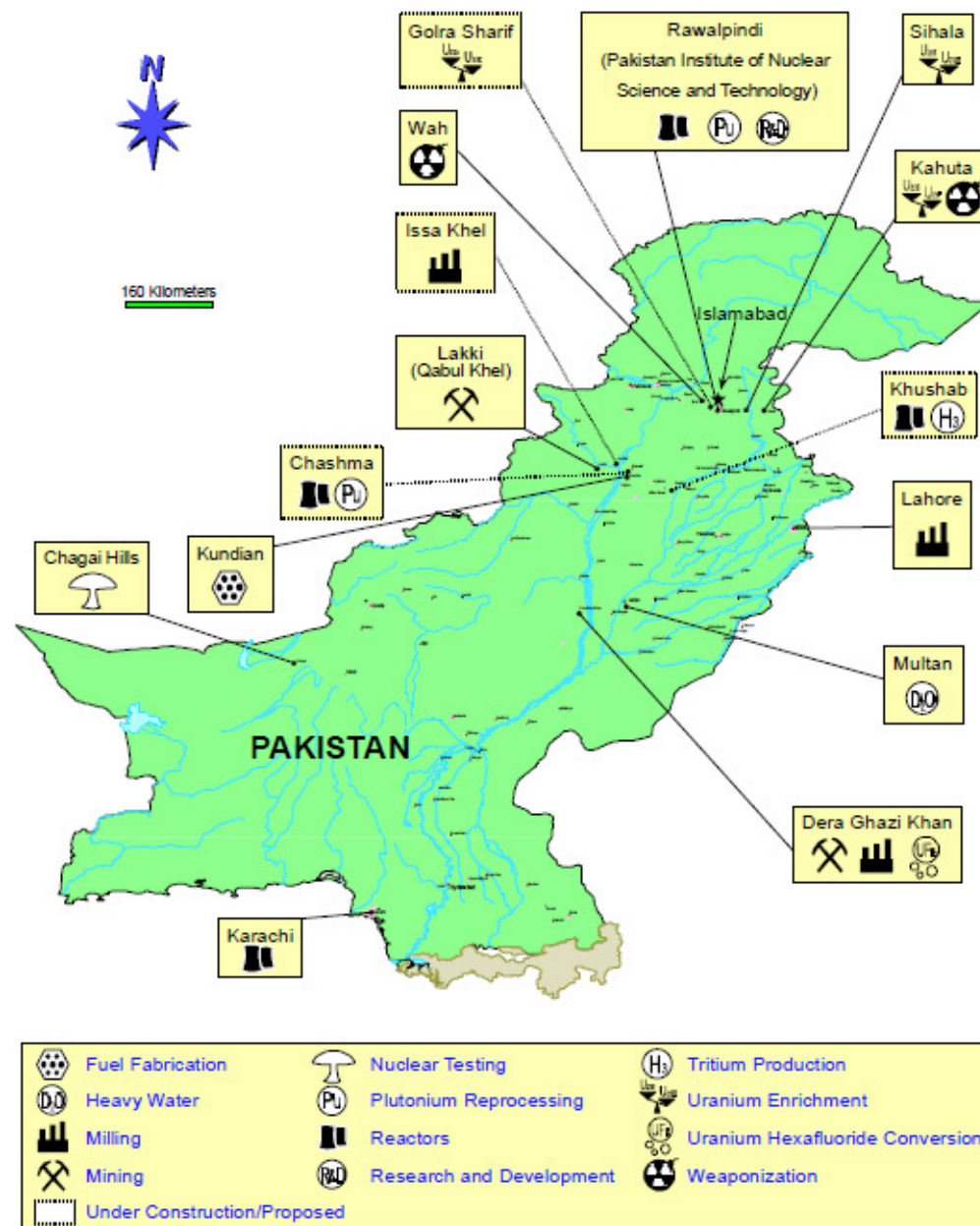
- “If we keep developing nuclear technology on the path of self-reliance, and also extend cooperation to other countries in this field, shall we not be the gainers ultimately”
- Described Pakistan’s nuclear capability as “the property of whole Ummah”
- Suggested that Taliban should serve as a model for Pakistan.

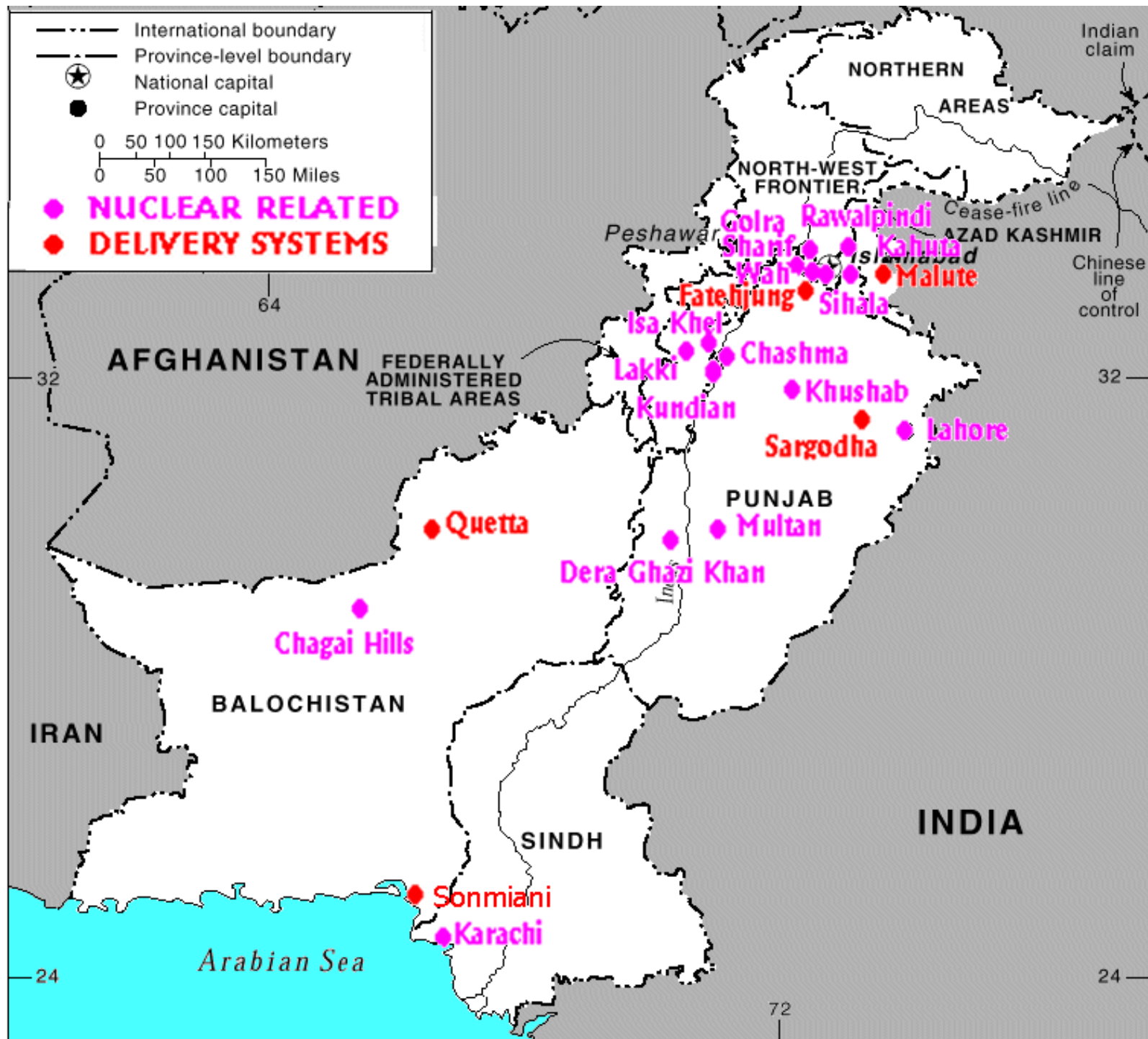
Pakistan's Nuclear Infrastructure

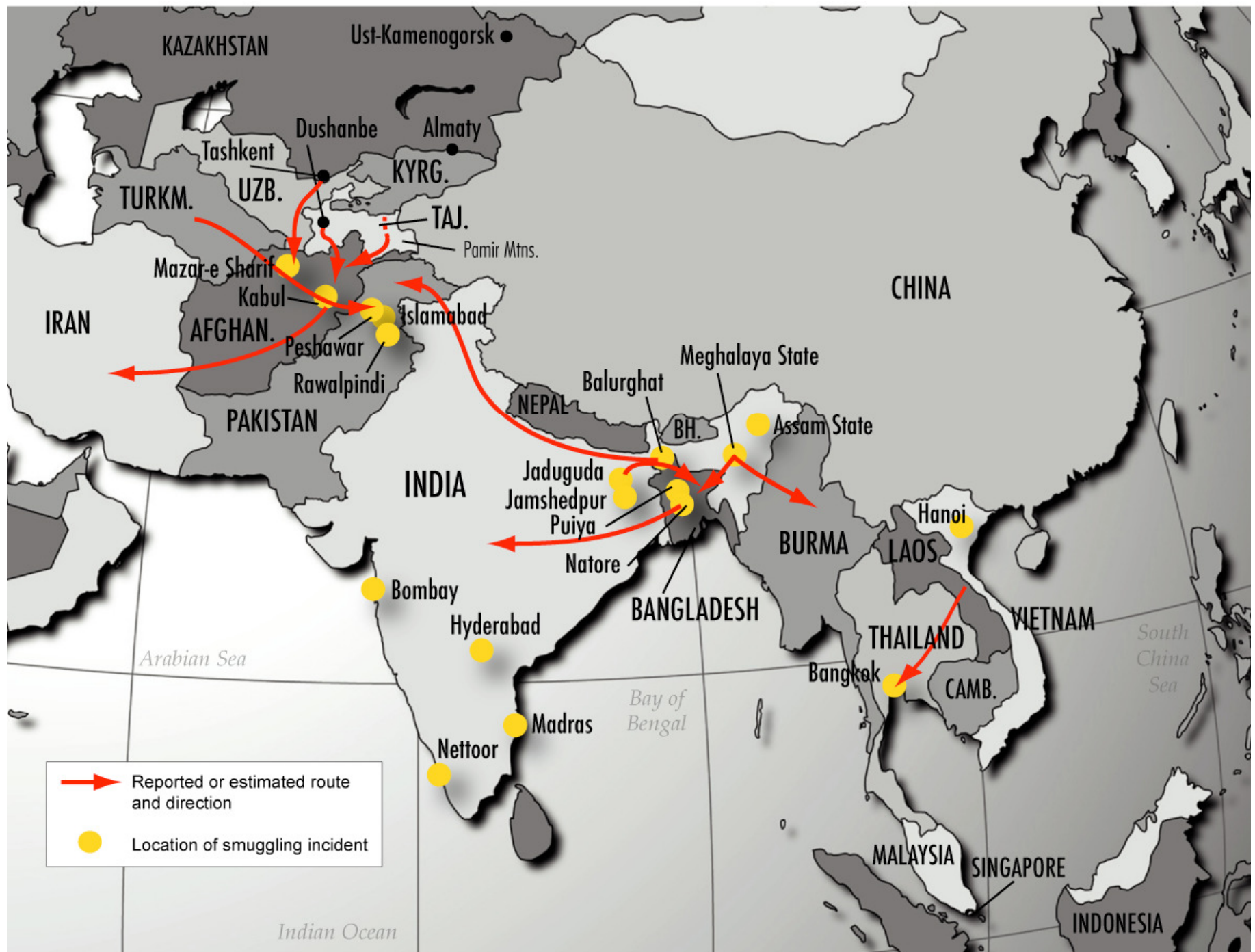
- Location of Nuclear Installations: Fissile material production sites (5); nuclear weapons manufacturing sites (?); storage sites (military bases in Punjab); deployment sites (?)
- Who guards the guardians?
- Nuclear command and control system – 2000
- Permissive action links (PALs) – coded switch devices
- Transportation of fissile material and weapons



PAKISTAN'S NUCLEAR-RELATED FACILITIES







Security Threats – Types of Religious Groups

- Category I: Religious political parties – currently part of the elected national and provincial assemblies - MMA
- Category II: Religious militant groups that have a “working relationship” with state: LET, HEM, etc
- Category III: Banned groups – linked with Al-Qaeda: JEM, LEJ
- Category IV: Rogue elements with intel & military; former intel operators

Profile of Masood Azhar (JEM)



- Close to OBL – Sudan operation
- From Indian jail to leader of a militant group in Pakistan
- Publications: Zarb-e-Momin (profiling Indian & Western nuclear installations)
- JEM banned in 2002
- Still a free citizen!

Assessments

- 1. Army controls the nuclear complex and it is in its institutional and corporate interest to secure the arsenal. Army will not give control of the nuclear program to civilians in foreseeable future.
- 2. Incompetence of law enforcement and intelligence services to tackle religious extremist groups effectively.
- 3. Internal threat – most significant risk
- 4. Serious concerns about outside/US help – trust deficit.
- 5. When to panic and when not to panic: Musharraf's survival issue; potential political change in the offing.

What can be done?

- 1. Involving China
- 2. Foreign specialized training of Pakistani security services
- 3. More confidence-building measures with India
- 4. Effective clamp down on religious militant groups (especially those with known links to Al-Qaeda)
- 5. Sharing responsibility with elected governments (long-term internal political scenario).