



# Have Gun, Will Shoot

Sixty thousand Pakistanis dead, 1,057, 456 gun licenses issued in Sindh alone... the statistics do the talking.

It is not that civilians and the military are not on the same page – it is just that there are no pages in the book. The only strategy is to wait for the next attack, the next bomb blast or the next act of terrorism. The only response is to do more of the same – only, more vociferously; raise the level of rhetoric, summon yet more meetings, appoint yet more committees and issue yet more directives. All reactive and tried umpteen times already.

Over 60,000 innocent Pakistani civilians have lost their lives in a war they never fought and to an enemy they never knew. They have been blown to smithereens, killed, kidnapped or mugged for not sharing the same ideology, for being a public figure, or simply for carrying a cell phone. Clearly there is something terribly wrong with our approach to fighting crime and terrorism.

At least four fundamental concepts need to be accepted and addressed at the outset if the state of Pakistan is se-



rious about tackling militancy. These are: a) that providing equal security to all citizens is the business of the state and not that of private gangs, guards or goons; b) that the policy of an endless reactive warfare must be replaced by a scientific and proactive approach of demanding surrender of some 20 million weapons held by civilians; c) that all militant groups, regardless of their ideology or patronage, be disbanded and,

d) that simply increasing the height of walls, building more barriers, hiring more guards, adding more weapons and creating more fortifications, is a corporate, capitalistic and counterproductive approach. It makes the state shrink and furthers the space enjoyed by the terrorists.

Sane nations around the world have opted to eliminate or control weapons as a first step towards elimination of crime and militancy. In contrast, Pakistan has chosen to promote a free-for-all weapons policy. It has neither disbanded (as required by Article 256 of the Constitution) scores

of existing private, political and sectarian militias, nor demanded the surrender of millions of illegal and quasi-legal weapons in the hands of civilians. Weapon licenses continue to be issued and the never-ending last date for computerisation of weapons continues to be stretched as a mark of magnanimity towards militants. The most recent extension now pushes this date from December 2015 to December 2016.