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Transnational Islamic networks

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Abstract

Besides a surge in terrorist activities, events following the 11 September terrorist attack on the United States have raised a new challenge for the world: the emergence of transnational Islamic networks, predominantly influenced by organizations such as Ikhwan al Muslimeen (the Muslim Brotherhood) and Al Qaeda, which are helping to spread a particular religious ideology across the globe and are also having an impact on pre-existing groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan. This article gives an overview of the role of Islamist networks and their influence, drawn from Al Qaeda and the Muslim Brotherhood, in South and South-west Asia and the Afghanistan–Pakistan region in particular. It also explains how local like-minded outfits have used Al Qaeda's anti-Western jargon to recruit foot soldiers and enlist support within their society, besides serving as financial conduits for the radical Wahabite/Salafi reformists.

Traditional Islam in South and South-west Asia

Islam came to the Indian subcontinent in the eighth century with the Arab conquest of Sindh (now the fourth province of Pakistan in the south). In the ensuing decades, however, besides struggles and battles for political domination among kings and sultans of the region, Sufis and saints played a major role in influencing traditional Islam in South (and West) Asia. Tombs of Sufi saints became a place of pilgrimage, thus favouring the expansion of Islam, and also the main means of adapting it to indigenous tradition in a culturally diverse society such as India.

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Several spiritual and religious personalities – both Sufis and saints – spread and revitalized Islam in the Indo-Pak subcontinent (as well as in Afghanistan and Central Asia) with their peaceful and inspiring teachings. Scholars and reformers such as Shah Waliullah Muhaddith Dehlvi (1703–1762) and Alf Sāni (1564–1624) had a profound influence on vast segments of Muslim society. Described as the 'reviver of the second millennium' for his work in rejuvenating Islam and opposing the heterodoxies prevalent at the time of the Mughal Emperor Akbar,[1] Sāni, an Indian Islamic scholar from Punjab, is said to have given 'to Indian Islam the rigid and conservative stamp it bears today'.[2]

The divide between traditionalists and reformists

However, the divide between traditionalists and reformists remained discernible through the centuries. The traditionalist view of Sharia is essentially legalistic and casuistic; it is sometimes connected to the popular forms of Sufism (hence the Barelvi school in Pakistan[3]). On the other hand, as Olivier Roy argues, the reformist fundamentalist position criticizes the tradition, the commentaries, popular religious practices, deviations, and superstitions. It aims to return to the founding texts (Shah Waliullah in India and Abd al Wahab in the Arabian Peninsula), and generally developed in response to an external threat (such as the influence of Hinduism on Islam).[4]

Until the early twentieth century these various movements had largely remained peaceful, but the turmoil for the Muslims of India (sectarian clashes between Hindus and Muslims) coincided with religious uprisings in the Middle East, led by Syed Qutub and Hassan al-Banna[5] in Egypt, as well as the abolition of the Islamic Caliphate in Turkey by Kemal Ataturk in the 1930s. These transnational factors – the First World War, British rule in India, the secular movement in Turkey, and political struggles in Egypt – essentially determined the evolution of Islamic thought over the last century.

Salafi and Wahabism

The origins of today's Salafi political parties and movements (Salafi revivalism) can be traced to the Society of the Muslim Brotherhood, created by the schoolteacher

1 Cyril Glasse, *The New Encyclopedia of Islam*, Altamira Press, Walnut Creek, CA, 2001, p. 432.
2 Aziz Ahmad, *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1964, p. 189.
3 Barelvi is a movement of Sunni Islam originating in the Indian subcontinent. The Barelvi movement was started in 1880 to defend contemporary traditionalist Islamic beliefs and practices from the criticisms of reformist movements such as the Deobandi and Ahl-e-Hadith. This movement in British India was shaped by the writings of Ahmed Raza Khan Barelvi (1856–1921).
4 Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*, I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd., London, 1994, p. 31.
5 Hassan al-Banna (1906–1949) was an Egyptian political and religious leader. He was the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood and one of the pioneers of today's Islamic revival.

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Hasan al-Banna in Egypt in 1928,[6] and the Jamaat-e-Islami (Islamic Party) of Pakistan, established by Syed Abul-Ala Maududi in 1941.[7] Roy argues that

> although the two movements developed independently, the overlapping of their themes was striking, and intellectual contacts were soon established: it was a disciple of Maududi, the Indian Abul Hasan Ali Nadvi, who undertook the translation of Maududi into Arabic and who met with Sayyid Qutub.[8]

An Egyptian ideologue of the Muslim Brotherhood, Qutub, who was executed by the regime of President Gamal Abdel Nasser in 1966, insisted on *jihad* (armed struggle) to establish the true Muslim state, as *dawa* (preaching) could not by itself achieve God's dominion on earth.[9]

Roy divides the current transnational Islamist movement, now about six decades old, into three geographic and cultural tendencies: the Sunni Arab Middle East, the Sunni Indian subcontinent, and Irano-Arab Shiism:

> These groups are as distinct politically as they are geographically, which is why it is more appropriate to speak of an Islamist sphere of influence than of an international union. The largest organizations are those of the Arab world's Muslim Brotherhood (MB), vaguely dependent on their Egyptian leadership … Next we find organizations on the Indian subcontinent (the various Jamaat-i Islamis of Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh), the Afghan *mujahideen* (Hizb-i Islami, Jamaat-i Islami), and, more recently, the North African Islamists … As for the revolutionary Shiite movement, it is the only one to have taken power by way of a true Islamic revolution … .[10]

Common goals

What binds these groups together is (i) a call to fundamentalism to cleanse the society and enforce Sharia, (ii) anti-colonialism, (iii) anti-imperialism

6 The term 'Salafi' is generally used to refer to the first three generations of Muslims: the Sahaba (Companions of Muhammad), the Tabi'un (Followers), and the Tabi' al-Tabi'in (Those after the Followers). Salafis view these three generations as examples of how Islam should be practised. The principal tenet of Salafism is that Islam was perfect and complete during the days of Muhammad and his Sahaba, but that undesirable innovations have been added over later centuries, owing to materialist and cultural influences. The term 'Salafism' is sometimes used interchangeably with 'Wahhabism'.

7 Primary sources for the study of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Jamaat are: Richard P. Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1963; and Kalim Bahadur, *The Jamaat-i-Islami of Pakistan: Political Thought and Political Action*, Chetana Publications, New Delhi, 1977. Maududi (1903–1979) was a Sunni journalist, theologian, Muslim revivalist leader, political philosopher, and major Islamist thinker. He was also a prominent political figure in Pakistan.

8 O. Roy, above note 4, p. 35. Sayyid Qutub (1906–1966) was an Egyptian writer, educator, and religious leader. His writings about Islam, and especially his call for a revolution to establish an Islamic state and society, greatly influenced the Islamic resurgence movements of the twentieth century.

9 Aneela Salman, 'Religious ideology and lethality: does religious sect have an effect on the lethality of a terrorist organization?', in Criterion, Vol. 5, no. 3, July–September 2010, available at: http://criterionpk.com/2011/02/religious-ideology-and-lethality-does-religious-sect-have-an-effect-on-the-lethality-of-a-terrorist-organization/ (last visited 9 March 2011).

10 O. Roy, above note 4, p. 2

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(synonymous with anti-Westernism), and (iv) anti-Americanism. Their obvious targets are therefore foreign banks (e.g. City Bank, American Express), foreign food franchises (e.g. KFC, McDonalds, Pepsi), the World Bank and the IMF (dubbed as American tools for arm-twisting poor Muslim nations), and even governments co-operating with the US or other NATO members (Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan are cases in point). Opposition to, and condemnation of, both Israel and the United States (for their policies vis-à-vis the Palestinians) is the common denominator for all these groups. So is their grudge against the US for its invasion of Iraq and the continued presence in Afghanistan. In this case, the Sunni groups (including Al Qaeda and the Muslim Brotherhood) find a common cause with the Palestinian radical Sunni group Hamas, which was born out of the Muslim Brotherhood, as well as mainstream Shia groups such as Hezbollah, and become mutually supportive entities.

Opposition to India and its hold over the disputed Himalayan state of Kashmir is specific to Pakistani militant groups – Lashkar-e-Taiba (the Army of the Righteous), Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (the Order of Holy Warriors) and Jaish-e-Muhammad (the Army of Mohammed). Meanwhile, all these groups have become force multipliers for the transnational Al Qaeda.

The Afghan war

The Afghan war against the Soviet Union was a watershed in militant Muslim revivalist movements and gave a new platform to militant Islamist groups from all over the Muslim world. Sheikh Abdullah Azzam was one of the first Arabs to join the *jihad* in Afghanistan. He advocated traditional *jihad* to push Christian encroachments out of all Muslim lands. Osama bin Laden (Azzam's deputy) created a common enemy against whom *jihadi* efforts were to be focused. Thus US troops in Saudi Arabia, and later Somalia, provided the embodiment of that common enemy, thereby changing the focus of Salafi *jihad* to the '"far enemy" (the United States and the West in general)'.[11]

The American CIA and the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence agency (ISI) used Muslim fighters from all over the world as proxies against the Soviet Union. Following the Soviet Union's withdrawal in February 1989, the socialist Afghan regime eventually fell to the *mujahideen* in late April 1992. The eventual chaos and factional fighting after the abrupt fall of President Najibullah turned Afghanistan into embattled fiefdoms, thereby enabling the Arab Wahabi-Salafi and Pakistani Deobandi[12] (both Sunni) and pro-Iran Shia groups to step in and influence the course of events there.

11 Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2004, p. 19.

12 A Deobandi is a person who follows the methodology of the Deoband Islamic movement. The movement began at Darul Uloom Deoband (a *madrassa*, or seminary) in Deoband, India, where its foundation was laid on 30 May 1866.

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Saudi Arabian role in the development of transnational networks

During the *jihad* against the Soviet Russians, Saudis not only matched America dollar for dollar but also funded the creation of new mosques and seminaries in the Afghanistan–Pakistan region, as well as creating their own proxies – Sipah-e-Sahaba (SPP) Pakistan, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, and several others – to counter Shia advances in Sunni regions.[13] In Afghanistan, they took Professor Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, a resistance leader and preacher of Wahabism, under their tutelage and apparently continue to do so.

The issue of funding for militant political organizations is primarily rooted in the Iranian Revolution of January 1979. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December of the same year provided the Saudis with the best opportunity to support religio-political parties financially on the one hand and, on the other, to help create political parties such as those mentioned above to counter the spreading Iranian Shia influence. Indeed, the Saudi monarchs feared that the revolution in Iran might undermine their own influence in the neighbouring countries. As the factional fighting in Afghanistan raged after all the *mujahideen* leaders arrived there in April 1992, the Saudi–Iranian rivalry also intensified. The Saudis and the Pakistanis joined hands to contain the Iranian influence both in Afghanistan and in Pakistan itself by permitting and funding the mushrooming of Sunni religious seminaries all over the country. The continuing Saudi desire is to exercise influence over its proxies in countries such as Pakistan, where two-thirds of the 175 million population are Sunni Muslims.

While the Saudi funding flowed for Sunni seminaries in Pakistan, it also triggered a violent sectarian conflict throughout the 1990s, mostly centred in central Pakistan – the Punjab – where radical Sunni[14] and Shia[15] organizations are headquartered. Most Sunni organizations, from Karachi in the south to South Punjab and to Waziristan in the north-west, share objectives and are bonded together by the overarching Al Qaeda ideology. Pakistan's ISI, craving for so-called strategic depth in Afghanistan, had its own axe to grind. In the mid-1990s, it saw in the Taliban a force multiplier for itself that it thought should be able to counter Russian, Indian, and Iranian influence. In this way, various militant groups emerged, guided and influenced by Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, both nurturing their favourite outfits. Later, the US-led anti-terror war in Afghanistan and the invasion of Iraq provided ever greater grounds for transnationalist movements such as Al Qaeda to raise cadres for an organized resistance to the 'US-led Western imperialism'.

Consequently a synergy or fusion of interests and similarity of causes has emerged between the traditionalist clergy and the radical reformists – largely led

13 Imtiaz Gul, *The Most Dangerous Place: Pakistan's Lawless Frontier*, Penguin, London, June 2010.
14 Such as SSP, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Jaish-e-Muhammad, Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jamaat-ud-Dawah.
15 Including the defunct Tehrike Jafria Pakistan.

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and influenced by Al Qaeda – in South and South-west Asia: a sort of synthesis between Islamist militants and traditional mullahs, who earlier prospered under the American largesse and now serve as direct supporters or apologists (indirect supporters) for the pan-Islamist missionaries.

That mission – basically to spread the Al Qaeda ideology – also resonated in a video statement by the Egyptian Ayman al-Zawahiri, issued in connection with the Hezbollah–Israeli conflict in the summer of 2006:

> The whole world is an open field for us. As they attack us everywhere, we will attack them everywhere. As their armies got together to wage war on us, our nation will get together to fight them. … The shells and missiles that tear apart the bodies of Muslims in Gaza and Lebanon are not purely Israeli. Rather, they come and are financed by all countries of the Crusader alliance.[16]

Prominent transnational networks

The Arab-centred networks

The Muslim Brotherhood

The Muslim Brotherhood's stated goal is to take the Qur'an and Sunnah as the 'sole reference point for … ordering the life of the Muslim family, individual, community … and state'.[17] The movement has officially opposed violent methods of achieving its goals, with some exceptions such as in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict or its attempts to overthrow secular Ba'athist rule in Syria. Sharon Otterman describes its recent history:

> The Muslim Brotherhood has been formally banned in Egypt since 1954, but in reality, the Egyptian government has allowed it to operate within limits since the 1970s, keeping it in check with frequent arrests and crackdowns. A more open political atmosphere in 2005, due to both domestic and international pressure, led the government to grant the Brotherhood unprecedented freedom to campaign before 2010 year's parliamentary vote. While the group's 150 candidates officially ran as independents, there was nothing secret about their Brotherhood affiliation. Candidates held rallies, hung posters with the Brotherhood's name, and used its slogan, 'Islam is the Solution'.[18]

16 Ayman al-Zawahiri, as transcribed in BBC, 'Excerpts: Al-Zawahiri video comments', 27 July 2006, available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/5220204.stm (last visited 14 January 2011).

17 Ikhwanweb, the Muslim Brotherhood's official English website, available at: http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=813&ref=search.php (last visited 9 March 2011). See also Robert S. Leiken and Steven Brooke, 'The moderate Muslim Brotherhood', in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 86, No. 2.

18 Sharon Otterman, *Muslim Brotherhood and Egypt's Parliamentary Elections*, Council on Foreign Relations Backgrounder, 1 December 2005, available at: http://www.cfr.org/egypt/muslim-brotherhood-egypts-parliamentary-elections/p9319 (last visited 9 March 2011).

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The Brotherhood was not actively involved in the January–February 2011 uprising in Egypt, the desire for change being led instead by social media and civil society. Indeed, many observers believe that this situation mounted a new strategic challenge to both the Brotherhood and Al Qaeda: the demand for democratic rights rather than Sharia (Islamic law) amounted to a snub to Al Qaeda and a denial of its thesis that Muslim people crave a Sharia-based society. Events in Tunisia, Bahrain, and Jordan suggest that the Brotherhood and Al Qaeda's case for Sharia has suffered a setback in those countries also.

The Brotherhood's core mission is religious proselytizing through preaching and social services, and the network spreads from Egypt to Jordan, Palestine, Kuwait, Sudan, Yemen, Syria, and Tunisia, making it a predominantly Arab-based entity, with Muslim Brotherhood branches in these countries being practically subordinate to the Egyptian centre. The Muslim Brotherhood also sponsors national organizations such as the Islamic Tendency Movement in Tunisia, Justice and Charity in Morocco, Hamas in Algeria, and the Movement of Islamic Youth, Malaysia, a group close to both the Muslim Brotherhood and the Malaysian Jamaat-e-Islami in 1971.[19] Literature on the subject suggests that the Afghan *mujahideen* leader Burhanuddin Rabbani adopted the ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood during his studies at Al-Azhar University in the 1950s.[20]

The Muslim Brotherhood and Al Qaeda have been vocal about Islamic resistance movements in the region because of the challenge and opportunity that they present to political Islam. However, there is a difference between the two organizations, according to Marwan Bishara, an Arab Palestinian political commentator and academic:

> The Muslim Brotherhood has supported various resistance movements against foreign occupation, including Palestinian Hamas (offshoot of the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood), the Lebanese Hezbollah, and the Islamist Iraqi resistance groups. Nevertheless, it also supported their attempts to join the political processes in their countries. Al-Qaeda on the other hand, has supported only the violent expressions of these groups, and whenever they turned to politics, al-Qaeda rejected all their political overtures as surrender to the enemies of Islam.[21]

Al Qaeda

In the last decade, no other organization has influenced political thought across the Muslim world as much as Al Qaeda. It is the vanguard of the global Salafi movement, which includes many sister terrorist groups that share the same ideology.

19 O. Roy, above note 4, p. 111.

20 Jason Burke, *Al-Qaeda: The True Story Of Radical Islam*, I. B. Tauris, London, 2004, pp. 66–67.

21 Marwan Bishara, 'Islam can not always be blamed: it appears Islam is not an appropriate scapegoat after all', Ikhwanweb, 19 January 2010, available at: http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=22699 (last visited 14 January 2011).

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The *jihadi* Salafi ideology considers the Saudi Arabian government, for example, to be an un-Islamic regime that needs to be purged of its present leaders.[22]

In his Declaration of *jihad*, Osama bin Laden adopted the historical imagery of Islamic resistance to the European Crusades, describing the enemy as 'the alliance of Jews, Christians and their agents' and holding them responsible for 'massacres in Tajikistan, Burma, Kashmir, Assam, the Philippines, Fatani [as transliterated], Ogaden, Somalia, Eritrea, Chechnya and Bosnia-Herzegovina'.[23] The *fatwa* proclaimed:

> The ruling to kill the Americans and their allies – civilians and military – is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it, in order to liberate Al-Aqsa Mosque and the holy mosques from their grip, and in order for their armies to move out of all the lands of Islam, defeated and unable to threaten any Muslim. This is in accordance with the words of Almighty God, 'And fight the pagans all together as they fight you all together', and 'Fight them until there is no more tumult or oppression, and there prevails justice and faith in God'.[24]

Interestingly, Al Qaeda propounds an intellectual concept that is not based on main schools of Islamic theology but constructs a new ideological starting point by the application of Islamic principles to socio-political change. Bin Laden projects *jihad* as an individual responsibility incumbent on all Muslims to avenge innocent Muslim blood, especially that of Muslim children in Iraq and Palestine.[25]

What distinguishes Al Qaeda from the Muslim Brotherhood is the ideological cohesion that simply transcends geography, culture, ethnicity, and personalities. The Muslim Brotherhood displays its political pragmatism by taking a reformist approach to the countries where it operates. It does not oppose the democratic process, nor does it bar its members from participation in elections, implying that, while sticking to its core mission, it also believes in the peaceful pursuit of political power. This may perhaps also be the reason for regional disagreements and conflicts within the Muslim Brotherhood network. In this regard, Olivier Roy makes a very convincing argument, namely that

> first of all, there are several centres: the Egyptian MB [Muslim Brotherhood], the Pakistani Jamaat and the World Muslim League based in Saudi Arabia.

22 See M. Sageman, above note 11.

23 Christopher M. Blanchard, *Al Qaeda: Statements and Evolving Ideology*, CRS Report for Congress, 16 November 2004, p. 3, available at: http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/terror/RL32759.pdf (last visited 9 March 2011). Besides bin Laden and al-Zawahiri, the Iraqi cleric Abu Musab al Zarqawi was the third most revered Al Qaeda figure. Praised by bin Laden as the 'prince of al-Qaeda in Iraq', he was later killed in a US air strike near Baghdad in 2006. See Jayshree Bajoria, 'al-Qaeda (a.k.a. al-Qaida, al-Qa'ida)', Council on Foreign Relations, updated on 30 December 2009, available at: http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations/al-qaeda-k-al-qaida-al-qaida/p9126 (last visited 9 March 2011).

24 Fatwa issued by Osama bin Laden and others in Al Qaeda, published in *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 23 February 1998, as quoted in Quintan Wiktorowicz, 'The new global threat: transnational Salafis and jihad', in *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 8, No. 4, December 2001, p. 18.

25 A. Salman, above note 9, p. 73.

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> From there connections and collaborations are established around a network of personal relationships, riddled with disagreements and divisions; their common denominator is not the MB ideology, but the simple desire to re-Islamize the society. These networks are periodically torn apart by conflicts that set the states of the Middle East against one another … .[26]

In contrast, those groups and persons wedded to the core ideology of Al Qaeda rarely display disagreements and are unanimous in pursuing political objectives through sheer violence such as suicide bombings. They disregard, for instance, the Muslim Brotherhood's pragmatism (such as participation in parliamentary elections) and believe in force as the only way to Islamize society and put an end to foreign occupation of the Muslim lands (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Palestine).

Al Qaeda is active in dozens of countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Spain, Germany, Yemen, and Somalia. After shifting its central command to Afghanistan during the Taliban rule, the organization introduced suicide bombings to both the Afghan and the Pakistani Taliban, as well as to affiliated groups in Iraq, Yemen, and North Africa. Daniel Benjamin, from the US Institute of Peace, a Washington-based think-tank, notes that 'Terrorism emanating from Yemen is a major security concern for the United States. But al-Qa'ida's core in Pakistan remains an extraordinarily formidable and dangerous terrorist organization whose targeting of the United States continues'.[27]

The discussion on Jamaat-e-Islami later in this section will also explain how local parties provide a cover or serve as an apology for Al Qaeda's global mission, despite the fact that only a limited section of the population supports und sympathizes with Al Qaeda. In a February 2008 poll by Terror Free Tomorrow, a Washington-based non-profit group, only 24% of Pakistanis had a favourable opinion of bin Laden in 2008, as compared to 46% in August 2007. Similarly, Al Qaeda's popularity had dropped from 33% to 18%.

Hezbollah

Hezbollah's ideology is based on the concept of *jihad* and martyrdom. These are often demonstrated in its acts of suicide terrorism. On 11 November 1982, Hezbollah's first suicide bomber, Ahmad Qasir, detonated himself in the Israeli military headquarters in Tyre, killing seventy-six (the Hezbollah website claims seventy-five) officers. The day continues to be commemorated by Hezbollah as 'Martyrdom Day' in Qasir's honour.[28]

26 O. Roy, above note 4, p. 112.

27 Daniel Benjamin, Coordinator for Counterterrorism/Ambassador-at-Large, *US Counterterrorism Strategy in Yemen*, US Institute of Peace, Washington, DC, 8 September 2010, available at: http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/rm/2010/147296.htm (last visited 14 January 2011).

28 A. Salman, above note 9, quoting Joseph Alagha, *The Shifts in Hizbullah's Ideology: Religious Ideology, Political Ideology, and Political Program*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2006.

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Hezbollah, too, projects itself as a pan-Arab, pan-Islamic movement, pursuing practical politics in a religious garb. Its relations with Iran are based on political-ideological, strategic-policy terms (pan-Islamism), and with Syria on ethno-national identity (pan-Arabism).[29]

Training even Sunni groups and non-Islamic outfits such as the Tamil Tigers has been part of Hezbollah strategy to spread the schemes of martyrdom into other territories. Addressing the organization's military units in December 2002, the Hezbollah leader, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, said: 'Martyrdom operations – suicide bombings – should be exported outside Palestine. I encourage Palestinians to take suicide bombings worldwide. Don't be shy to do it'.[30]

South and South-west Asian-centred organizations

Jamaat-e-Islami (JI)

From its foundation in 1941, Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan opposed the partition of India. Later, after the emergence of Pakistan as a new state on the world map, it changed its stance and opted to create a constituency for itself in the new state. Unlike other Islamic movements, it presents a more comprehensive and pragmatic Islamic view, embodied by a large number of mostly educated lower- and middle-class political activists, academics, and intelligentsia. It places great stress on political struggle for establishing an Islamic state rather than wasting energy on individuals to make them perfect Muslims.

Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan overtly runs an indigenous movement to Islamize the state. It does, however, also share the Islamic political ideology and programme with other political parties (such as Jamaat-e-Islami, Bangladesh, or Hizb-i-Islami, Afghanistan). At the same time, it shares an ideological nexus with Al Qaeda, and particularly with those persons and groups who were once part of the Muslim Brotherhood but are now devout Al Qaeda activists. This fusion gives Jamaat-e-Islami the transnational character that transcends the boundaries of a particular country or region. That several people linked to Al Qaeda, such as Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, one of the masterminds of the 9/11 events, were arrested from the houses of Jamaat-e-Islami leaders in different parts of Pakistan also confirmed the link that has existed between Al Qaeda and Jamaat-e-Islami in Pakistan.

Being a pragmatic Sunni Islamist party, Jamaat-e-Islami also maintains a good working relationship with the Shia in Iran. Despite being entirely a Sunni movement, it is regarded as the only Sunni party that does not believe in sectarianism and has no differences with Shia Muslims. In fact, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the Hezb-e-Islami chief who had been traditionally close to the Jamaat-e-Islami, was rumoured to have found refuge in Iran on a number of

29 Alagha, above note 28.

30 Council on Foreign Relations, backgrounder on Hamas, 27 August 2009, available at: http://www.cfr.org/israel/hamas/p8968 (last visited 22 February 2011).

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occasions in the 1990s and even after the United States unleashed the 'global war on terror' in Afghanistan in the aftermath of the 9/11 events. In his latest post-Ramadan messages to Muslims ahead of Eid ul-Fitr, for instance, Hekmatyar advised the Pakistani and Iranian governments in particular not to befriend the United States at the cost of the Afghan nation. Do not endanger your interests by continuing to support the war in Afghanistan, he exhorted the two governments.[31] During my visits to Afghanistan in the early 1990s and early 2000, Hezb-e-Islami fighters would often speak of their contacts and adventures in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Chechnya, and in Kashmir in particular. They talked especially of al-Zawahiri because these non-Arab followers are bound to the Egyptian doctor by the original Muslim Brotherhood ideology.

Over a dozen organizations work either directly or indirectly under the Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan umbrella. Two of them are political, four are *jihadi*, and one represents a union of religious scholars. There are also four youth and students' organizations that identify themselves with JI or are inspired by its core ideology.[32] The Al-Khidmat Foundation, a prominent organization under direct supervision of Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan, for instance, operates as a welfare charity – a non-governmental organization (NGO) – that tries to reach and serve the victims of war or any sort of natural disaster or catastrophe that occurs in the country. In recent years it has rapidly extended its operations countrywide: 'According to 2001 Yearly Report of Jamaate Islami, Al-Khidmat Foundation spent approximately 40 million rupees on different programs in previous year'.[33] During the August 2010 floods, the Foundation once again joined the fray, with several hundred million rupees and thousands of volunteers to help in rescuing and getting relief supplies to millions of people displaced by the devastating waters of the Indus river.

Jamaat-e-Islami's Kashmir connection

The Jamaat-e-Islami Jammu and Kashmir (JIJK) was established as an independent political organization in 1952. It presented itself as an organization committed to establishing an Islamic state in Kashmir based on the Sharia, but using democratic means of peaceful persuasion for attaining its goals.[34] However, in the late 1980s, JIJK initiated its armed struggle against Indian rule. In 1989, it instructed its members in the assembly to resign and join the struggle. The JIJK leaders, including Sayyed Ali Gilani, its chief ideologue, allege that infidel forces such as Israel, the Western world, and India are all united to dominate the Muslim world by hatching

31 Maverick Report, 'Hekmatyar advises Pakistan, Iran not to befriend US at cost of Afghan nation', 11 September 2010, available at: http://www.maverickpakistanis.com/?p=8513 (last visited 22 February 2011).

32 Mohmmad Amir Rana, *A to Z of Jihadi Organizations in Pakistan*, Mashal Books, Lahore, 2004.

33 *Ibid.*

34 See Yoginder Sikand, 'Changing course of Kashmiri struggle: from national liberation to Islamist jihad?', in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 36, No. 3, 2001, p. 219.

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conspiracies and using force against them. Gilani argues that 'whenever Muslims have ignored the principles of Islam that see no boundaries of region they have lost their power and have become like any other community'. Territorial nationalism, he writes, has proved to be the bane of the Muslims, for it has divided them into different states and, thereby, has deflected them from the task of 'changing the conditions of the entire human race'.[35]

Besides Jamaat-e-Islami-affiliated outfits in Indian-administered Kashmir, groups such as Lashkar-e-Taiba, Tehreek-ul-Mujahideen, and Harkat-ul-Mujahideen also operate in tandem with one another; this underscores the transnational character of the Islamist reformists who consider use of force as a legitimate tool in gaining their objectives.

Tablighi Jamaat

Tablighi Jamaat is the most influential religious organization in Pakistan. It runs centres at district level where its members gather for Islamic teachings, and it also arranges special congregations from time to time to attract the masses from various parts of the country. It holds annual international three-day congregations in Raiwind near Lahore, in Pakistan, and Tungi in Bangladesh, where almost two million Muslims from across the world usually attend the gatherings. It is the second-largest gathering of Muslims after the annual Hajj (pilgrimage) to Mecca.

Tablighi Jamaat originated in northern India in the 1920s and is 'a scion of several generations of Ulama [Islamic scholars and religious leaders] associated with Deoband. Maulana Muhammad Ilyas (d. 1944) is taken to be the founder of Tablighi Jamaat'.[36] After the partition of the subcontinent in 1947 the movement took on new energy, most importantly in Mewat, the district where it originated and where Hindus had engaged in ruthless 'ethnic cleansing'.[37] Tablighi Jamaat has no formal bureaucratic structure and is a highly decentralized voluntary movement with no official name. It is led by a non-charismatic leadership and is in principle averse to personality cults. The name 'Tablighi Jamaat' has been publicly adopted but not officially used. It has no offices and no archives, and there are no closed-door meetings.[38]

35 *Ibid.*

36 Barbara Metcalf, 'Travelers' tales in the Tablighi Jamaat', in *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 588, July 2003, pp. 136–148.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 137.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 138. One can gauge the Tablighi Jamaat's pull from the fact that, despite being a moderate and liberal Muslim, Farooq Leghari, a former president of Pakistan, attended the Tablighi Jamaat's annual congregation in the mid-1990s while he was still in office. Another extreme example was General Mehmood Ahmed, a former chief of the ISI, who joined the Tablighi Jamaat after his forced retirement in October 1999 and spends weeks every year in promoting its cause. A number of national cricketers, including the former captain Inzamul Haq, Mushtaq Ahmed, and Yousuf Yohanna, are also currently active members of Tablighi Jamaat; Yohanna, in fact, converted from Christianity to Islam because of the Tablighi Jamaat and now uses Muhammad Yousuf as his full Muslim name. The popular pop singers Junaid Jamshed, Ali Haider, and Najam Sheeraz are a few more examples of how Tablighi Jamaat can influence individuals usually considered areligious; at the height of their singing careers these three

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Despite its pacifist stance, Tablighi Jamaat has appeared on the fringes of numerous terrorism investigations. It has gained much public and media attention, particularly in the UK, when it announced plans for construction of Europe's largest mosque there. With its international headquarters in Nizamuddin, Delhi, it has several national headquarters to co-ordinate its activities in over eighty countries, and has a significant presence in North America, Europe, Africa, and Central Asia.

In political terms, Tablighi Jamaat finds itself at odds with other Islamic organizations:

> TJ has been facing a lot of criticism by other Deobandi factions of Islam, especially those in the business of Jihad; their contention is that this non-resistant and consistently expanding humanitarian outfit should also gear up for Jihad, one of the compulsory tenets of Islam. The party elders generally avoid responding to criticism from outside though they are forthcoming to questions within the party.[39]

Both in Pakistan and in Bangladesh, Tablighi Jamaat has an interface with the political establishment. The dividing line is not between political and apolitical Islamic movements but between two ways of conceiving politics. While the Islamists work through the nation-state, there are other groups who think beyond borders; 'putting politics most often in parentheses they first build individuals and institutions, which over time may exert a more lasting political influence'.[40]

The Tablighi Jamaat has no visible sources of financing. It depends solely on charities and donations by members or others. Donors are strictly prohibited from displaying their financial support. According to a Tablighi worker, showing off the financial support you give in God's way may corrupt your purpose and thus you lose the essence of Islamic practice.[41]

Critics meanwhile brand the Tablighi Jamaat as the biggest group of apologists for the radical Wahhabi/Salafi Islamists. In fact, it offers a safe refuge to all shades of militancy as well. During a visit to Pakistan's wild and embattled South Waziristan region, for example, I stumbled upon a diary, probably a visitors' notebook, in the compound of a seminary that militants had been using for political brainwashing of activists from all over Pakistan. Written in Urdu, Pakistan's national language, the diary contained comments and memoirs of many militants who had transited through this camp. At least a dozen entries related to the writer's visit to Raiwind, the Tablighi Jamaat's Pakistan headquarters on the outskirts of

prolific artists fell under the influence of the Tablighi Jamaat and now, besides performing either recitations of religious songs and hymns or, in the case of Jamshed, pursuing other business such as branded menswear, they preach Islam. Jamshed also conducts TV programmes from the Tablighi perspective.

39 Waqar Gillani, 'Revolution, not quite', in *News International*, 1 November 2009, available at: http://jang.com.pk/thenews/nov2009-weekly/nos-01-11-2009/dia.htm#2 (last visited 27 October 2010).

40 Shail Mayaram, 'Hindu and Islamic transnational religious movements', in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 39, No. 1, 3–9 January 2004, p. 85.

41 Interviews with Tablighi activists, Islamabad, July 2010.

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Lahore, the country's second largest city. Almost all spoke of a great 'spiritual sojourn and great emotional experience' at Raiwind, which clearly suggested that Muslims across the board hold the place in great reverence, and it thus also becomes an almost unassailable hideout to those who are averse to the socio-political system and conditions in Pakistan and might want to escape the law or interrogation for some time. Here the zealots sink themselves in meditation for weeks, disconnecting themselves from the outside world, an experience they believe elevates them much closer to God.

Dawat-e-Islami

Dawat-e-Islami is another strand of the Tablighi (preaching) school of thought, founded in 1984 by Maulana Ilyas Qadri, a Barelvi Sunni scholar. It was apparently intended for diluting the growing influence of Tablighi Jamaat, particularly in the Punjab province. Dawat-e-Islami also routinely sends out its delegations on preaching missions but it lacks the global appeal of Tablighi Jamaat. It is mainly restricted to Pakistan's central Punjab and southern Sindh provinces. The importance given to Maulana Ilyas Qadri's book *Faizan-e-Sunnat* in Dawat-e-Islami is the same as that given to Maulana Zakaria's book *Fazail-i-Amaal* in Tablighi Jamaat.[42] Though Dawat-e-Islami's sphere of influence is limited, its message is global in nature. It mostly collects its funds from local businessmen, traders, landlords, and so forth. However, it also gets substantial financial support from the Barelvi diasporas in the USA, UK, and other parts of Europe and the Middle East.

Ahl-e Hadith and Jamaat-ud-Dawah (Lashkar-e-Taiba)

Jamaat-ud-Dawah represents the Ahl-e-Hadith school of thought, drawing ideological, political, and financial support from Saudi Arabian sources. Ahl-e-Hadith followers believe in almost no *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), this being the only issue that distinguishes them from the Deobandis. The Ahl-e-Hadith school of thought is affiliated to Salafi Islam, known for its fierce opposition to Sufism[43] and to the established schools of Islamic jurisprudence, insisting that Muslims must go back to the original sources of inspiration: the Qur'an and the Hadith (the sayings and reports of the acts of the Prophet Muhammad). The broad thrust of their beliefs remains the same among the majority of Arabs in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen, Qatar, Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, and Kuwait. They share the same philosophy, for instance, of *jihad*, and that is why they all praise Osama bin Laden

42 M. A. Rana, above note 32, p. 371.

43 Sufism is a mystical-ascetic approach to Islam that seeks to find divine love and knowledge through direct personal experience of God. Sufism and Islamic law are usually considered to be complementary, although Sufism has been criticized by Salafi for what they see as an unjustified religious innovation. Another name for a Sufi is Dervish.

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and Al Qaida.[44] Jamaat-ud-Dawah also radiates a global message in harmony with the stated mission objectives of Al Qaeda.

Its precursor, Markaz Da'awat-ul Irshad ('The Centre for Preaching and Guidance'), which has its social and doctrinal roots in the Ahl-e-Hadith school of thought, was set up at Muridke near Lahore in 1986 by two Pakistani university professors, Hafiz Muhammad Saeed and Zafar Iqbal, and with its vicious militant campaign in Indian-controlled Kashmir took the *jihadi* scene by storm, particularly in the 1990s. The Markaz Da'awat-ul Irshad complex, where Jamaat-ud-Dawah is headquartered, is spread over several blocs meant for religious education. Jamaat-ud-Dawah also runs several hundred schools in the Punjab and some parts of Sindh province.

Following the government ban on six militant organizations in January 2002, including Lashkar-e-Taiba, Markaz Da'awat-ul Irshad renamed itself Jamaat-ud-Dawah; the main players remained the same. That is why Jamaat-ud-Dawah and Lashkar-e-Taiba are considered as two sides of the same coin.[45]

Jamaat-ud-Dawah, through various local organizations in Europe and the Americas, has an extensive network, and uses its *jihadist* appeal, as well as reverence for the cause of Al Qaeda, to mobilize funds. Its co-operation with different *jihadi* networks in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Kashmir also lends it a transnational character. Although based in central Pakistan, it is very well connected with Afghan militant outfits such as the Haqqani network that operates in areas between Pakistani Waziristan and eastern Afghanistan.

Pakistani security officials view this nexus with ever-increasing concern. 'While they may listen to us and refrain from violence in Kashmir, their growing relationship with Arab, Afghan, and other groups has become a formidable challenge', a senior ISI official told me.[46] This amounted to an expression of helplessness vis-à-vis an organization that had been considered a handy pawn in Pakistan's Kashmir policy, but now, because of its contacts with transnational groups, seems to have grown out of control.[47]

44 The primary source for this section is Imtiaz Gul, *The Unholy Nexus: Pakistan–Afghan Relations under the Taliban*, Vanguard, Lahore, 2002, p. 128; and Imtiaz Gul, *The Most Dangerous Place*, Penguin, London, 2010.

45 The organization's headquarters in Muridke, a small town about 30 km away from Lahore, is a sprawling complex spread over 160 acres with a residential colony, two model schools – one each for girls and boys – and a university, Al-Dawat-al-Irshad. The students attending the university also learn horse-riding. Hundreds of them graduate every year, and hundreds more are swelling their ranks, essentially those driven by the Lashkar-e-Taiba's ideology of 'leaving and living for God'.

46 Author's meeting with anonymous official in Islamabad, August 2010.

47 Particularly since the late 1990s, Jamaat-ud-Dawah (and formerly Lashkar-e-Taiba) has been a major irritant in India's relations with Pakistan. India dubs the Wahabi outfit as the 'Pakistan army's first line of defence', which it says has carried out terrorist attacks not only in Kashmir but elsewhere in India. As far back as 1998, Lashkar-e-Taiba had launched and eventually executed the concept of *fedayeen* (suicide squad) attacks. Several such strikes, including one on the Indian Parliament in December 2001 and the almost simultaneous multiple bloody acts of violence in Mumbai on 26 November 2008, bore the hallmarks of such *fedayeen* attacks. In fact, the November 2008 strikes, including those on the Taj and Oberoi Trident hotels in Mumbai – eleven in all – once again shook the entire region. The three-day carnage was allegedly the work of several attackers who had travelled from the port city of Karachi in

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Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)

Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, or the Pakistan Taliban Movement, emerged as a powerful new entity in 2007 in the context of a series of military operations – US-led missile strikes on the one hand and an incursion by the Pakistan army into the Mehsud area of south Waziristan on the other. Until then, most of its component groups were loosely organized, with ties to the Afghan Taliban. Its leader, Baitullah Mehsud, was killed in a US drone strike on 5 August 2009, and Hakimullah Mehsud became his successor later that month. Initially, a forty-member central *Shura* (assembly), comprising representatives from all seven FATA Agencies – that is, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, with considerable autonomy, in north-west Pakistan – guided the organization. Its leaders met regularly until the death of Baitullah Mehsud, but a spike in US drone attacks, as well as the Pakistani military operation in south Waziristan, disrupted the organizational command structure, forcing them to disperse in various directions for shelter.

Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan employs modern, more lethal techniques, and operates in most of Pakistan's lawless tribal areas bordering Afghanistan with the help of a number of Taliban groups, most of them wedded to anti-Americanism and determined to enforce Sharia. Its creation marked a new and more threatening development, resulting from a realization among most local and foreign militants that they needed a central command figure who could transcend tribal differences. In Baitullah Mehsud, followed by Hakimullah Mehsud, they found a unifying force. Inspired by Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda, most militant groups in the tribal regions share a common ideology and are opposed to the international coalition against terrorism. Driving foreign forces out of Afghanistan, and enforcing Sharia wherever possible, is their shared goal. They also want Pakistan to end its co-operation with the US and NATO forces based in Afghanistan, and demand that Sharia must replace the existing legal system, which these militants condemn as 'corrupt and repressive'.[48]

Pakistan. These acts of terror provided Indian officials and the media with another opportunity to point a finger at the ISI. The electronic media in India whipped up a frenzy that aroused fears of yet another war between the two now nuclear-armed nations. On 10 December 2008, India formally requested the United Nations Security Council to designate Jamaat-ud-Dawah as a terrorist organization. The following day, the Security Council imposed sanctions on Jamaat-ud-Dawah, declaring it a global terrorist group. Hafiz Muhammad Saeed, the chief of Jamaat-ud-Dawah, announced that his group would challenge the sanctions imposed on it in all forums. Pakistan's government also banned Jamaat-ud-Dawah on the same day and issued an order to seal the Jamaat-ud-Dawah offices in all four provinces, as well as in Pakistan-controlled Kashmir. The United States likewise designated Jamaat-ud-Dawah as a foreign terrorist group posing a threat to its security. In January 2009, the Jamaat-ud-Dawah spokesperson, Abdullah Muntazir, stressed that the group did not have global *jihadist* aspirations and would welcome a peaceful resolution of the Kashmir issue. He also publicly disowned the Lashkar-e-Taiba commanders Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi and Zarrar Shah, who have both been accused of being the masterminds behind the November 2008 Mumbai attacks.

48 Proof of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan's involvement in Afghanistan – and of the close association between the Afghan Taliban and Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan – came in early June 2008, when eighteen militants belonging to Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan fell to air strikes by Coalition forces on militant positions in

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Benjamin notes the links between Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan and Al Qaida:

> The TTP and al-Qaida have a symbiotic relationship. TTP draws ideological guidance from al-Qaida while al-Qaida relies on the TTP for safe haven in the Pashtun areas along the Afghan-Pakistani border. This mutual cooperation gives TTP access to both al-Qaida's global terrorist network and the operational experience of its members. Given the proximity of the two groups and the nature of their relationship, TTP is a force multiplier for al-Qaida.[49]

The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan caught the US lawmakers' attention after the failed Times Square bomber Faisal Shahzad pleaded guilty of contacts with it.[50] Shahzad's confessions confirmed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan's transnational character. This simply reinforced earlier analysis that the organization had become part of a network that transcends Waziristan and Afghanistan, and had begun colluding with Al Qaeda, the Afghan Haqqani Network (Waziristan and eastern Afghanistan), and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), as well as Pakistani auxiliaries of Al Qaeda – Lashkar-e-Taiba and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi.

Hizb ut-Tahrir (Party of Liberation)

From a South Asian perspective, Hizb ut-Tahrir spread outwards from the Western cosmopolitan city of London and later descended into the Pakistan–Afghanistan region. Its origin can be traced back to a Palestinian Islamic movement in 1953.

Afghanistan's Helmand province. All eighteen were from Makeen village in the Waziristan Agency. Ruthless attacks on Pakistani military and government targets offer ample evidence that, while publicly Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan wants to counter US hegemony, it also wants to keep Pakistani forces on tenterhooks. It has furthermore joined hands with Al Qaeda to stage devastating suicide bombings since mid-2007 – killing government, military and intelligence officials, and women and children across the board – which has turned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan into a major source of instability, besides the anti-Shia radical Lashkare Jhangvi. Pakistan's security establishment treats Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan as its public enemy no. 1 for its string of vicious attacks all over Pakistan. The United States also formally designated it as a foreign terrorist organization. Daniel Benjamin, the Ambassador-at-Large for Counterterrorism, formally announced this at a press briefing, thereby making Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan the latest addition to a list of forty-seven such organizations banned under Executive Order 13224. See Daniel Benjamin, Coordinator for Counterterrorism/Ambassador-at-Large, *Briefing on U.S. Government's Continued Efforts to Disrupt and Dismantle Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan*, Washington, DC, 1 September 2010, available at: http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/rm/2010/146597.htm (last visited 3 January 2011).

49 *Ibid.* Benjamin also described the duo of Hakimullah Mehsud and Waliur Rehman – the two top leaders of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan – as 'dedicated terrorists who are attempting to extend their bloody reach into the American homeland'.

50 About a week after the deadly 30 December suicide attack on the CIA's Forward Operating Base Chapman in eastern Afghanistan, a video showed Hakimullah Mehsud sitting to the left of Khalil Abu-Mulal al-Balawi, the Jordanian doctor who ended up killing seven CIA officials, including the base chief, a mother of three young children, five men, and young woman. The emergence of the video instantly turned Hakimullah Mehsud into the CIA's prime target – if he was not already – because his group had apparently first hosted al-Balawi and then facilitated his onward journey into Afghanistan to hook up with the CIA.

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Founded in East Jerusalem by Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, an Islamic scholar and appeals court judge from Palestine, the organization reportedly operates in about forty countries from Africa to Asia, Europe, and Russia. Although officially non-violent, its ideas are very radical, particularly since it advocated the immediate re-establishment of the Caliphate.[51]

Hizb ut-Tahrir is active today in western Europe and the United States, but is banned in most Muslim countries. It believes that the Islamic *umma* (Muslim world) is a single unit of its operations and rejects nationalism. Hizb ut-Tahrir envisages a three-stage plan of action: 1) cultivation of individuals; 2) interaction with the *umma*; and 3) establishment of an Islamic state and implementation of Islamic laws generally. Within the broader context of transnational Islamic mobilization, it falls, rather ambiguously, into the category of the neo-fundamentalist camp as opposed to the Islamist camp. It does not favour the idea of seizing the state and then forcing society to accept Islam, preferring instead to persuade society to accept its ideas, which, it is assumed, would then lead inevitably to a change in regime.[52]

Since October 2001, Hizb ut-Tahrir has quickly established its network in Pakistan, which it now uses to send out daily SMS messages, emails, and fax statements to newspapers, columnists, writers, and TV journalists, urging them to 'correct their path, shun the US friendship and follow the Quran'. It uses occasions such as the Muslim traditional festivals of Ramadan, Eid ul-Fitr, or 9/11 anniversaries to spread a narrative identical to that of other Islamist networks such as Al Qaeda and the Muslim Brotherhood.

In countries where the party is outlawed, Hizb ut-Tahrir's organization is said to be strongly centralized, with its central leadership based in Palestine. Below that level are national organizations or *wilayas*, usually headed by a group of twelve, that control networks of local committees and cells. It continues to operate in the UK, albeit with a heated ongoing debate as to whether it should be banned for its radical views.[53]

There are hardly any obvious Hizb ut-Tahrir offices in Pakistan and Afghanistan because the US, too, has designated it as a foreign terrorist organization. Nevertheless, through its electronic messaging it seems omnipresent in Pakistan. What makes Hizb ut-Tahrir a very formidable challenge is its radical outlook and the narrative that it shares with transnational organizations. It may be non-violent, but its statements easily feed into the frustrations of common and ignorant Pakistanis.

51 Mariam Abou Zahab and Olivier Roy, *Islamist Networks: The Afghan–Pakistan Connection*, Hurst & Co, London, 2004, p. 9.

52 Emmanuel Karagiannis, 'Political Islam in Uzbekistan: Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami', in *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 58, No. 2, 2006, p. 266.

53 Following the 7 July 2005 London bombings, for instance, the British government announced its intention to ban the organization but gave up the idea. According to *The Independent*, Tony Blair put the ban on hold 'after warnings from police, intelligence chiefs and civil liberties groups' that it is a non-violent group, and that driving it underground could backfire. See Nigel Morris, 'PM forced to shelve Islamist group ban', in *The Independent*, 18 July 2006.

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Although limited in its impact in Pakistan and Afghanistan, Hizb ut-Tahrir has advanced into Central Asia as well. It became active in Uzbekistan in the mid-1990s, where its first cells are believed to have been established by the Jordanian missionaries who came to preach Islam in Central Asia: 'By the late 1990s Uzbekistan had become the hub of Hizb ut-Tahrir's activities in Central Asia and Islam has deeper roots there than, for example, in neighboring Kazakhstan'.[54]

Role of charities/auxiliary transnational networks

The anti-Soviet Union *jihad* not only introduced militant Islam to South and South-west Asia but also heralded a new era in the region. Scores of NGOs began pouring in with the stated objective of helping Afghan refugees and treating wounded *mujahideen*. Arab Islamist networks also encouraged and/or helped local supporters and sympathizers in setting up their own charities, which went on to serve as financial conduits first for the Muslim Brotherhood and then for Al Qaeda.

The way in which these organizations came into being and became crucial facilitators for Al Qaeda leaves little doubt that, without them, Osama bin Laden and his group would not have been able to proliferate in Afghanistan and Pakistan. By implication they can also be called auxiliary transnational networks, including similar Pakistani charitable organizations with close links to the Muslim Brotherhood, Al Qaeda, and the Afghan Taliban.

The roots of the contemporary radicalization and support for terrorism can be traced back two decades to the organizational lessons of the Soviet–Afghan war. At the time, a number of sympathetic NGOs provided various kinds of assistance that proved to be invaluable in the long-term struggle. By clothing their militant activity in charitable ideals, radical militants discovered that they were able to maintain their level of efficiency while working with very few restrictions at an international level.[55]

Signboards of those organizations could be seen all over Peshawar, which most of them used as a regional hub, and were hard to overlook when travelling to the Pakistan–Afghan border town of Torkham. Arab and Arab-European charities mostly had their offices in residential areas such as Tehkal Bala, University Town, or Hayatabad – all of them located along the Peshawar–Torkham road. The US Congressional 9/11 Commission report also concluded that 'entire charities' under the control of 'Al-Qaida operatives … may have wittingly participated in funneling

54 E. Karagiannis, above note 52, p. 264.

55 Kohlmann provides an excellent overview of how charities grew in the shadow of the Afghan *jihad* and became critical links for funnelling funds to *jihadist* networks in the region. Evan F. Kohlmann, *The role of Islamic charities in international terrorist recruitment and financing*, Working Paper No. 2006/7, Danish Institute for International Studies, available at: http://www.wepapers.com/Papers/109824/The_Role_of_Islamic_Charities_in_International_Terrorist_Recruitment_and_Financing (last visited 9 March 2011).

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money to Al-Qaida'.[56] They played a critical role in the Arab–Afghan terrorist infrastructure by laundering money originating from bank accounts belonging to bin Laden and his sympathetic patrons in the Arabian Gulf, providing employment and travel documents to Al Qaeda personnel worldwide, and helping 'to move funds to areas where al Qaeda was carrying out operations'.[57]

In Europe and North America, Muslim NGOs came to serve an additional role in indoctrinating new generations of international *jihadists*. According to a 1996 French intelligence memorandum, 'these charities – screens for Islamic groups like … the Egyptian Al-Gama'at al-Islamiyya – permitted a very large recruitment among young volunteers; under the notion of *jihad*, they provided "humanitarian" support for the indoctrination of the youth [and it worked] so well that numerous French converts to Islam joined the ranks of Islamic extremists'.[58]

The first known Arab–Afghan *jihad* cell on US soil led by native American operatives was partly financed by the Sudanese charity Third World Relief Agency.[59] However, much of the funding responsible for underwriting international Muslim charities has originated from the Arabian Peninsula and, in particular, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. A well-informed Saudi figure boasted to the *Washington Post*,

> No one can control the flow of money from Saudi Arabia … It is not one person – it is a thousand. We are here. Money comes to us from inside Saudi Arabia. We have private talks with businessmen. Sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly. But it comes.[60]

56 See National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States (The 9/11 Commission), *The 9/11 Commission Report*, 22 July 2004, p. 170, available at: http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/911/report/index.htm (last visited 9 March 2011). According to a US Justice Department brief on the subject, Al-Fadl 'understood from conversations with Bin Laden and others in al Qaeda that the charities would receive funds that could be withdrawn in cash and a portion of the money used for legitimate relief purposes and another portion diverted for al Qaeda operations. The money for al Qaeda operations would nevertheless be listed in the charities' books as expenses for building mosques or schools or feeding the poor or the needy'. United States District Court Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division, *United States of America* v. *Enaam M. Arnaout*, Government's Evidentiary Proffer Supporting the Admissibility of Co-Conspirator Statements, Case No. 02 CR 892, 31 January 2003 p. 25. Standing orders were left by bin Laden to keep all transactions involving the charitable groups in cash only; by this method, these NGOs were manipulated as a secret laundry to make Al Qaeda's financial network virtually invisible. The charities would then create false documentation for the benefit of unwary donors, purportedly showing that the money had actually been spent on orphans or starving refugees. According to some former employees of these organizations, more than 50% of their total funding was secretly diverted directly to Al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden. *9/11 Commission Report*, p. 171.

57 *United States of America* v. *Enaam M. Arnaout*, above note 56, pp. 28–29.

58 'La formation des volontaires pour le djihad en camps d'entrainement', confidential memorandum issued by UCLAT (French Central Anti-Terrorism Unit), 27 December 1996.

59 January 1996 CIA report on 'International Islamic NGOs and links to terrorism', p. 13. See also United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division, *United States of America* v. *Soliman S. Biheiri*, Affidavit by Senior Special Agent David Kane (Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Department of Homeland Security), Case No. 03-365-A, 14 August 2003, p. 2.

60 Steve Coll and Steve LeVine, 'Global network provides money, haven', in *Washington Post*, 3 August 1993, p. A1.

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A staff report of 23 January 2002 in the *Los Angeles Times* also provided good insight into how Al Qaeda used different channels for its financial transactions to Afghanistan and elsewhere for its activities of advocacy, training and execution of threats against US and western interests. The paper said in its investigative report:

> Until Sept. 11 Osama bin Laden's terrorists in Afghanistan used the Persian Gulf crossroads of the United Arab Emirates as their lifeline to the outside world. Poor oversight in the loose federation of seven tiny sheikdoms allowed Bin Laden's Al- Qaeda network and Taliban agents to set up clandestine arms-trading and money-laundering operations, according to accounts from American, United Nations, Afghan and U.A.E. sources.[61]

Largely based on the findings of the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the report even spoke of a nexus between Russian, African, and Afghan businessmen, financiers, and philanthropists for the financial transactions to Afghanistan.

Terrorists used a Somali warlord's money exchange, an Islamic bank once headed by the Emirates' finance minister, and currency houses that touted their ability to wire $1 million abroad overnight. The US investigation into the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon exposed trails leading back to the UAE; those attacks finally prompted UAE officials to crack down on Al Qaeda and its front ventures. Some NGOs are suspected of having served as conduits for the Arab money meant for Al Qaeda and the Taliban. Most of these NGOs were run by Kuwaiti, Saudi, and Jordanian nationals, many of them settled in Peshawar. Among them was a former Osama bin Laden associate, Abdullah Ezam, a Jordanian who was killed in a bomb blast in November 1989.

When the Coalition began bombing the Taliban and Al Qaeda network in October 2001, Pakistani politico-religious organizations took to the streets to express solidarity with their friends in Afghanistan, and almost all Arab NGO workers were asked to move to Islamabad for security reasons. Many were even requested by the authorities to leave the country. By January 2002, however, the majority of these people had returned to their bases in Peshawar and resumed their activities, keeping a low profile. Interestingly, the Pakistani and American authorities had until then failed to establish any linkage between these organizations and the Al Qaeda network.

Finally, money changers in Peshawar's bustling Qissa Khani bazaar also played an important role in the financial transactions from Pakistan and the Middle East to Afghanistan, using the traditional *hundi* (or *hawala*) system – a system in which verbal instructions and mutual trust are the key.

As of 2010, most of these organizations had apparently vanished, and most of their top management had either left Pakistan or were keeping a very low profile

61 Judy Pasternak and Stephen Braun, 'Emirates looked other way while al Qaeda funds flowed', in *Los Angeles Times*, 20 January 2002.

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and were practically in hiding with locals who were either supportive of or sympathetic to them.

Pakistan-based charities[62]

After the war on terrorism began unfolding in October 2001, the Al-Rashid Trust, Umma Tameer-e-Nau (UTN), and Lashkar-e-Taiba became special targets, not just because of their anti-America, anti-India, and pro-Taliban missions but also because of their frequent contacts with the Taliban embassy in Islamabad. Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef, the Taliban ambassador, and his deputies courted scores of such volunteers, including those from the Islamic Relief organization and Dr Bashir-ud-Din Mahmood, a leading Pakistani nuclear scientist, of Umma Tameer-i-Nau.

In all, by 20 December 2001, the US government had designated 158 individuals and organizations as terrorist, including those mentioned above. As for assets frozen under UN Security Council Resolution 1373 of September 2001, Francis Taylor, the then US State Department's Coordinator for Counterterrorism, told a symposium held by the Executives' Club, Chicago, on 14 March 2002 that approximately $34 million in terrorist assets had been frozen in the United States, while another $70 million had been frozen elsewhere in the world.

The Al-Rashid Trust

The Al-Rashid Trust was the first Pakistan-based NGO to be involved in relief work outside the country. Though established in February 1996 by Rasheed Ahmed, the Mufti-e-Azam (Grand Mufti, a Muslim religious scholar who holds the authority to issue decrees on socio-political and economic issues concerning Muslim society), its main intervention was seen when it started setting up bakeries in Afghanistan after the World Food Programme (WFP) decided to halt its own bakeries operation in June 2001 – the UN body had been feeding a large number of destitute people and widows in Kabul and other major towns. WFP had taken this step in response to the Taliban regime's refusal to allow the hiring of female surveyors to check who was receiving the highly subsidized bread on old ration cards. The United Nations had already tried in July 2000 to recruit some 600 female surveyors for that purpose, but the Taliban Ministry for Planning had thereupon flatly banned the employment of women by the United Nations or its affiliates.[63]

By the end of June 2001 the WFP had resumed its bakery programme to provide low-cost bread, but the standoff with the Taliban had meanwhile given the Al-Rashid Trust an opportunity to expand its influence across Afghanistan. Since

62 Most of this information comes from Gul, *Unholy Nexus*, above note 44, chapter on 'Financial conduits for al Qaeda'.

63 *Ibid.*

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1996, a Trust official said, the organization had been carrying out relief operations in Afghanistan, Kashmir (both Indian- and Pakistani-held parts of the valley), Chechnya, and Palestine. The humanitarian operations were conducted with individual contributions from Muslims all over the world, mostly from Arab countries.[64]

In fact, the Trust set up a central office in the Wazir Akbar Khan neighbourhood of Kabul, where Taliban officials and religious clerics would converge to discuss strategies for food distribution and relief operations. The 'Central Office of the Committee of the Ulema [Scholars] of Afghanistan' had, the Trust official said, become a symbol of the assistance that was flowing into a Taliban-controlled Afghanistan from Pakistan and the Middle East. On various visits to Kabul, I spotted young Arabs and Africans popping in and out of this office, arriving either riding bicycles or driving the pick-up trucks that had become the most commonly used vehicle for combat operations since the war against the Soviet-forces began in the early 1980s.

Besides the bakeries, the Trust established fifteen medical clinics and dug thirty-eight wells in Jalalabad, Kandahar, and Kabul. The magazine *Arshad* said that they had been helping Afghans regardless of their religion or ethnic affiliation and that 'We have been assisting about 35,000 widows of men affiliated with the Northern Alliance. Taliban consider them their enemies but we do not'. This magazine had been launched a year before the establishment of the Trust, followed by a daily *Islam*. Both publications were obviously pro-Taliban, appreciative of Bin Laden and his outfit, and anti-American and anti-Jewish. They carried articles by people such as Maulana Masood Azhar, leader of the now-banned Pakistan-based militant outfit Jaish-e-Mohammed.

In 2000, for instance, the Trust sent 750,000 dollars in cash to Chechnya alone, alleging that aid sent to Chechnya through the United Nations (described as the enemy) never reached Chechen Muslims. The funds were handed over to the head of an unidentified religious party of Chechnya, headed by Sheikh Omer bin Ismail Daud and Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev, the former Chechen president.[65]

Following a major ban on several militant organizations and their affiliates in Pakistan in 2002, the Al-Rashid Trust's activities came to a halt for a while, but it resumed its work as well as the publication of newspapers after a year or so, under the name Al-Ameen Trust.

Conclusion

If the comprehensive *9/11 Commission Final Report* and papers such as the one by Kohlmann of the Danish Institute for International Studies, or continued activities of Islamic outfits mentioned in the preceding section – charities and auxiliary transnational networks – are any indication, one can presume that the seeds sown

64 *Ibid.*
65 *Ibid.*

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along with the US-led *jihad* against the Soviet Union germinated, and that the war against terrorism in 2001 inspired and reinforced, a global Islamist network extending from Asia to Africa, Europe, and the Americas.

As the 1996 CIA report put it, despite

> the intense public focus on the role of Islamic charitable groups in financing and recruiting for terrorism following 9/11, those same organizations nonetheless clearly continue to be manipulated by Osama Bin Laden and his global extremist allies. Given the underlying complex web of financial and personal relationships, such agile front groups are notoriously difficult to clean out or shut down. It is a challenge that has largely defied past efforts aimed at addressing it, including the much-lauded 'central collecting agencies' supposedly established by Saudi Arabia and its Gulf neighbors.[66]

Notwithstanding the CIA's many containment initiatives against these charitable organizations, no systematic approach could be evolved and the focus was placed instead on the arrest of the individual members for terrorism or other illegal acts.

Islamist networks feed off views such as those expressed by Tony Blair with regard to his unquestioning support for the State of Israel and those of the US-led NATO policies on Iraq or Afghanistan, thereby justifying the methods that they apply (suicide bombings or other means of violence). The ideology underlying their mission statements and the operations of Islamist charities (the auxiliary transnational networks) are also inherently intertwined with the world view of leading transnational Islamist networks. They essentially live off one another and, if outlawed, would always find ways to re-emerge under different identities. Politically, this combination of transnational political networks and charities has also largely upstaged traditional Islam in South Asia, for, while these outfits clearly represent a minority view within Pakistani, Indian, or Afghan society, they do instil fear in the hearts and minds of the majority Sunni as well as the Shia populations in these countries, with potentially dire consequences for those who are perceived as being on the 'other side of the divide'. Particularly in the case of Afghanistan, where the state somewhat lacks cohesion, the scope for these groups to indulge in all kinds of illegal activities that ensure the continuity of their operations is far greater and much less closely monitored. Most recently, a very similar trend was observed in Pakistan's FATA and Swat areas, but the Pakistani Army later wrested control away from the religious extremists trying to establish an Islamic Emirate of Waziristan.

While the situation warrants comprehensive monitoring and stringent finance-tracking mechanisms to minimize, if not prevent altogether, the exploitation of non-profit NGOs by radical Islamist and terrorist groups, these mechanisms must also be accompanied by bureaucratic oversight of religious

66 CIA Report on 'International Islamic NGOs and links to terrorism', January 1996, p. 4. See also United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division, above note 59, p. 2.

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networks disguised as NGOs. But that oversight must be thoughtful, non-provocative, and as non-intrusive as possible to avoid arousing resentment among the community with which the target NGO is associated.

This alone, however, will not be enough to deal with the ability of the transnational networks to proliferate within societies and prey on them with their ideology, or to resurrect their auxiliaries under new identities in one way or another. A major counter-measure must be to create and promote understanding of the dominant majority of Muslims, who are by and large non-violent and firm believers in Islam's fundamental messages of peaceful co-existence. The need to engage Muslims and thus prevent them from falling victim to the narrative of Al Qaeda and its auxiliaries therefore requires a concerted and collective effort by lead nations. Only engagement and a dispassionate discourse on sensitive issues that relate to, and affect, the lives of the large majority of Muslims can help in countering the religiously wrapped political appeal of transnational networks.

If the United States and other NATO countries, particularly in central Europe, keep pressing for enforcement through ever more stringent administrative measures, they will continue to lag behind in the struggle to shut down these potentially lucrative avenues of international terrorist recruitment and financing. Moreover – and this is a much graver challenge facing us all – Western countries will find it increasingly difficult to stop, or even contain, disgruntled Muslims, especially second- and third-generation youth, from walking into the trap that the transnational Islamist networks have laid by exploiting the extremely emotive issue of Palestine as well as internal socio-economic imbalances facing the Muslim community. In this regard, the British government's IMIB (I am Muslim, I am British) initiative could be cited as a good example in which the government proactively engaged the Muslim community and focused in particular on British Muslim young people. Contrary to the open society that Britain has ensured, the French ban on the veil or the Swiss prohibition on the construction of minarets for mosques will certainly not help, and may well further radicalize Muslim youth who see these actions as the government's infringement on the Muslim way of life. Among Muslims the world over, the United States is largely seen as the initiator of the most recent social and political trends against them, from body-checks to singling out Muslim passport-holders for more detailed security checks that many Muslims find humiliating. Governments and states could demonstrate more inclusion, and not exclusion, of the Muslim population. Engagement with Muslim communities would help. Ostracizing them will not.

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