



VIVEKANANDA INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION

— A COMPENDIUM OF —

TERRORIST GROUPS



SURINDER SHARMA
SOUMYA AWASTHI

The last three decades has seen the South and West Asian regions turning into a hot bed of terror activities. Spreading from these regions, and alongside by many other isolated areas across the globe, terrorism today has become the biggest threat to world peace and security.

The contemporary brand of terrorism sprouts from the base human instincts of political, ethnic and religious ideals gone corrupt. It is characterised by mindless violence and barbarity carried out by suave, clever but diabolically indoctrinated fanatic groups who believe that it is their transcendent 'duty' to upturn, through unprovoked bloodletting, the human society according to their horribly dehumanised notions. Terrorism has thus emerged as the most fearsome disease to attack the common peoples' aspirations for peace and progress. To make matters worse, certain state entities have joined in using terror as another tool of their despicable political demands and have helped in spreading the disease.

Civilized world today is at its wits end to stamp out the disease of terrorism. To achieve that goal, it is necessary to study this poisonous phenomenon from its inception and consider the features of indoctrination that converts a human into a Satan. Following up, it is also necessary to monitor the various methods to adopted to terrorise the hapless targets of their violence. With the terror groups ever morphing into new collaborations, structures and appearances, the study assumes more salience for counter-terrorism measures to succeed.

This Compendium of Terror Groups is a continuation of the VIF's regular efforts to record and evaluate the terror phenomena. The Compendium is aimed at providing an updated starting point for the observers of terrorism to proceed to deeper research. VIF is sanguine that this effort would be found useful in understanding terrorism and its eventual defeat.



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CONTENTS

PREFACE	VI
ACRONYMS	X
GROUP NAMES AND AREAS OF ACTIVITY	XV
TERROR ORGANISATIONS	
1. AL BADR	3
2. AL BARQ	9
3. JABHAT AL-NUSRA	13
4. LASHKAR-E-JHANGVI	20
5. AL-SHABAAB	31
6. AL UMAR MUJAHIDEEN	39
7. ANSAR AL- SHARIYA LIBYA	45
8. ANSAR AL-SHARIYA TUNISIA	51
9. AL QAEDA IN ARABIAN PENINSULA	57
10. DUKHTARAN-E-MILLAT	65

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

11. THE HAMAS	71
12. HIZB-UL-MUJAHIDEEN	84
13. HIZB-UT-TAHRIR	95
14. INDIAN MUJAHIDEEN	106
15. ISLAMIC STATE IN IRAQ AND LEVANT	113
16. JAMIAT-UL-MUJAHIDEEN	120
17. JAMMU KASHMIR LIBERATION FRONT	126
18. LASHKAR-E-JABBAR	136
19. TEHREEK-UL-MUJAHIDEEN	141
20. TEHRIK-I-TALIBAN PAKISTAN	147
21. THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD	158
22. THE POPULAR FRONT OF INDIA	171
23. BOKO HARAM	190
24. EGYPTIAN ISLAMIC JIHAD	199
25. HARKAT-UL-JIHAD-AL-ISLAMI	205
26. HARKAT-UL-MUJAHIDEEN AL-ALAMI	217
27. THE HOUTHY MOVEMENT	222
28. THE ISLAMIC FRONT	229
29. JAISH-E-MOHAMMED	235
30. LASHKAR-E-TAIBA	244
31. AL-QAEDA IN IRAQ	254
32. AL-QAEDA IN ISLAMIC MAGHREB	261
33. UNITED JIHAD COUNCIL	268
34. AL-QAEDA IN INDIAN SUBCONTINENT	277

35. BALOCH LIBERATION ARMY	288
36. EAST TURKISTAN ISLAMIC MOVEMENT	297
37. HEZBOLLAH	302
38. JEMMAH ISLAMIIYAH	310
39. JAMAAT-UL-MUJAHIDEEN BANGLADESH	318
40. JUNDULLAH	329
41. TEHREEK-E-LABBAIK PAKISTAN	336
42. SIPAH-E-MOHAMMED PAKISTAN	344
43. SIPAH-E-SAHABA PAKISTAN	350
44. SUNNI TEHREEK	360
45. TABLIGHI JAMAAT MOVEMENT	367
46. THE TALIBAN	376
47. HAQQANI NETWORK	384
48. ISLAMIC STATE OF KHORASAN PROVINCE	395
CONCLUSION	410
TERRORISM DATABASES AND DATA SETS: INVENTORY	421

PREFACE

South Asia has been a hotbed of terror, especially for the last three decades, with the active participation of state entities, both in terms of formation of and sustenance of terror outfits as instruments of their foreign and security policies. What began as a strategy to defeat the erstwhile Soviet Union in the Afghan theatre has become a leitmotif of national security policies for many states in the region to weaken their perceived or real adversaries. In the post-Cold War period, after the fall of Berlin Wall and the dismantling of the Soviet Union, there was a hope that this phenomenon would gradually wither away after the success of the Mujahideen in Afghanistan. However, the history of the last three decades in the region has dashed such hopes, with the phenomenon of terrorism striking deep roots and fanning out into other regions, imperiling the security of many states and threatening world peace. The region, i.e. South Asia in general and India in particular, has faced the brunt of terror, which has emerged as a nagging security concern and been found difficult to deal with in a comprehensive manner. State sponsorship of terror agencies has made this threat much more complicated to handle.

In this context, an earlier attempt was made in 2014 to provide an informative account of terror groups operating in the region. Given the

dynamic situation obtained in the region and the extended Global War on Terror in the Af-Pak theatre as well as in Iraq and Syria, the phenomenon of terror has become an abiding feature of regional politics and security at the local and regional level, necessitating a closer study and analysis of these groups. In view of the fact that these outfits also change their strategies, areas of operation, their shape of configuration, both through fission and fusion, and even ideological orientation, it is all the more necessary to keep track of the evolution of these groups and their offshoots to better understand their future trajectories and trends of terrorism in individual countries and in the region as a whole.

Indeed, some existing groups have split into new ones while there have also been cases of multiple groups coming together to form an alliance, which is more lethal and destructive. For example, Tehrik-Taliban Pakistan split up in 2014 with some sections setting up a new outfit called Jamaat-ul- Ahrar while in 2019, they came together again under the TTP's banner. Similarly, different franchisees of Al Qaeda appeared in the West Asia and in the North African region. Some new outfits have also appeared in the landscape, i.e., Allahr Dal and Ansar al Islam, Ansarul Bangla Team in Bangladesh; Ansar ut Tawhid wa al Jihad and The Resistance Front (TRF) in Kashmir; Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and its branches in different countries. In addition, Al Qaeda and ISIS have set up their South Asian regional variants like Al Qaeda in Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) and IS of Khorsan respectively. In Sri Lanka, a fresh new outfit called National Thowheed Jamaat (NTJ) carried out a series of attacks on the Easter Day on 20 April 2019. The links between NTJ cadres and Jihadi operatives in southern India was investigated by Indian agencies revealing the transnational connections among terrorist groups that pose a critical challenge to our national security.

Apart from structural changes, some outfits have either brought about their changes in their ideological orientations or outlook or tweaked them to suit their political aspirations. For example, Al Qaeda seemingly shed its sectarian outlook and emphasized on inter-sectarian solidarity to fight a

united battle against the West while the Afghan Taliban through their *Layhas* demonstrated their willingness to moderate their position on women education and employment and larger issues of human rights, even while emphasizing their Islamic credentials.

The extended region from the Mediterranean to the Bay of Bengal and beyond, terror outfits have shown their resilience in the face of greater resolve of the countries in the region to gear their security machineries to counter such menace. It is primarily because of the hobnobbing of sovereign states with terror groups, both local and transnational, in their attempt to forge them into their geopolitical or geostrategic agendas. This has led to escalation of conflicts in some areas like in the case of Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria. The involvement of regional actors in local conflicts has lent legitimacy to terror groups and in countries like Afghanistan, they threaten to overrun the state with their military might, greatly enabled and enhanced by neighbouring states looking for 'strategic depth' in other countries.

The present study seeks to update information about the terror outfits operating in South Asia and also widen the scope of the study to go beyond to cover important militant groups in other regions, besides providing students, researchers, experts and policy makers with credible information on acting terror groups to help them understand this complex transnational issue which has affected many countries.

The study focuses on a select group of terror outfits operating in their regions, known for their destructive potential and disruptive agenda having a significant impact on the regional security landscape. The framework adopted for the study is as follows:-

- History and genesis
- Objectives and agenda
- Organisational structure and leadership
- Cadre strength, recruitment and training

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

- Area of operation and influence
- Transnational linkages
- Finance and funding
- Present status

Each of these points is self-explanatory and will help readers to get a comprehensive understanding of terror groups to help them evolve policy measures to deal with threats emanating from them. All the information taken for this book are from open sources and have been checked for their reliability.

I thank Ms. Soumya Awasthi, who has been meticulous in the collection and collation of input information for the Compendium. I also thank Lt Gen Gautam Banerjee for the edit work and adding his personal experience as add value to the Compendium in a cogent and coherent manner.

Lastly, I thank Dr. Arvind Gupta, Director, Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF), New Delhi, for conceptualising the study and infecting me with the idea of updating the narrative on such an important theme. Without his insistence and encouragement, it would not have been possible to put it all together. The Institute (VIF) deserves credit for having evolved into a place for incubating such ideas, under Dr. Gupta's stewardship. I hope the book will be received well in the larger strategic community.

New Delhi
March 2022

Surinder Sharma
Vivekananda International Foundation

ACRONYMS

AAS	- Ansar al Sharia
AHAB	- Ahle Hadith Andolan Bangladesh
AIAI	- Al- Itihad al- Islami
AIG	- Armed Islamic Group
AMISOM	- African Union Mission in Somalia
APML	- All Pakistan Muslim League
AQAM	- Al Qaeda and Associated Movements
AQAP	- Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula
AQI	- Al Qaeda in Iraq
AQIM	- Al Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb
AQIS	- Al- Qaeda in the Islamic Subcontinent
ARCF	- Asif Reza Commando Force
ASB	- Ansar al- Sharia Brigade
ASD	- Ansar al- Sharia Derna
ASL	- Ansar al- Sharia Libya
AST	- Ansar al- Shariya Tunisia
AuM	- Al- Umar Mujahideen
BJP	- Bharatiya Janata Party

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

BLA	- Baloch Liberation Army
BRI	- Belt and Road Initiative
CAA	- Citizenship Amendment Act
CEC	- Central Executive Committee
CPEC	- China- Pakistan Economic Corridor
CRPF	- Central Reserve Police Forces
DCR	- Democratic Constitutional Rally
DeM	- Dukhtaran- e- Millat
DeT	- Dukhtareen- e- Toiba
EIJ	- Egyptian Islamic Jihad
ETIM	- East Turkistan Islamic Movement
ETIP	- East Turkistan Islamic Party
FATA	- Federally Administered Tribal Areas
FCRA	- Foreign Contribution Regulation Act
FSA	- Free Syrian Army
FSA	- Free Syrian Army
FTO	- Foreign Terrorist Organisation
GJF	- Global Jihad Fund
GSPC	- Group for Call and Combat
HM	- Hizb- ul- Mujahideen
HuJI	- Harkat- ul- Jihad- al- Islami
HuM	- Harkat- ul- Mujahideen
HuMA	- Harkat- ul- Mujahideen al- Alami
HuT	- Hizb ut Tahrir
IB	- Intelligence Bureau
ICG	- International Crisis Group
ICU	- Islamic Courts Union
IDF	- Israeli Defence Forces
IDP	- Internally Displaced People
IED	- Improvised Explosive Devices
IF	- Islamic Front
IRGC	- Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps

Acronyms

ISI	- Inter- Services Intelligence
ISI	- Islamic State of Iraq
ISIL	- Islamic State of Iraq & Levant
ISIS	- Islamic State of Iraq & Syria
ISKP	- Islamic State- Khorasan Province
ISWAP	- Islamic State's West African Province
IUML	- Indian Union Muslim League
JAA	- Jamiat Ansarul Afghaneen
JAN	- Jabhat al- Nusra
JeI	- Jamaat- e- Islami
JeM	- Jaish- e- Mohammed
JIH	- Jamaat- e- Islami Hind
JKART	- Jammu and Kashmir Affectees Relief Trust
JKLF	- Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front
JKNFL	- Jammu Kashmir National Liberation Front
JMB	- Jamaat- ul- Mujahideen Bangladesh
JuF	- Jamaat ul- Furqan
JUP	- Jamiat Ulema- e- Pakistan
KKF	- Kashmir Freedom Forum
KPK	- Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
KRF	- Kashmir Resistance Forum
KuI	- Khuddam- ul- Islam
LeJ	- Lashkar- e- Jhangvi
LeJ	- Lashkar- e- Jabbar
LeT	- Lashkar- e- Taiba
LoC	- Line of Control
MDI	- Markaz- e- Dawa- wal- Irshad
MQM	- Muttahida Qaumi Movement
MRN	- Muslim Relief Network
MSC	- Mujahideen Shura Council
MWL	- Muslim World League
MYC	- Milli Yekjehti Council

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

NAFA	- News and Media Alliance
NAM Non	- Alignment Movement
NDF	- National Development Front
NIA	- National Investigation Agency
NPR	- National Population Register
NRC	- National Register of Citizenship
PFI	- Popular Front of India
PLO	- Palestine Liberation Organisation
PNA	- Palestinian National Authority
PoK	- Pakistan Occupied Kashmir
PST	- Pakistan Sunni Tehreek
PSX	- Pakistan Stock Exchange
PTI	- Pakistan Tehrik- e- Insaaf
RIF	- Rehab India Foundation
RSS	- Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh
SDF	- Syrian Democratic Forces
SDPI	- Social Democratic Party of India
SFI	- Syrian Islamic Front
SGPC	- Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat
SIC	- Sunni Ittehad Council
SILF	- Syrian Islamic Liberation Front
SIMI	- Student Islamic Movement of India
SMC	- Supreme Military Command
SMP	- Sipah- e- Mohammed Pakistan
SSP	- Sipah- e- Sahaba Pakistan
ST	- Sunni Tehreek
STFG	- Somalian Transitional Federal Government
TCC	- Troop Contributing Countries
TJP	- Tehreek- e- Jafariya Pakistan
TLP	- Tehreek- e- Labbaik Pakistan
TLY	- Tehreek Labbaik Ya Rasool
TNEJ	- Tehriq- e- Nifaz- Fiqah- Jafari

Acronyms

TTP	- Tehrik- e- Taliban Pakistan
TuM	- Tehreek- ul- Mujahideen
UAPA	- Unlawful Activities Prevention Act
UBA	- United Baloch Army
UDF	- United Democratic Front
UJC	- United Jihad Council
ULFA	- United Liberation Front of Asom
VBIED	- Vehicle- Borne Improvised Explosive Devices
WAMY	- World Assembly of Muslim Youth
WTC	- World Trade Centre
XUAR	- Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region

GROUP NAMES AND AREAS OF ACTIVITY

Group Names	Area of Activity
1. Al Badr	J&K
2. Al Barq	J&K
3. Al Nusra	Iraq
4. Lashkar e Jhangvi	Pakistan
5. Al Shabab	Somalia
6. Al Umar Mujahideen	J&K
7. Ansar al Shariya Libya	Libya
8. Ansar al Shariya Tunisia	Tunisia
9. Al Qaeda in Arabian Peninsula	Yemen, Pakistan and Afghanistan
10. Dukhtaran-e-Millat	J&K
11. Hamas	Israel
12. Hizbul Mujahideen	J&K
13. Hizb ut Tahrir	Lebanon
14. Indian Mujahideen	J&K
15. Islamic State in Iraq and Levant	Iraq
16. Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen (Pakistan)	J&K

Group Names and Areas of Activity

17. Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front	J&K
18. Lashkar-e-Jabbar	Pakistan
19. Tehreek-ul-Mujahideen	Pakistan
20. Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan	Pakistan
21. The Muslim Brotherhood	Egypt
22. Popular Front of India	Parts of India
23. Boko Haram	Nigeria
24. Egyptian Islamic Jihad	Egypt
25. Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami	Pakistan
26. Harkat-ul- Mujahideen al-Alami	Pakistan
27. Houthi Movement	Yemen
28. Islamic Front	Syria
29. Jaish-e-Mohammed	Pakistan
30. Lashkar-e-Taiba	Pakistan
31. Al Qaeda in Iraq	Iraq
32. Al Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb	Algeria
33. United Jihad Council	Pakistan
34. Al Qaeda in Indian Subcontinent	India, Myanmar, Bangladesh
35. Baloch Liberation Army	Pakistan
36. East Turkistan Islamic Movement	Xinjiang, China
37. Hezbollah	Lebanon
38. Jemmah Islamiyah	Indonesia
39. Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh	Bangladesh
40. Jundullah	Pakistan
41. Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan	Pakistan
42. Sipah-e-Muhammed Pakistan	Pakistan
43. Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan	Pakistan
44. Sunni Tehreek	Pakistan
45. Tablighi Jamaat Movement	Parts of India
46. Taliban	Afghanistan
47. Haqqani Network	Pakistan
48. Islamic State Khorasan Province	Afghanistan

**TERROR
ORGANISATIONS**

1

AL BADR

Introduction

The Al-Badr is a pro-Pakistan Islamist terrorist organisation operating in Jammu and Kashmir. It is one of several militant offshoots of the Jamaat-e-Islami and has often worked in tandem with the notorious Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM).

Background

The roots of Al Badr can be traced back to 1971, when Pakistan-sponsored Islamist terrorists carried out their pogrom in erstwhile East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) against the Bengali-speaking population. Later, Al Badr operated as part of the Hizb-i-Islami, an Islamist terrorist group operating in Afghanistan under the leadership of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. Its introduction to Kashmir happened in 1990, when it waged a *jihād* ('Holy War') against India under the banner of the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen. or HM.¹ The HM itself was created as an armed wing of the Jamaat-e-Islami in 1990 under the influence of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence. (ISI) In 1998, however, Al Badr developed differences with the HM and split from it to form as an

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

independent separatist terrorist organisation.

With its creation, the group distanced itself from both the HM and the Jamaat, and operated as an independent actor. It continued to receive sponsorship from Pakistan's ISI for its violence in the Kashmir Valley, while marginalising indigenous separatist outfits as well.² As part of this agenda, it conducted strikes against the Indian military, government infrastructure and personnel.³ Notably, Al Badr also participated in the 1999 Kargil War on Pakistan's side against Indian forces. Reportedly, the group's 'Chief Commander', Bakht Zameen, was directing militant operations from his base in Skardu (in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir or PoK), wherein his cadres crossed over the Line of Control (LoC) to attack Indian posts.⁴

In the year 2000, it stepped up militancy in the Kashmir Valley and also introduced suicide attack tactics. Other than the Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Jaish-e-Mohammed, Al Badr is the only terrorist group to use such tactics in the Valley. Al Badr also began enforcing its fanatic interpretations of Islamic law in areas where it operated. This had negative social consequences, particularly for women. For instance, in a major terrorist attack in 2002, it targeted women killing three of them in the Jammu region. In 2003, in rural areas controlled by the group, it warned women of consequences for not adhering to Islamic laws (wearing veils, giving up education at age 14, and so on).⁵ In 2003, it also opposed the India-Pakistan ceasefire and stated that Pakistan should focus more on *jihad* against India rather than "wasting time seeking a negotiated settlement".⁶

While Al Badr remained a relatively minor group compared to larger ones like the HM, Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) or the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), it managed to conduct several terror attacks against both civilians and security forces, often in public places using grenades and explosives. However, it was significantly crippled in 2021, when security forces killed Abdul Ghani Khawaja, a major commander of the group.⁷

Ideology and Objectives

Al Badr is a fundamentalist Islamist extremist organisation that seeks to impose stringent Islamic laws across the State of Jammu and Kashmir. Its fundamentalist norms are imposed by force, with many women being killed for non-compliance with their stringent ideas.⁸ It supports the accession of the region to Pakistan and actively opposes Indian rule. It seeks to 'liberate' Kashmir through *jihad*, i.e., violent conflict, until its objectives are fulfilled.

Al Badr is strongly opposed to groups which promote pro-independence stances like the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) and also opposes peace negotiations between India, Pakistan and militants. Like other extremist Islamist groups, Al Badr also opposes countries like the USA, Israel, and Saudi Arabia.⁹

Modus Operandi

The group uses violent means to further its agenda, targeting government officials, security forces and even civilians. It uses rifles and grenades, supplied by Pakistan and other terrorist groups to cause havoc and disrupt the peace. Other than groups like the LeT and the JeM, the Al Badr is the only group to have inducted suicide (Fedayeen) attacks into its *modus operandi*. It spreads propaganda through its Urdu magazine 'Al Badr', set up in Pakistan in 1999.¹⁰

Sources of Funding

The ISI, along with the Jamaat-e-Islami, have been important patrons of the group over the years, though its relations with the Jamaat have often been strained. It publicly collects donations in Pakistan for its operations without much resistance from the authorities. For example, in 2012, it conducted a two-day public rally in Rawalpindi to collect donations.

However, it is believed that in recent years, the group has been suffering from a shortage of funds, resulting in it being forced to shut down several training camps.¹¹

Network

In its earlier days, Al Badr was a part of the Afghan *jihad* as a member of Hekmatyar's Hizb-i-Islami, and later was affiliated with the Jamaat, being a part of the Kashmir-based HM. In both cases, Pakistan's ISI was its primary patron, and that has continued even after Al Badr's break-away from the HM in 1998. It also continues to have ties with the Hizb-i-Islami and the Afghan Taliban. Al Badr recruits from the western Pakistani provinces of Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (formerly the North-West Frontier Province).¹²

Al Badr is a part of the United Jihad Council (UJC), an umbrella organisation of major Pakistan and Kashmir-based terrorist groups, waging a *jihad* against India in Kashmir.¹³ This has brought Al Badr closer to notorious Pakistani groups like the LeT and the JeM, whose tactics have clearly rubbed off, with these three being the only ones to adopt suicide attack tactics.

Areas of Operation

Al Badr primarily operates in the Kashmir Valley from its several bases in the PoK and recruitment centres in Pakistan. Its headquarters is reportedly located at Manshera in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.¹⁴ It is also known to have operated in North Kashmir, in the districts of Langate, Qaziabad, Handwara, Sopore, Zainageer, Tujjar and Barhampora, among others.¹⁵ Apart from these northern districts, it also has some presence in Srinagar, Anantnag, Baramulla, Kupwara and Budgam. In the Jammu region, it has a limited presence in Poonch and Rajouri.¹⁶

Leadership and Cadre

Bakht Zameen Khan is the chief commander of Al Badr, with Ahmed Hamza acting as his deputy. The chief organiser of recruitment is Rizwan Bhai. Shahbaz Afghani and Azhar Nasim are the other important leaders.¹⁷ Another important commander, killed recently, was Abdul Ghani Khawaja, who was responsible for recruitment and execution of terrorist operations.

Al Badr is said to have a cadre of 200 members, with a majority of them being foreign mercenaries.¹⁸

Current Status

Al Badr has been designated as a terrorist organisation by India. The US State Department has also designated it as an FTO (Foreign Terrorist Organisation).

The group is in a weak position today due to its waning influence and effective Indian counter-insurgency operations. Its small size and lack of sufficient funding has constrained its expansion. Further, recent Indian successes in eliminating Al Badr cadre and leadership have effectively crippled the group. Its lack of influence among Kashmiris is evident in the fact that a majority of recruits are foreign fighters, primarily Pashtuns from Afghanistan and Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

Conclusion

In the face of effective crackdown by Indian security forces, Al Badr's prospects are bleak. Foiled militant actions and personnel losses have weakened the group. It already lacks support from the largest Kashmiri militant group, the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, and has strained relations with the Jamaat-e-Islami. Further, the group's stringent imposition of Islamic law on the local population does it no favours. Its killing of local women and young girls for not conforming to radical Islamist norms has obviously reflected poorly on the group's legitimacy among Kashmiri people.

Al Badr's allies are few and its prospects for growth are limited. It seems that in the ISI's reckoning it has lost salience as a leading militant group. Thus, Al Badr's activities might taper-off in the near future unless it regains its utility with the ISI.

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2

AL BARQ

Introduction

Al Barq ('The Lightning') is an Islamist extremist terrorist organisation in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) which supports the region's accession to Pakistan. It was formed as an armed wing of a political party, the People's Conference (PC), and was founded by a prominent Kashmiri lawyer-turned-politician, Abdul Ghani Lone.

Background

Al Barq came into existence in 1990 under the patronage of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), its agenda being to promote anti-India separatism through over-ground political proxies and underground armed militancy. The intent was also to instigate the local Gujjar community settled in Baramulla and Kupwara districts.¹

Abdul Ghani Lone founded the PC in 1978. While initially favouring autonomy for Kashmir, following the 1987 assembly elections, was allegedly rigged in favour of Farooq Abdullah's National Conference, Lone and the PC adopted a more hardline pro-Pakistan stance. Lone's sons, Bilal and Sajjad

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

Lone, were closely associated with Yasin Malik, leader of the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), which was at that time the largest secessionist group in the Kashmir Valley, having been involved in a spate of high-profile terrorist acts for over half-a-decade. This association led to Sajjad Lone being incarcerated by the authorities for some time. Following his release, Sajjad temporarily retired from politics and separatism. In 2000, he married the daughter of Amanullah Khan, the founder of the JKLF and led its Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK) branch. Bilal Lone continues to be a member of the separatist All Parties' Hurriyat Conference (APHC).²

With the Lones' closely associated with armed militants and driven by the political situation towards Pakistan, Al Barq came into existence. Through the 1990s, Al Barq acted as the PC's armed wing. In 1991, emerging from the cadre of Al Barq, Hafiz Saeed along with his followers decided to break-off from the outfit to form their own terrorist organisation, which is today known as the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT). The roots of the infamous LeT, therefore, lie in Al Barq.

However, in 2000, Al Barq's leadership revolted against the PC. Al Barq's chief, Malik Bilal Rahi, announced that the group's ties with Abdul Ghani Lone, and effectively the PC, would be severed. Rahi accused Ghani Lone of pursuing a personal agenda at the cost of the Kashmir *jihad*. Given Lone's lukewarm pro-Pakistan sentiment, the more radical Al Barq leadership thus chose to split away from the PC.³ In 2002, Abdul Ghani Lone was assassinated by unidentified gunmen, later identified as Hizb-ul- Muzahideed (HM) militants under the leadership of Syed Salahuddin..

In the 2000s, Al Barq came into its own as a staunch pro-Pakistan terrorist group. It joined Salahuddin's United Jihad Council (UJC), with the common aim of waging *jihad* against India. Over the years, it also stepped-up attacks on Indian security forces. It was also reportedly involved in the planning of the 2005 London bombings.

Objectives

Al Barq's primary objective is the separation of J&K from India and its merger with Pakistan. It has been known to be relatively moderate Islamist as compared to other more fundamentalist terrorist groups. In the 1990s, unlike other armed groups, Al Barq promoted the idea of having talks between the Indian government and militant groups. However, it continues to use violence as the primary tool in its quest for separation.

Modus Operandi

Al Barq is known to employ the use of assault rifles and explosives to target security forces and civilians in the region in pursuit of its political objectives. Most of its equipment and training is supplied by Pakistan's ISI.

In the 1990s, the group demonstrated its capacity to create mayhem. In one instance, it burned a bridge in Budgam district. Other instances which underlined the group's notoriety in that period were its attacks on a security forces' convoy, several attacks on police posts and military troops, and the assassination of a minister in the J&K government in 2002.⁴

Sources of Funding

At its inception, Al Barq was the armed wing of the PC and its armed sustenance mainly came from the ISI through the PC. After its break away from the PC, its increasing pro-Pakistan advocacy kept the ISI propping the group up by providing finances and arms and ammunition to sustain its *jihad*. Pakistan also sponsored the setting up of terrorist training camps in PoK, which helped the group to develop its fighting force. Notably, these Al Barq training camps later became hubs for training of LeT and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) fighters as well.

Hawala transactions were resorted to fund the group, the transactions being carried out through middlemen in the Islamic banking system.

Network

After its break away, Al Barq stands completely separated from the PC. Interestingly, while the Al Barq is vehemently pro-Pakistani, the PC has since integrated into the democratic political system under the Indian Constitution, and has at times, even allied with the Bharatiya Janata Party, which is known for its strong stance against Pakistan's sponsorship of radical groups and cross-border terrorism.

The ISI is now Al Barq's principal sponsor, supplying it with weapons and funding. Al Barq has also established ties with other terrorist groups with a pro-Pakistan stance—it is a member of the UJC, a coalition of pro-Pakistan terrorist outfits, and in a way, a parent organisation of the notorious LeT. Its training camps have been utilised by cadre of LeT and JeM as well, thus implying the existence of a united front of these terrorist outfits.

Current Status

Largely inactive in recent years, Al Barq has not been involved in any major terror incident. However, it has contributed significantly to the growth of larger groups like the LeT and JeM by facilitating their planning and training for terror attacks. Besides, Al Barq cadres often join these other groups.

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3

JABHAT AL-NUSRA

Background

Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) is an affiliate of Al Qaeda which was founded in 2004.¹ It first began as a terror cell of Al Qaeda's operations in Iraq and eventually evolved into a transnational terror group. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was the patron of this transnational terror group that few years later was associated with grooming AQI as one of the insurgent groups against the Assad regime in Syria.

The Jabhat al-Nusra spun off from AQI's involvement in Syria. Al Nusra serves Al Qaeda's larger objective. These objectives were aimed at establishing Shariya rule in the Muslim world and expelling the United States and its allies from that world.² Al Nusra's affiliation with the larger global terrorist movement of Al Qaeda and Associated Movements (AQAM) is contested. It is easy to assume that Al Nusra and the Islamic State of Iraq & Syria (ISIS, or IS, also referred to as Islamic State of Iraq & Levant, or ISIL) were related by their common goals and the involvement of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in Al Nusra's foundation.³ To put some clarity on the matter, Al Nusra, in a YouTube video released in April of 2013, pledged allegiance to Sheikh Ayman al-Zawahiri, who was then the acting head of Al Qaeda.⁴

Rise of Al Nusra

Al Nusra, the Free Syrian Army (FSA), the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), ISIS and other armed groups emerged during the Syrian civil war against the regime of Bashar al-Assad. The war led to the involvement of regional and extra-regional powers in the conflict. Turkey and Iran, as regional powers, and the United States and Russia as extra-regional powers, supported one or more of the armed groups, including the forces of Assad's regime. Russia, the United States and its allies supported their favoured groups against the forces of Al Nusra and ISIL by undertaking air strikes and supply of armaments.

Al Nusra had in its ranks veteran soldiers who fought in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya. These soldiers were not necessarily Syrian in origin, which indicates the transnational character of the conflict. The Islamic State and Al Nusra, both being a Salafi-Jihadi-oriented organisations, had adapted very different approaches in achieving their objectives. Al Nusra had embedded itself in promoting the religious edicts of Salafism and, in turn, introduced a social revolution. This approach won it support among the locals, more so easily in the midst of the civil war. Al Nusra thus came to steadily dominate Syrian territory controlled by multiple warring groups, including non-state factions. It managed to do this by influencing the local population over a well laid out long-term arrangement that distinguished them from the ISIL.

Objective

Al Nusra, like other insurgent groups, was vying for control of the Syrian state. They had managed to create a proto state, thus fulfilling the short-term objective of Al Qaeda. In the territory controlled by them, they had provided basic amenities, besides managing law and order, thus making the absence of the Assad government a reality. Al Nusra became one of the most important players, who were widely accepted by others in the opposition as equals. The support of locals gave them legitimacy in local politics. In the words of Al Nusra's leader, Abu Mohammad al-Jolani, the overarching objective of the

organisation has been “...that the Shari’a rules, justice prevails, injustice is removed and a judicious Islamic government is established following the course of the prophet. It shall be a government that seeks to liberate the Muslim land, apply the Shari’a of God, treat people equally, and remove injustice. This is what we seek to achieve”.⁵

Ideology

Al Nusra’s ideological foundation lay in the beliefs of the Salafi Sect and the overall motivation and practices followed by the Al Qaeda network. Al Qaeda and ISIS had been working towards the same goal, that is, to establish a Caliphate in the Muslim world. Their more ambitious long-term goal was to establish a global order through this Islamic state.⁶

The vision of the Caliphate is very retrograde as it is trying to implement a version of Islam that is very illusive. The Salafi Sect of Islam believes that the first three generations of the Islamic Caliphate were the finest in terms of teachings and practices and that the generations that followed, diverted from the core teaching of Islam by imbibing tenets of various other schools of thoughts.⁷ Salafis promote a very radical interpretation of Islam which is very intolerant towards other cultures, religions and sects. It is this intolerance that has led to excessive violence and conflict in the regions where they are present. Al Nusra and other organisations are political instruments of the sect to achieve its goals, even if these are not achieved in the immediate future.

Modus Operandi

Al Nusra, being a political, religious and military organisation, used all of its organizational skillsets to achieve its objectives. It employed not just hard power to fight the Assad regime and other opposition. The projection of soft power was an important aspect of the organisation’s strategy to ensure that in the long-term, the presence of Al Nusra is widely accepted.

Al Nusra controlled parts of the countryside, while the urban centres remained in the Assad regime’s control. It slowly entrenched itself in the

politics of the nation by infiltrating rebel forces and the opposition, which allowed it to influence their leaders. It projected itself as a nationalist and humanitarian force working for the good of the people. The *Qism al-Igatha* was Al Nusra's department for running a social welfare campaign.⁸ It also organised a proselytisation of locals in exchange for relief work which was provided by the *Qism al-Igatha*. This helped it to slowly introduce its version of Islam at the grassroots level. In the areas in its control, Al Nusra used this tactic to gain local support and introduce an alternative system of governance. This policy of support was reflected in the provision of basic amenities on the lines of charities also known as *Da'wa*.

The use of social media and other forms of electronic medium has been a constant feature of the organisation's communication channel. It announced its existence through a social media post shared on January 23, 2012. Later, it created the 'Hemm Agency', which was a media outlet to propagate the organisation's social welfare work and other efforts.⁹

Structure and Leadership of the Organisation

Al Nusra's leadership and support has flowed through Al Qaeda. Its most important leader, Abu Mohammad al-Jolani, has managed the organisation's overall functions since its inception. Abu Khalid al-Suri was al-Jolani's personal representative, who was sent by Al Qaeda along with other advisors after Al Nusra got its independent status. The organisation's methodology of functioning has been inspired by the dictates of Al Qaeda's chief, Ayman al-Zawahiri, who has, besides arms actions, given priority to other indirect methods in creating conditions for the establishment of an Islamic emirate.

Religious clerics played an important role in support of Al Nusra's idea of slowly achieving Islamic statehood. This can be seen from the relationship shared between its religious and military establishments. Besides, Al Nusra also focused on creating an alliance among rebels across the entire country. Its provincial military commands functioned by sharing funds through a central committee known as the 'Muslim Treasury.'¹⁰

Recruitment and Membership

Al Qaeda's approach in Syria was to create a rebel army similar to units of Special Forces soldiers. They started with a small group of veteran soldiers who were joined by inmates from a Syrian prison, and later, by inmates from an Iraqi prison. All these early recruits were able to have a substantial impact on other rebel groups. Subsequently, following their early success, they were able to increase their ranks with the induction of local men and soldiers from other rebel groups. The new recruits were assessed based on their religious and ideological commitment followed by the process of *Tezkiyya*, which required approval from two frontline commanders.¹¹ Among the foreign recruits other than the early prison inmates, soldiers from other West Asian and North African countries also joined in Al Nusra's operations.

Al Nusra is reported to have also recruited soldiers for Al Qaeda holding Western passports. They were trained to launch attacks on their home countries. The 'Khorasan Group' is a name coined by the United States for these soldiers.¹²

Sources of Funding

In November 2020, some 330 Syrian refugees in United Kingdom filed a case against the state-run Doha Bank claiming that it used to funnel funds to Al Nusra for its terror activities in Syria.¹³ Other sources of funding were collection of 'taxes' and seizing of properties in territory under its control. It also had donors and supporters from the Persian Gulf like Moutaz and Ramez Al Khayyat from Qatar.¹⁴

Current Status

In 2016, Al Nusra became an independent organisation by cutting all of its ties with Al Qaeda. Following the split, it changed its name to 'Jabhat Fatah al-Sham'. A few months later, it merged with fellow rebel groups and rebranded itself as 'Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham', which translates as the 'Organisation for

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

the Liberation of the Levant'. These rebel groups were Harakat Nour al-Din al-Zinki, Liwa al-Haq, Jaysh al-Sunna and Jabhat Ansar al-Din.¹⁵

The group continues to share similar goals as that of Al Qaeda and follows similar tactics as in its previous incarnation. It sees the Islamic State as a destabilising force and pushes for unity among the opposition. As of October 2018, its fighting force had increased to twelve to fifteen thousand, which protects its territories in and around Idlib, Damascus, Aleppo, Hama and Dera'a provinces.¹⁶

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4

LASHKAR-E-JHANGVI

Introduction

Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (The Army of Jhangvi) is a Pakistani Islamist terrorist outfit with a radical Sunni Deobandi ideology. It originated as a breakaway faction of the Sunni Deobandi outfit, Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), and has become notorious for its violent targeting of Shia, Ahmadiyya and Sufi Muslim sects in Pakistan. It should be noted that Pakistani law does not recognise Ahmadiyyas as Muslims and forbids them from practising Islam.

Background

The Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) was formed in 1996 by radical Sunni Islamists, who broke away from the Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan, also a Sunni extremist outfit. The newly-formed leadership, comprising Akram Lahori, Malik Ishaq and Riaz Basra, claimed that the Sipah-e-Sahaba was deviating from the teachings of its founders, Maulana Haq Nawaz Jhangvi.

The LeJ is named after Maulana Jhangvi.¹ Maulana Jhangvi was assassinated in 1990 by Shiite terrorists.²

Following its inception, the LeJ embarked on a campaign to terrorise Shia Muslims in Pakistan. Bombings, assassinations and kidnappings were orchestrated in 1996, targeting Shias. In 1997, it was responsible for a vicious attack on the Iranian Centre in Multan, which led to 25 fatalities, including that of an Iranian diplomat.³ It also orchestrated an attack in Karachi, which led to the killing of four American oil workers.⁴ Within the first five years of its existence, the group carried out around 350 attacks, mainly targeting Shias and Westerners present in Pakistan. In 1998, the group carried out a particularly deadly attack, now known as the 'Lahore Mominpura Cemetery Massacre', which claimed the lives of 25 Shias and injured 50 others who had congregated for a Quranic ritual at the cemetery.⁵

As the Western world began its campaign against Islamist terrorism in the late 1990s, Pakistan decided to placate its Western allies. From 1998 onwards, the Pakistan government began to conduct a series of crackdowns against the LeJ, arresting and eliminating several of its cadre. The LeJ refused to back down and decided to retaliate. It went so far as to publicly place a bounty of 135 million Pakistani rupees on the head of then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, his younger brother Shahbaz Sharif and then information minister, Mushahid Hussain.⁶ This threat was soon followed up by an actual assassination attempt on Sharif, when on January 2, 1999 a bomb was used to destroy a bridge which was to be used by Sharif an hour later whilst travelling from Lahore to Raiwind.⁷

In 1999, a military coup in Pakistan put General Pervez Musharraf in power. A brief decline in sectarian violence in the country followed. One LeJ leader, Qari Abdul Hai alias Qari Asadullah, wished to continue this trend and openly called for ending anti-Shia violence perpetrated by the group. He argued that sectarian violence was detrimental to the national solidarity of the Islamic republic and that violence would only lead to more severe crackdowns on the LeJ by the military regime. Riaz Basra, one of the founders of the outfit, disagreed with this position and wanted to resume violence against Shias. The resultant tensions culminated in a split in the LeJ in 2001,

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

wherein Basra led the faction primarily based in Punjab, while Asadullah led the breakaway faction based in Karachi.⁸

The LeJ faced another setback in 2001 when the Pakistan government officially banned the outfit. The following two years also did not bode well for the outfit. In 2002, Riaz Basra was eliminated in a police encounter.⁹ Then in 2003, Asadullah was arrested.¹⁰ Akram Lahori, a former SSP member who co-founded the LeJ along with Riaz Basra, succeeded Basra as the outfit's *Amir*, but was arrested in Karachi just a month after Basra's elimination.¹¹ In the same year, the USA designated the LeJ as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO).¹²

However, the LeJ persevered in its violent ways despite these various setbacks. Between 2000 and 2002 alone, the LeJ and its parent organisation, the SSP, were collectively responsible for the murders of over 70 doctors, 34 lawyers, several religious scholars and seminary teachers, students, politicians, activists and government officials, among others, all of whom were Shias.¹³ It is alleged that the outfit was involved in the 2002 abduction and murder of Jewish-American journalist Daniel Pearl.¹⁴ Qari Asadullah was arrested again by the Pakistani authorities in 2013 for his involvement in the same.¹⁵

There are several conflicting reports as to who stepped up to become the LeJ leader following the killings of Basra and arrest of Asadullah. Some reports claimed that one Qari Zafar took over the leadership in 2005; others stated that Rizwan Ahmed was the leader till his arrest in 2007. Some believed that Akram Lahori continued to retain power despite his arrest in 2002.¹⁶

The year 2002 saw many more violent acts of terror being perpetrated by the group like the suicide attack on the International Protestant Church in Islamabad, a car bomb attack on French workers in Karachi and another car bomb attack on the US Consulate Karachi. It perpetrated a suicide bombing in a Shiite Mosque in Islamabad in 2005, a suicide bombing at the Marriot Hotel in Islamabad in 2008, double suicide bombings in Lahore in 2010 and suicide attacks on Ahmadiyya shrines in 2010.

It was also suspected that the LeJ was involved in the assassination of former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in 2007, when she was first shot and then injured by a suicide bomber in an election rally.¹⁷ In 2009, the LeJ was involved in the attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore.

The group's sectarian violence saw a massive upsurge in the late 2000s and the 2010s. In Pakistan's Baluchistan Province, the LeJ was responsible for killing 700 Shias between 2008 and 2012. Besides Shias, the outfit also targeted members of the Hazara community and the Sufi sect. In 2012-13, the LeJ killed over 350 Hazaras in Baluchistan, specifically in provincial capital Quetta. In 2011, the group made a violent statement by orchestrating an attack in Kabul—an IED (Improvised Explosive Device) was detonated in a crowd of Shia mourners leading to 48 deaths.¹⁸

Around this time, the LeJ faced a renewed crisis of leadership. Malik Ishaq (another co-founder of the group) reportedly assumed operational command of the outfit following his release from prison in 2011. However, he was arrested again by Pakistani authorities in 2013. Akram Lahori, reportedly still leading the group from prison, was executed in 2015. However, the group has remained active and continues its sectarian terrorism in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Its most recent major attack was a suicide bombing in Quetta in 2019, where 21 people were killed in a marketplace in a Hazara Shia-dominated area.

Objectives and Ideology

The LeJ is a component of the extremist Sunni Deobandi movement and its principal objective is to transform Pakistan into a Sunni Islamic state.¹⁹ Its ideology is inspired by Wahhabism,²⁰ a conservative Islamic ideology, that Muhammed Ibn Abd al Wahhab first put forth in the 18th century, which believes that worshippers of saints and mystics (such as Sufis) and Shias were not Muslims at all.²¹ This ideology became one of the founding principles of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and subsequently misguided extremist groups

like the Islamic State (IS) and Al-Qaeda (AQ). The deliberate targeting of Shias and Sufis by the LeJ, IS and AQ, as well as Saudi Arabia's anti-Shia bias, are results of that ideology.

Further, the LeJ's ideology is antagonistic to other religions, and like most Islamist terrorist groups, it aims to destroy Christianity, Judaism and Hinduism. Following the turn of the millennium, the group's targets also reflect ideological opposition to Western nations.²²

Modus Operandi

As is evidenced from its many attacks in Pakistan and Afghanistan, the LeJ specialises in the use of explosives, primarily through suicide bombings, IED and car bombings. It conducts suicide bombings in public places like mosques, hotels, processions, etc., which are often crowded to inflict maximum casualties. The viciousness of this method is indicated by the group's attacks in Kabul, Baluchistan and elsewhere, each of which caused very high fatalities. This method was also used in the assassination of Benazir Bhutto in an election rally.

The group spreads fear through assassinations of prominent members of the Shia sect such as teachers, government officials and politicians. The group has also targeted Iranian diplomatic personnel and offices. It has been using an assortment of small arms and explosives to carry out its terror campaign. For instance, Pakistani authorities have, in the past, uncovered caches of Kalashnikov rifles, landmines, rockets, explosives and chemicals from the possession of the LeJ.²³

Structure and Leadership

It is difficult to get a complete picture of the organisational structure and leadership of the LeJ as the group is exceptionally opaque in this regard. It is considered to be one of the most secretive terrorist organisations in South Asia at present.²⁴

Organisational Structure

The *Majlis-e-Shura* (Supreme Council) is the highest decision-making body of the LeJ. The group's chief is known as the *Salar-e-Ala* (Commander-in-Chief) and is assisted by 12 *Salars* (Commanders).²⁵

Leadership

Riaz Basra: He was one of the three members of the SSP who defected to cofound the LeJ and assumed a leadership position in the newly-formed outfit. He continued as the chief until he was killed in an encounter in 2002.²⁶ Basra had an eventful past before his LeJ stint. Before the LeJ's formation, he had orchestrated several attacks in the 1980s and 1990s. In 1980s, he was involved in the killing of Iranian Air Force cadets who were visiting Pakistan, and in 1990, he coordinated the murder of an Iranian diplomat. In all, Basra has been involved in 300 criminal acts.²⁷ Through a political wing of the SSP, he had attempted to gain political power in Punjab province and even fought the provincial assembly elections in 1998. He then travelled to Afghanistan, where he received military training, joined the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HuM) and participated in the anti-Soviet *jihad*. On his return to Pakistan, he continued with his violent ways and began to perpetuate sectarian terrorism.

Akram Lahori: Along with Basra, Lahori was the other co-founder of the LeJ. He took over the LeJ's leadership following Basra's elimination and continued until he was arrested a month after the Basra encounter. Some reports claim Lahori continued to lead the outfit from the prison and did so until his execution in 2015.²⁸

Malik Ishaq: Ishaq was the third co-founder of the LeJ. He reportedly took over the outfit's operational command after being released from prison in 2011. He had spent 14 years behind bars. However, he was imprisoned again in 2013 and was finally killed in an encounter in 2015 while some gunmen allegedly tried to facilitate his escape from prison.²⁹ Ishaq was charged with over 70 murders, all of which were sectarian in nature. Despite being

imprisoned for over a decade, he was permitted outside contact through a cell phone. In this way, he managed to communicate with LeJ terrorists and help in orchestrating attacks; the 2009 attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team was one example.³⁰

Qari Abdul Hai alias Qari Asadullah: He was a member of the group's advisory council.³¹ Later, following differences of opinion with Basra, he exited in 2001 and formed a rebel faction. While Basra wished to continue sectarian violence against Shias and Sufis, Asadullah wished to stop such sectarian killings.

Asif Chotto: He reportedly succeeded Akram Lahori as the LeJ leader, following Lahori's arrest in 2002. Chotto was involved in the 2004 Karachi twin bombings, 2004 Sialkot bombing, and the 2005 attack on a Shia mosque in Karachi. Chotto continued as leader until his arrest in 2005 by the Pakistani authorities.³²

Qari Mohammed Zafar: He is said to have led the group as acting chief from 2005 onwards. He was killed in a US drone strike in 2010.³³

Rizwan Ahmad: He was one of the LeJ leaders involved in the orchestration of suicide attacks. He was arrested in 2007.³⁴

Sources of Funding

Ironically, one of the bigger sponsors of the LeJ is the Pakistani state itself. Despite the government's many crackdowns, arrests, and high-profile encounters against the LeJ and its leadership, it continues to sponsor the outfit to further its interests against Shi'ite Iran. These funds are directed through the Pakistani Army and the ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence), Pakistan's intelligence agency, which has a notorious reputation for funding, arming and training a number of South Asian Islamist terrorist organisations. Further, many Sunni Gulf states, such as Saudi Arabia are said to be the sponsors of the LeJ, given their intense antagonism towards Iran.³⁵

Other sources of funding include private sponsors from the Gulf States, extortion and the narcotics trade. The state funding of Wahhabi and Deobandi *madrassas* (Islamic religious schools) also gets passed-off to the LeJ as it draws several of its cadre from these schools.³⁶

Network

The LeJ and SSP are ideologically closely linked and both follow the same ideologue: Maulana Haq Nawaz Jhangvi. Both groups source their cadre from similar *madrassas*. Given the alignment of their views and interests, the SSP leadership has seldom spoken out against the LeJ, as both are propagators of sectarian violence.³⁷

The LeJ (along with the SSP) is also closely linked with the Taliban in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The LeJ has reportedly assisted the Taliban in fighting the Afghan Northern Alliance. It is also known that LeJ co-founder Riaz Basra fought in the Afghan jihad against the USSR. Further, the LeJ and the Taliban share a common objective of terrorising Shias and Sufis in Afghanistan and Pakistan. According to the Pakistan Government, the Taliban has given shelter to LeJ terrorists in the past, though it denies this.³⁸

The LeJ also has ties with the Pakistan-based terrorist group HuM, which operates in Jammu and Kashmir. It also has its camps in Afghanistan. The LeJ cadres reportedly received training in a HuM camp in Afghanistan. Another Pakistani outfit that operates in J&K, the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), is also associated with the LeJ.

Current Status

The LeJ is one of the major instigators of sectarian violence in Pakistan and Afghanistan. In the past, while Pakistani authorities have often moved against the highest echelons of its leadership, this has had little effect on the LeJ's violent activities. For instance, its killings of hundreds of Shias in Baluchistan and the assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto took place

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

after its main leaders like Riaz Basra, Akram Lahori and Malik Ishaq were eliminated or arrested. The group has easily spread its reach from initially being Punjab-centric to pulling off significant attacks in Baluchistan, Sindh and even in Afghanistan.

Government crackdowns and police encounters have had virtually no effect on the LeJ. This is to be expected because the Pakistani establishment simultaneously finances and sponsors the LeJ through the Army and ISI, not to mention the support flowing in from Gulf States due to their geopolitical rivalry against Iran. Even the imprisonment of LeJ leaders seems to be only a façade, as Malik Ishaq kept coordinating major attacks from prison, or when Akram Lahori continued to guide the group during his incarceration.

Given the group's links with anti-India terrorist organisations like the JeM and HuM, it is certain to continue to receive the Pakistan's state sponsorship directly or indirectly. Besides, the LeJ's position is strengthened by its influence over the populous Punjab province, which causes political parties to pander to the outfit in order to secure their electoral vote-banks.

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5

AL-SHABAAB

Background

Al-Shabaab, meaning ‘the youth’ in Arabic, is believed to have originated in late 2006 as an independent group in response to the Ethiopian invasion of Somalia. However, its ideological origins go back to more than a decade when Somalia was in the grip of a devastating civil war following the collapse of Siad Barre’s long authoritarian rule.

Al-Shabaab traces its origin to the rebel Al-Itihad al-Islami (AIAI) group, meaning ‘Unity of Islam’, which played a part in bringing down the military regime. The collapse of Barre’s regime plunged Somalia into a civil war which continues.

The top leadership of the AIAI was educated in the Middle East and partly funded by Osama bin Laden.¹ The AIAI had set its base near the Ethiopian border to carry out attacks against Ethiopian forces. After a decisive military action by Ethiopia in 1996, the remnants of the AIAI fled to the Somali capital of Mogadishu and joined up with the Islamic Courts Union (ICU).² The ICU was a conglomeration of various Islamic Courts and their militia

that had come up in Somalia to provide a semblance of law and governance in areas under their control.³

Covert actions undertaken by Somalian Transitional Federal Government (TFG), supported by Ethiopia and the US, to check the growing influence of Islamic Courts, resulted in deaths of several ICU leaders. In retaliation, the ICU militia attacked TFG and United Nations officials in Mogadishu.⁴ From this militia emerged the group, Al-Shabaab, which strived to enforce the ICU's jurisdiction through violence and captured Mogadishu.

Rise of Al Shabaab

As Al-Shabaab emerged as the most militant arm of the ICU militia, it established the ICU's control over Mogadishu by dislodging the TNG government and driving out all warlords. Fearing the establishment of an Islamic state next door, Ethiopia invaded Somalia in December 2006 and occupied the capital.⁵ The African Union (AU) too rushed troops through its African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) to stop Somalia from slipping into another round of civil war and prevent its possible Islamist takeover. The invasion and occupation by foreign forces proved to be highly beneficial for Al-Shabaab as it used the traditional Somalian hostility for Ethiopians to recruit cadres for its cause. Its founder, Sheikh Mukhtar Aby Zubayr aka Godane, projected the group as a nationalist-Islamist organisation working for the liberation of Somalia from foreign occupation.⁶ The messaging worked to rally the people to their cause.

After the withdrawal of Ethiopian forces from Somalia in early 2009, Al-Shabaab managed to capture Mogadishu again. It also made significant territorial gains and captured the important port cities of Kismayo, Marka and Barawe, reaching the peak of its power in 2011-12. However, by 2012, AMISOM troops managed to oust Al-Shabaab from all of these cities.

Although Al-Shabaab fighters were able to retake the cities by launching surprise attacks, they were not able to hold on to them.⁷ Coups and feuds

within the terror group impacted its finances and to certain extents restricted its ability to fight AMISOM troops.

Objective

Although the immediate objective of Al-Shabaab was to fight the Ethiopian and AMISOM occupation forces, their goal was to take power and impose Sharia law in what is traditionally considered to be Somali land.⁸ The area includes Somalia, the Ogaden region of Ethiopia, North eastern Kenya and Djibouti.⁹ Therefore, their ultimate aim is to establish an Islamic emirate and assume control over the Horn of Africa. This would also allow them to exercise control over the Gulf of Aden and Bab-al-Mandeeb chokepoints.

Ideology

Al-Shabaab is one of the deadliest terrorist organisations in Africa and follows the radical Islamic ideology of Salafism and Wahabism. It seeks to establish a fundamentalist Islamic state in Somalia and to extend its control over the Horn of Africa. Al-Shabaab's first leader, Aden Hashi Ayro, wanted to create an Islamic state in the Somali on the lines of the Taliban's Islamic emirate in Afghanistan.¹⁰ It runs its own religious courts where criminals and apostates are punished based on its radical interpretation of the Sharia law. The 2006-2009 war with Ethiopia helped Al-Shabaab to grow from a group of few hundred fighters to an Islamic insurgency movement. After it declared the fight against Ethiopian occupation as a holy war (*jihad*), thousands flocked under its nationalist and religious banner. The Christian majority Ethiopia is disliked by Somalis due to a complex history of invasions that both the countries share.

In 2012, Al-Shabaab pledged allegiance to Al-Qaeda in an attempt to frame the narrative of the conflict in Somalia into the global jihadi struggle. In 2016, a faction wanted the group to change its allegiance to the Islamic State (IS); however, the top leadership did not agree and purged IS sympathisers from Al-Shabaab.¹¹

Modus Operandi

From a militia, Al-Shabaab quickly transformed into an insurgent group. So, its methods of attack are similar to other insurgency movements. Its fighters employ hit-and-run tactics and use improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs) to cause massive casualties. Al-Shabaab has also made extensive use of suicide bombers. It mainly targets security forces, public installations and government officials. It employs either *Fedayeen* squads or VBIEDs to carry out these attacks.

Further, to attract media limelight, Al-Shabaab has carried out some spectacular attacks, particularly in neighbouring Kenya. The September 2013 attack on the Westgate Shopping Centre in Nairobi, in which sixty-seven people died, brought Al-Shabaab into the global spotlight and publicity.¹² In 2015, it targeted the Garissa University where its suicide squad killed 148 people.¹³ Al-Shabaab has targeted the Troop Contributing Countries (TCC) of the AMISOM, its motive being to force them to withdraw their troops from Somalia.¹⁴

Al-Shabaab has carried out terror attacks to disrupt democracy and electoral politics in Somalia. In 2016, it assassinated several electoral delegates in an attempt to stop the electoral process. Al-Shabaab carried out its deadliest terror attack in Somalia on October 14, 2017, when an IED laden truck killed 587 people in Mogadishu.¹⁵ Reports suggest that elections in 2021 are going to be the main target for Al-Shabaab.¹⁶ Following the drawdown of US and AMISOM forces from Somalia, the Al-Shabaab leadership will feel emboldened to carry out more attacks.

Funding

Al-Shabaab has traditionally funded its activities by collecting *zakat* – which is an obligatory contribution in Islam - from areas under its control. It has also used its links with other terror groups like the Somali sea pirates to secure funds. Further, it resorts to kidnapping of government officials and

international aid workers for ransom. Individuals from the Somali diaspora in Europe and the US, who support the group's ideology, also help in collecting and mobilising funds.

After pushing Ethiopian forces out of Somalia in 2009, Al-Shabaab, managed to capture the important port of Kismayo. This allowed the group to make financial gains to the tune of around \$35-50 million annually by taxing imports and exports of charcoal. The UN banned the export of Somalian charcoal in 2012.¹⁷ It lost control of the port in 2012 but continues to operate the illicit charcoal trade in areas under its control with the help of Iran. That remains a major source of its funding.¹⁸

After taking control of major parts of Somalia, including its capital, Al-Shabaab shifted to levying taxes by erecting roadblocks. Its fighters primarily targeted the merchants going in and out of Mogadishu for business. Al-Shabaab also extorts business establishments and hires out its fighters to businessmen to eliminate their competitors¹⁹. They also tax the humanitarian and aid organisations working in Somalia.

Leadership

The Supreme leader or Emir of the terror group is Sheikh Ahmed Umar or Ahmed Diriye aka Abu Obaidah, who succeeded his predecessor, Ahmed Abdi Godane, who was killed in a US air strike in September 2014. In 2018, Obaidah appointed Shaykh Abukar Ali Aden as his deputy and principal advisor. For several years, Aden was Al-Shabaab's military chief. Reportedly, due to ill health, Obaidah has transferred his powers to his deputy last year. Aden was made the Emir due to Obaidah's feud with Intelligence Chief Karate, who also aspired for the top leadership position.

Other prominent members of the Al Shabaab's *Shura*, or executive council, are Abdirahaman Mohammed Warsame, aka Mahad Karate, the head of Al-Shabaab's financial and intelligence wings, Amniyat Maalim Osman, the infantry commander, and Ali Mohammed Rage aka Ali Dheere, the group's spokesman.

Recruitment

Most of Al-Shabaab's recruits are ethnic Somalis. But given its trans-national activities, it has also been able to get recruits from camps of internally displaced people (IDP) in Kenya.²⁰ Al-Shabaab has also been able to get some recruits from the West, especially Somali-Americans from the US, who are brainwashed by its sophisticated social media and video propaganda. Before the IS, Al-Shabaab was one of the rare terrorist groups that had been successful in getting foreign fighters to join its ranks. Links with Al-Qaeda immensely helped Al-Shabaab as they managed to get funds from Al-Qaeda supporters, train in Al-Qaeda camps and recruit foreigners.

As mentioned above, Al-Shabaab uses a mix of Somali nationalism and Islamist ideology to attract the youth. Al-Shabaab's local radio broadcast station Al-Andalus has been an effective means of spreading their ideology among the rural population. Al-Shabaab recruits within Somalia mostly come from rural and suburban areas and can be as young as eight-nine years old.²¹ Young recruits are preferred as they are yet to develop an attachment for their clan.

Ineffective governance has allowed Al-Shabaab to run its specialised training camps for years. Although the exact number of recruits who join the terror group is not clear, estimates are that around 500-600 new recruits join every year. Following a six-month period of training, the recruits are given various options based on their education and performance to join any particular branch of Al-Shabaab.

Current Status

Despite factionalism and several attempted coups for the leadership position, Al-Shabaab largely remains a unified organisation. Its territorial control is fluid as they prefer fighting a guerrilla war. But the group maintains control over South and Central Somalia and that is where most of its funds come from. The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted Al-Shabaab's ability to launch

attacks as several of its fighters have died in the pandemic. Reports suggest that the terror group was able to raise around \$13 million in 2020 through extortion, taxing at checkpoints and investments in real estate.²²

Al-Shabaab is sensing an opportunity to dislodge the current government in Mogadishu and establish its Islamic emirate once AMISOM forces begin to withdraw.

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6

AL UMAR MUJAHIDEEN

Introduction

Al-Umar Mujahideen is an Islamist extremist group operating in the Kashmir Valley, both in India and Pakistan. It was formed by a Kashmiri separatist, Mushtaq Ahmed Zargar (aka Latram), in 1989, and is among a plethora of Islamist terror groups fighting for the separation of Jammu and Kashmir from the Union of India.

Background

Zargar has been carrying out violent terrorist activities for over three decades now. Initially, he was a member of the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), a group which advocates Kashmir's secession from India and adopts violent terrorist activities to achieve that end.¹

In 1989, Zargar and the JKLF were involved in the infamous kidnapping of Rubaiya Sayeed, the daughter of then union home minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed. The kidnappers demanded the release of five separatist guerrillas in exchange for Rubaiya Sayeed, which was acceded to by the then state government under pressure from her father.² In this incident, differences

developed between the JKLF and Zargar, which eventually drove him to break away from the group and start his own outfit—the Al-Umar Mujahideen (AuM).³ The group engaged in armed violence against the state and Zargar himself was implicated in the murder of more than twenty Indian security personnel as well as a large number of Kashmiri political cadres.⁴

In 1992, Zargar was arrested by the Indian authorities for his crimes. However, in 1999, the infamous hijacking of the Indian Airlines flight IC-814 by Islamists took place, in which the hijackers demanded the release of three high-profile terrorist leaders, including Masood Azhar (who later formed the Jaish-e-Mohammed), Umar Sheikh (who later murdered the journalist Daniel Pearl) and Zargar. In this incident, the Indian Government capitulated and all three terrorists were released. This allowed Zargar to resume control over AuM operations from Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK).

Over the years, AuM has been involved in many violent attacks. In 2016, it claimed responsibility for attacking a convoy of Indian paramilitary forces, causing one death and injury to several others. In 2019, it struck again, killing five paramilitary personnel in Anantnag, Kashmir. Indian officials believe that this attack was carried out in collaboration with the notorious Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM).

It is a known fact that Islamist separatist groups in Kashmir are sponsored by the Pakistan government and military. This has been true of AuM and its leader Zargar as well, allowing it to perpetrate extremism and violence in the valley. When Zargar (along with Azhar and Umar Sheikh) was released, large processions were organised in Pakistan to welcome him publicly.⁵ Later, even as Zargar was arrested by the Pakistani authorities in 2002, he continues to remain active and is known to be complicit in terror attacks in 2016 and 2019 in the valley. That the AuM's association with the JeM, is also sponsored by the Pakistani establishment, substantiates this fact. AuM is also affiliated with the United Jihad Council (UJC),⁶ a coalition of Islamist terrorist outfits created by the Pakistan military.⁷

Objective and Ideology

The AuM believes in waging *jihad* (holy war) to attain its objectives. Its principal objective is to secure the 'liberation' of Kashmir and merge it with Pakistan through an armed struggle. The region, being demographically Muslim-majority, the AuM, like Pakistan, takes it as a justification for the region's merger with the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, while repudiating the sovereignty of secular India.

Modus Operandi

AuM follows terror tactics, usually targeting security forces deployed in the Kashmir Valley. Like most other Kashmiri separatist groups, it works in tandem with Pakistan's ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence), which provides it with training, finances and armaments.⁸ PoK and parts of Pakistan are the training grounds and launch pads for most attacks in the valley. In its separatist pursuit, it torments the local populace by disrupting public peace through armed attacks, suicide bombings, and extortion of local businesses, and obstruction of democratic politics in the region.⁹ It has particularly targeted Kashmiri Hindu *Pandits*, businessmen and government officials. In the 2000s, it was involved in bombings and attacks against political parties and candidates in state assembly elections at the behest of the ISI and in tandem with the JeM.¹⁰

As stated, AuM is a part of the wider Pakistan-sponsored terrorist network targeting India under the umbrella organisation of the UJC.¹¹ It works in tandem with the Pakistani establishment and the JeM. It is also known to have links with the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), having jointly coordinated many suicide bombings. Besides, it appears to have linkages with Sikh separatist groups like the Khalistan Liberation Force in tune with former Pakistan President Zia ul-Haq's 'Kashmir-Khalistan' strategy.¹²

Structure and Leadership

AuM is structured with a 'Supreme Command' and many 'Field Formations'. The structure is mostly centralised, with some degree of hierarchical distribution of powers for coordinating local operations.

Supreme Command

- Chief Commander: The founder, Mushtaq Ahmed Zargar, also acts as the 'Chief Commander' of AuM, making him the highest ranking member.
- Deputy Chief Commanders: Some deputies to the Chief Commander are Manzoor Ahmed Ganai (organiser of training), Latif-ul-Haq (acting Chief Commander) and Jamshed Khan.
- The Supreme Command also consists of other important offices, such as military advisors, publicity advisors, intelligence chiefs and so on.

Field Formations: These consist of local commanders with specified districts and formations under their jurisdiction.

Cadre: It is estimated that AuM has around 700 militants. Most of its recruits are residents of the Kashmir Valley, unlike some other groups which comprise of Afghans, Pashtuns and West Asian fighters.

Due to infighting, opposition from rival separatist groups like the JKLF and the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen and India's counter-insurgency actions, the AuM has shrunk in size and has been significantly weakened over the past few years. Most of its recent attacks, like the 2019 Anantnag attack for example, have only been possible because of active support from the ISI.¹³

Areas of Operation

The AuM has its headquarters in the PoK towns of Muzaffarabad and Kotli.

It also has a training centre in the Kel sector of PoK. Most of its operations in the India are centred around the districts of Srinagar, Anantnag, Baramulla, Kupwara and Pulwama.

Sources of Funding

AuM allegedly receives funding from the Pakistan military to facilitate its terrorist activities against India in Kashmir. Extortion from businesses and shops and ransoms acquired through kidnappings are some of its other sources of funding.

Current Status

AuM is listed by India as a banned terrorist organisation under the First Schedule of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967. Mushtaq Ahmed Zargar resides in Pakistan from where he freely directs AuM's terrorist activities with impunity.

Nevertheless, AuM is a relatively weaker outfit in the region today. Apart from triggering isolated incidents over the last three decades, it has remained inactive and ineffective. In recent years, not many high-profile incidents have been attributed to it and its cadre size is also shrinking. Its conflicts with the JKLF and Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, which are more significant forces, make matters worse. As it loses relevance, it may well dissolve to join other, more powerful terrorist groups operating in the region.

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7

ANSAR AL- SHARIYA LIBYA

Background

Ansar al-Shariya Libya came into the limelight in 2012 when it attacked the United States consulate in Benghazi, Libya. The group was originally created by the consolidation of similar groups like the Ansar al-Sharia Brigade (ASB) and the Ansar al-Sharia Derna (ASD).¹ This transformation to Ansar al-Sharia Libya (ASL) was a result of the rebranding of these groups after the 2012 attack.

Introduction

The ASB was formed by Muhammad al-Zahawi, who later led the consolidated ASL. It's sister organisation, Ansar al-Shariya Derna, was led by Abu Sufian bin Qumu, who had previously spent six years in a Guantanamo prison and ten years in a Libyan prison for his association with terrorist groups and outfits like Al Qaida, Taliban, African extremist network and Libyan Islamic groups. He was also known to have joined Libyan rebel fighters against Col. Gaddafi's regime.² These two groups were based around Derna and Benghazi. Ansar al-Shariya means 'supporter of Shariya law. The influence of Al Qaida

and its associates over the Ansar al-Shariya and its sister groups is immense.

In its new incarnation, the ASL has its cells all around Libya. Its growth was helped by the instability that befell the country after the removal of Col. Muammar Gaddafi's regime. The group's membership grew in the Libyan cities of Nawfalia, Sirte, Ajdabiya, Al-Bayda, Sabratha and Tripoli. Recruitment became easier after the ASL was portrayed as a group working for a socio-religious cause. The ASL is considered to be a frontal organisation of Al Qaida having branches in Yemen, Libya, Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt. The socio-cultural face of the group helped it distinguish its core objectives from that of Al Qaida and its methods to achieve those aims.

Objective

ASL, like any other Ansar al-Shariyas' located in other parts of the Muslim world, is centered only in Libya which makes it a regional threat. As the interim government in Tripoli failed to assume full control of state institutions, the ASL's objective exploited this instability in the post-Gaddafi period. It thus got into prolonged conflicts with other groups that were also vying for similar opportunities. General Haftar's faction, not being committed to the interests of the interim government, launched his own movement which led to a full-scale civil war. 'Operation Dignity', launched by him attacked not just the ASL, but also other Islamic groups. Most of the ASL's resources was thus consumed in this conflict with General Khalifa Haftar's group.³

Ideology

Ansar al-Shariya and its sister groups in various West Asian countries advocate a puritan version of Islam. Drawing on Islam's earliest practices and teachings, they distinguish themselves from Shi'ite and Sunni Muslims. ASL, in turn, promotes Salafism, aiming to recreate a political order that existed during the first three generations of the Islamic Caliphate. This order, dictating all aspects of life through medieval lens, is practically an utopia.

Traditionally there are two schools of thought with contrary views on Islamic teachings. These schools are made of followers of *Ahl al-Ra'y* (people of considered opinion) and *Ahl al-Hadith* (people of prophetic tradition) respectively. *Ahl al-Hadith* relies on textual interpretations to espouse practices followed by the Prophet, whereas *Ahl al-Ra'y* focuses on lived traditions of the earliest followers of Islam. The Sunni Islam emerged from elements of both these schools of thought. Sunnis' value the teachings ascribed to the Quran, the *Sunnah* (practices of Prophet Muhammad), the *Ra'y* (opinions of revered early believers) and the *Ijma* (scholarly consensus). The Salafi School is a version of *Ahl al-Hadith* known for its strict dedication to the Prophet's traditions through the practice of *Sunnah* and the reading of the Quran. This school has triggered many movements in various part of the Islamic world, either challenging or advocating blind interpretations of the *Hadith*.⁴

With the support of the ruling class of present-day Saudi Arabia, teachings of Abd al-Wahhab have become widespread. The Wahhabi movement, inspired by fundamentalists, has paved the way for the spread of the ideology of Salafi-Jihad.⁵ Salafi-Jihadists permit the waging Jihad not just against non-Muslims, but also against the Islamic regimes that have not applied the Sharia in full. In that propaganda, the US and other western countries are seen as the third and the last enemy who have invaded the Muslim world over the years in one form or another. The political dimensions of the Salafi movement are not just pushed by the network of Al Qaeda, but also adapted by groups where Al Qaeda is not influential. In the recent past, the Islamic State (IS) was able to take the Salafi-Jihadist notions to new lows by creating a *de facto* state around Iraq and Syria.

By its overwhelmingly radical political structure, the Salafi Sect has turned into a serious security threat for the regional and global political order. It has instigated and mobilised cadres from all over the Islamic world to join in its jihad. Tacit support from various West and Central Asian nations has allowed Salafists to get a foothold in weak states and instigate the radicalisation of youth, who join in one group or another. The transit of members from one

group to another indicates that the pull of Salafist ideology is more powerful than that of any particular outfit.

Modus Operandi

Benghazi and Derna have remained the traditional strongholds of the ASL. It is reinforced with cooperation of various Shura councils like the Benghazi Revolutionaries Shura Council (BRSC). Shura councils are moderate groups which advocate consultations among Muslims regarding their common affairs. The ASL's collaboration with Shura councils and other Jihadi groups strengthens its position in the conflict with Gen. Haftar.

In 2012, the ASB and the ASD had refuted any involvement in the attack on the US consulate. In subsequent years, the ASL has triggered 329 incidents in its clashes with "Operation Dignity" forces.⁶ In the period between 2012 and 2016, these attacks have accounted for a total of 1509 victims.⁷ ASL fighters have targeted the military and civilians during this period, though the attacks have mainly been against the military. Attacks on the civilian population have targeted supporters of rival groups with bombing and rockets. The attacks on individuals have also been carried out by kidnapping, assassinations, armed assault and sniper attacks. Weapons used have usually been small arms, sniper rifles and rocket launchers. The use of larger weaponry like tanks and portable missile launchers capable of taking down fighter jets, have also been reported.

Structure and Leadership

The founding leaders of the group were Mohammad al- Zahawi⁸ and Abu Sufyan bin Qumu⁹, who were leaders of their respective outfits before they merged. Other important leaders were Ahmed Abu Khattala¹⁰, Sheikh Faiz Attiya¹¹, Mansour al-Shalili¹², Abu Abdullah al-Libi¹³, Abu Tamim al-Libi¹⁴, Nasser al-Tarshani¹⁵, Hani al-Mansuri¹⁶, Wissam Bin Hamid¹⁷ and Abu Khalid al Madani¹⁸.

Ahmed Abu Khattala was with the ASB when he planned the attack on

US consulate. He is also said to have founded the Abu Ubaidah bin Jarrah rebel group. After the death of Al-Zahawai in September 2014, the leadership was taken up by Abu Khalid al Madani. Both Attiya and Madani were killed in 2017, which led to a leadership collapse.

Recruitment and Membership

The Al-Raya Media Productions Foundation was the ASL's media wing, managing the group's social media campaign¹⁹. Recruitment for the group relied heavily on platforms like Twitter, Facebook and Google Plus. The media propagated the group's social and cultural activities and its political goals. Recruits came primarily from Libya and trained in the ASL's training centre in Benghazi. The ASD also conducted training for Al Qaida network in Syria and Iraq.

Source of Funding

The group has been funded by Libyan expatriates for its *Dawa* (social welfare) campaign. For a while it was also supported by the interim government of Libya to provide for the latter's security.²⁰ The *Dawa* campaign was supported by Muslim expatriates as it provided security and ensured basic amenities to their co-religionist people. The ASL also organised cultural activities during Eid and Ramadan and opened religious schools.

Current Status

ASL and its incarnations have taken many forms over the years as its members have transited to other groups. Even after being worn down by years of fighting, these groups have managed to reemerge. The last major attack was in 2018 when Ansar al-Sharia, Derna Mujahedeen Shura Council and the Libyan National Army clashed in Wadi al-Arquab near Derna.²¹ ASL has been mostly inactive since then.

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ANSAR AL-SHARIYA TUNISIA

Background

After independence, Tunisia has been a country with a democratically elected head of the state. But on a downside, the politics of the state has been characterised by the sole monopoly of Democratic Constitutional Rally (RCD). The RCD enjoyed this privilege as the first political party after independence and then, for a time, was the only party when all opposition was outlawed.

The Tunisian revolution in 2011 overthrew the regime of President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali who had ruled the country since 1987. In the aftermath of the revolution, many non-state actors who were waiting to challenge the state got activated. Ansar al-Shariya Tunisia (AST) emerged as one of those non-state actors that tried to influence the political and cultural domain of post-revolution Tunisia. The idea was conceived in 2006 by a group of prisoners, who after getting released from prison in 2011 formed the AST. Seifallah Ben Hassine was the founder of this group. Soon enough, the AST was declared a terrorist organisation.¹

Introduction

AST was the largest Salafi Jihadist organisation in Tunisia and was constantly in conflict with Tunisian government. A clash between the Tunisian government and the Katibat Uqbah Ibn Nafi on the Algerian border was followed by the clampdown of August 2013.² AST was declared a terrorist organisation in August 2013 when the Tunisian government acknowledged the existence of an 'Allegiance Pact' between the AST and Al Qaida in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).³

In July 2014, AST declared its allegiance to the Islamic State (ISIS), which led to it losing relevance among its supporters as well as potential recruits.⁴ The following months led to a series of attacks and assassination attempts by the group against those with contrarian views. AST is a part of the Al Qaida network of organisations which allowed it to collaborate with other groups. It is closely associated with Ansar al-Shariya Libya (ASL), which has led to its sharing of resources and manpower. ASL is itself a cluster of groups with branches in many West Asian and North African countries. As an organisation, AST remained a threat between 2011 and 2015, after which, its leadership and cadre either migrated or got absorbed into other groups with similar goals.

Objectives

AST founders grew up in a country which was far from being a typical Islamic state. The country allowed liberals, socialists and secularists to shape the national politics. The goal of radical Islamists like ASL has been to introduce Shariya in the country of their operation. Its Tunisia branch has been one of the most prominent among the groups operating in the West Asian and Maghreb region.

The group's long-term objective has been to challenge the *status quo* of the Tunisian state and its western influenced values by transforming the society to the Salafi mould. It was able to activate when the central authority

of President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali collapsed. But the resistance it faced from civil society and the common masses came from decades of democratic values which the people had collectively subscribed to.

Ideology

AST is a part of the modern-day Salafi movement which aims to reintroduce that version of Islam which was prevalent in the earliest days of the religion. The Salafi movement's objective is not just to shape the social structure of the followers of Islam but also to create a political structure for adherents. The creation of a caliphate is an important goal of the movement. Salafism has existed since the earliest days of the religion, which has allowed it to influence various religious movements and schools of thought around the world. These movements have often taken overt radical stands due to their conservative views on religion, whereas the imposition of Sharia is considered a step in the direction of creating a fundamentalist political ideology.

Modus Operandi

AST's success has been attributed to their usage of *Dawa*, *Jihad* and *Hisba*. *Dawa* is charitable and missionary work that is undertaken to bring non-Muslims to embrace Islam. It is also used to provide aid and assistance in the more backward areas of the country. AST uses these charitable activities to divert attention away from its criminal enterprise.⁵

For the AST, *Jihad* and *Hisba* are interrelated concepts. *Jihad* means 'struggle', which is translated into action by waging war against those it considers as enemies of Islam. *Jihad* is waged within and beyond the Muslim community. *Hisba* permits acts of vigilantism towards Muslims whose acts AST finds un-Islamic. Freedom of speech, women's rights and human rights are values not accepted among Salafi sect followers.⁶

Violence against civil rights activists became common in post revolution Tunisia. The assassination of political opponents was carried out and even

foreign tourists were targeted. It is for all these reasons that the AST and the government's security forces were constantly at war with each other. AST was for a while associated with the Al-Nadha political party. The relationship of both these organisations became strained after AST adapted more violent tactics to achieve its goals.⁷ Presently, the group seems to have gone dormant.

Structure and Leadership

The organisational structure of AST was headed by Seifallah Ben Hassine (deceased) and his deputy leaders. The core leadership of AST comprised of Seifallah Ben Hassine (founding leader, Seifeddine Rais (spokesman), Wael Amami (deputy leader), Kamel Zarrouk (former deputy leader, deceased), Sami Ben Khemais Essid (former head of operations for Al-Qaeda in Italy), Mehdi Kammoun (senior leader), Hassan Ben Brik (head of Dawa committee), Ahmed al-Akrami (medical and humanitarian coordinator), and Youssef Mazouz (leader of AST's youth wing).⁸ The group relied on units of around 20 men who worked among the masses to fulfil their goals. The structure of AST is divided into northern, central and southern branches.⁹

Recruitment and Membership

The exact number of supporters of AST is hard to determine. An estimate suggested that since its inception in 2011, the numbers in the group exceeded 70,000.¹⁰ The group was able to amass such a following in a short span of time because of its emphasis on charitable and religious work. With the emergence of ISIS, the AST became one of its sources of recruitment. To promote its agenda, the AST extensively used both online platforms like Facebook and Twitter as well as grass-root engagement programmes at local schools. It was thus able to focus on issues which the Tunisian government had ignored.

The AST focused on promoting fundamentalist Islamist causes. The premise of its propaganda aimed at attracting fighters for terrorist outfits associated with the Ansar al-Shariya groups. The youth were enticed by the idea of becoming a member of a religious 'brotherhood'.¹¹ Another motivation

came from the youths' urge to defy the extant state structures and the policies of the Tunisian state.¹² As the AST declared its intention of creating a new caliphate, the third motivation was to contribute to the creation of an Islamic state.¹³

Sources of Funding

Funding of the organisation comes from both illegal activities and from countries like Libya, Yemen and Mali. Funding is also known to have come from Al-Qaeda, AQIM and donations for its charitable work.

Current Status

The group was active mostly from 2011 till 2015. AST was blamed for the attack on the US embassy and an American school on September 12, 2012.¹⁴ The following year they were implicated in the assassination of secular politicians Chokri Belaid and Mohamed Brahmi.¹⁵ Later, it found difficulty in operating openly due to increased confrontations with Tunisian government forces.

Over time, AST's leadership and members went into hiding or joined the ISIS and found fighting in Libya and Syria for the Islamic State. In June 2015, Seifallah Ben Hassine was reported to have been killed in Libya by a US airstrike; the report remained inconclusive due to lack of evidence till it was confirmed by a tribute from AQIM on March 3, 2020.¹⁶ But a July 2017 report suggested that Ben Hassine still remained at-large.¹⁷ The government has continued to crack down on members of AST who have gone into hiding.

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AL QAEDA IN ARABIAN PENINSULA

Introduction

Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) is a Sunni terrorist organisation and an Al Qaeda (AQ) affiliate based in Yemen. A strategic maritime location contributes to the core practices of AQAP in terms of facilitating, financing and smuggling. The group frequently acts as a node between the AQ and outlying franchises like the Al Shabaab, the Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and other terrorist groups in Egypt. AQAP emerged in the year 2009 from merger of the Yemeni and Saudi Arabian chapters of Al Qaeda. It is distinguished from other AQ branches as one of the most active groups among AQ's global network. A unique feature of the group is its proficiency in managing its social media campaign and propagating its fanatic narrative.

Although AQAP was formally formed in 2009, the group traces its roots to the Soviet-Afghan War when mujahideen fighters, including foreigners, were rendered stateless by their countries denying them re-entry after the war. These were then granted sanctuary in Yemen by its Saleh regime. While most former mujahideen integrated into Yemeni society, a small group remained determined to continue their violent jihad. As AQ leader Osama bin Laden

began funding the jihadist movement in Yemen, recruits and resources were rerouted from Afghanistan into Southern Yemen. A video produced by AQAP leaders suggested that the jihadi merger would include the Yemen Soldiers Brigade, another AQ franchise in Yemen. Four days after this video announcement, the group released a 19-minute video titled, “We Start from Here and We Will Meet at Al-Aqsa”, outlining their destructive ideology and goals.

Raymi, also known as Abu Hurayra, was the leader of AQAP till February 2020, when he was killed in a US counter-terrorism operation. Earlier, he had succeeded Wuhayshi following the latter’s death in 2015. So far, AQAP has not named Raymi’s successor or officially acknowledged his death.

Objective

AQAP has both local and global aims inspired by Salafi and Jihadi objectives. As Thomas Hegghammer argues, merging of local and international radicals in contemporary jihadi groups has led to hybridisation of their messages. For example, AQAP explicitly grafts the plight of the Yemenis under President Ali Saleh onto the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Similarly, the group seeks to expel foreigners from the Arabian Peninsula and spread jihad to Israel to ‘liberate Muslim holy sites and brethren in Gaza’. AQAP, in concurrence with Al Qaeda, endeavours to form an Islamic caliphate in the Arabian Peninsula by a union of states. According to Al Qaeda’s central ideology, “Al Qaeda will mobilise four armies that will march from the periphery of the Muslim world to the heart of Palestine: one from Pakistan and Afghanistan, one from Iraq, one from Yemen and one from the Levant.” AQAP asserts that it will form the army to be mobilised from Yemen.

AQAP has also worked to marginalise sectarian minorities, especially the Houthis in northern Yemen. It has accused Houthi insurgents of receiving foreign assistance from Iran and fights to impose Sunni religious law in Yemen.

Structure and Leadership

AQAP is hierarchical with a distinct division of work. It has a political head who lays down the prime objective and a military chief who plans executive details - this branch organises kidnapping and robberies. There is a propaganda cell that is responsible for recruitment, and finally in the religious branch, it has a theological mentor who is required to justify the acts that the military wing carries out.

AQAP's chief bomb maker, Ibrahim Al-Asiri, was responsible for the high-profile bombings, including the Christmas Day Bombing in 2009 and the Times Square Bombing in 2010. In 2011, the AQAP created a domestic affiliate called Ansar al-Sharia (AAS).

As per the International Crisis Group (ICG), AAS is AQAP's domestic insurgent arm in Yemen, drawing-in newcomers who were suspicious of AQAP, "which many Yemenis view as a violent instrument ... and is likely to trigger a military retaliation."¹

Since 2017, AQAP has suffered losses in its leadership against extensive Yemeni and international counter-terrorism operations. It is not clear if Asiri was killed in 2018 along with propaganda cell leader Abu Hajar al-Makki in a drone strike by the US. In the same year, AQAP appointed several regional leaders as well as a new military commander, a lesser-known jihadist called Ammar al-San'ani.²

AQAP's propaganda cell is responsible for its outreach in Yemen and Saudi Arabia. Its media channel is titled 'Al-Malahem', which is the group's official propaganda arm.³ The channel publishes a bi-monthly magazine in Arabic directed towards its Yemeni citizens and an English magazine called *Inspire*, which targets western readers.⁴ The group also publishes Al-Masra, a digital newsletter, which provides a regular update on Al-Qaeda and its affiliates.⁵ Post the killing of Abu Hajar al-Makki in 2018, the AQAP's Al-Badr Media Foundation announced its online presence to find protection from drone attacks and surveillance by its enemies.

Khalidi Batarfi, a former member of AQAP's Shura Council, was the top commander of the AQAP in the Abyan Governorate in Yemen. He escaped from the Central Prison in Al-Mukalla during an AQAP attack. At present, he has taken charge of AQAP's propaganda operations to strengthen the organisation's 'global image'.⁶ The head of the political branch of the group, Qasim al-Raymi, was killed on February 6, 2020, during a US counter-terrorism operation.⁷

Recruitment and Membership

The group depends heavily upon print, digital and social media to expand its support base. The media cell answers through its various magazines like *Inspire*, questions from its sympathisers about their objectives and how to participate in their mission. According to analyst Gregory Johnsen, *the magazine* helps AQAP to "reach, influence and inspire other like-minded individuals in Western countries...the magazine helps non-Arabic speakers to connect with the group without any hurdles".⁸ The *Inspire's* first issue in July 2010 included an article titled, 'Make a Bomb in the Kitchen of Your Mom', describing how to make a bomb using everyday items.⁹ In May 2017, AQAP released a video message from Qasim al-Raymi encouraging lone wolf attacks in the West—the first one using the banner of *Inspire*.¹⁰

Of late, AQAP has renewed its strategy and has started exploiting new prospects for recruitment as provided by social media sites like Twitter, Facebook and the like. On Twitter, for example, the AQAP started its own 'Ask Me Anything' (AMA) Twitter account in November 2014, answering questions such as "Why haven't there been further AQAP attacks inside the US? Why don't you move the war from Yemen to US soil?" etc. The job of resolving such queries from the jihadist perspective falls on Nasser bin Ali al-Ansi, an AQAP senior, who claimed responsibility for the Charlie Hebdo attack in January 2015. As soon as a Twitter handle is blocked by the authorities, the group begins almost instantly using a new name usually with minor spelling changes.¹¹

Since the Islamic State (ISIS) established its own affiliate branches in Yemen, the two groups have competed for recruitments and areas of influence, each pursuing a leadership role in the Salafi-jihadist movement in Yemen.¹² According to Yemeni officials, ‘real competition’ between the groups began in 2015 when AQAP followers were in their hundreds, while the ISIS, had only a handful supporters.¹³ Some AQAP cells have reportedly swapped their allegiance to the ISIS due to factors such as its global activities and better pay.¹⁴

According to UN experts, AQAP is estimated to have between 6,000 and 7,000 fighters in Yemen, indicating an increase from the US estimate in 2017 of “low thousands.”¹⁵ As per Dr Gregory Johnsen, member of the UN Security Council’s Panel of Experts on Yemen, the influx of domestic volunteers in AQAP continue but the nature of its threat is not as strong as intended; domestic insurgency in Yemen is strengthened though.¹⁶

Modus Operandi

AQAP has utilised both conventional and unconventional methods to recruit members and attack its enemies by means of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), kidnappings, shooting attacks, mail bombs and bombs on planes. In 2009, the group attempted to detonate a bomb on a Detroit-bound airplane by injecting chemicals into a package of Pentrite explosive in the bomber’s underwear, due to which, he has been called the ‘Underwear Bomber’. The group’s attempts drew more global attention and that led some analysts to consider it more dangerous than even Al Qaeda’s central branch, which is headquartered in Pakistan.

Apart from violent acts, the AQAP has also used non-violent methods to spread fear through its magazines like *Inspire* (English) and *Sada al-Malahim* (Arabic, meaning ‘Echo of Battles’). Through these publications the group aims at expanding its areas of influence, recruit more volunteers and to justify its acts of violence against the West. The group has also encouraged individuals to carry out lone wolf attacks by guiding them to connect with

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

its members and make bombs. The group usually promotes small scale but multiple attacks which cost less and have more impact.

In early 2020, the AQAP claimed responsibility for the attack on the US Naval Air Station, Pensacola, in Florida, which led to the killing of four and injuries to several others. In the same month, it carried out another attack in Al Hamra village in Abyan Governorate, Yemen, and this time, the target was Colonel Jamal Al Awlaki, a senior Yemini counter-terrorism official.

Funding Sources

AQAP receives substantial financial support from Islamic donations. It is also funded by cash bequests from rich individuals, a process that is much harder to track. Besides, AQAP does not require huge funding to be influential; for example, its parcel bombing attempt in October 2010 probably cost less than \$500 to engineer and deliver.¹⁷ AQAP's funding also comes from thefts and abductions for ransom. According to one estimate, the group has hoarded approximately \$ 20 million from ransoms.¹⁸ The group also seized large sums of money during the civil war in Yemen. There have also been reports of AQAP participating in gun and drug trafficking and forced 'marriages'.¹⁹ According to Yemeni analyst Ahmad Abd Allah al-Sufi, the group has also indulged in opium trading.²⁰

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10

DUKHTARAN-E-MILLAT

Introduction

The Dukhtaran-e-Millat (DeM) is unique in that it is an all-women terrorist outfit. It advocates the merger of Kashmir with Pakistan, its stance being based on radical Islamism.

Background

DeM was formed in 1989 by Asiya Andrabi to promote social practices based on fundamentalist Islamic ideas. The group later evolved to extend support to the pro-Pakistan separatist movement in Kashmir. It practiced what is known as ‘soft terrorism’ - promoting fanaticism without itself taking up arms. In the 1990s, the group staged protests against Muslim women venturing outdoors without wearing the *burqa* (veil) and threatened those who did so. They vocally supported the militant group, Lashkar-e-Jabbar, when its cadres hurled acid on two women in Srinagar for not adhering to the so-called ‘Islamic dress code’ in the year 2000. It has also opposed the circulation of ‘objectionable’, or ‘un-Islamic’ literature in the Valley. Thus, the DeM has mostly functioned as a radical pressure group.

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

While the group has not been actively involved in armed attacks, it has vocally instigated armed militancy against India and is prolific in its vicious criticism of alleged atrocities, mostly fabricated, of Indian security forces. In June 2000, it called for a strike to protest against unsubstantiated ‘custodial killings’ by security forces. It has often instigated strikes in tandem with the All Parties Hurriyat Conference, the most visible separatist political association in the Valley.

When Indian government announced the Ramadan ceasefire in 2000, the DeM vehemently opposed the move. Further, when Hurriyat leader Abdul Ghani Lone made remarks against some fanatic militant groups, the DeM called on the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba to take punitive action against him.¹ It is believed that the group also provides logistic support to militant outfits, for example, by acting as couriers to supply weapons and funds to them. In one case, the US State Department believes the DeM to be directly complicit in a parcel bombing attack on the BBC office in Srinagar in 1995. In this instance, a woman deposited an explosive laden box at the BBC office and the resulting explosion killed one individual and injured others.² Given the DeM’s role in assisting terror groups, as well its ties with Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), the Indian government designated it as a terrorist group in 1990 and banned it under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

The group’s leader, Asiya Andrabi, has remained a controversial figure for her advocacy of violent militancy and open incitement for Kashmir’s accession to Pakistan. In 2010, she was found complicit in mobilising, through her DeM cadres’ influence and contacts, stone-pelting protests across the Valley.³ In 2015, she publicly unfurled a Pakistani flag and sang its national anthem. In July 2018, India’s National Investigation Agency (NIA) took her into custody for a hate speech and for waging war against India.⁴ This was the third time, as she had been taken into custody in 2010 and 2015 as well, though released both times.

Ideology and Objectives

The group is radical Islamist in its ideology. It strongly advocates a strict adherence to fundamentalist values and conduct, and particularly pitches for a return to the women's status in mediaeval Islamist society. Its fundamentalist attitude leads it to impose regressive practices such as veiling of women and censoring literature deemed to be liberal or 'un-Islamic'.

Politically, the group is strongly pro-Pakistan and supports armed militancy to effect Kashmir's merger with Pakistan. It promotes violent pro-Pakistan terrorist groups operating in the Valley, and stages demonstrations against the Indian state. The DeM's ultimate objective is the fundamentalist Islamisation of Kashmir and its merger with Pakistan.

Modus Operandi

Unlike other militant groups, the DeM practices 'soft terrorism'. It is closely allied to armed groups that carry out violence and is also part of the ISI nexus. But it does not usually carry out armed attacks on its own, one exception being the BBC office bombing. Rather, it supplements the separatist movement socially, politically and logistically.

Socially, it pushes for radical Islamisation through protests and propaganda in educational institutions. The outfit is known to have supported anti-India protests often, along with movements to impose strict Islamic codes on the populace, particularly women. Some members are said to be teachers in religious schools in the Valley, who brainwash the youth into radicalisation.⁵

Politically, it exerts pressure on Indian authorities as well as political separatist entities like the Hurriyat through protests and provocative speeches. It acts as a pressure group for the Hurriyat to cooperate with the Pakistani agenda while acting as a thorn in the side for Indian authorities and security forces. Close ties with armed terrorist outfits adds to the group's nuisance value for both the Hurriyat and the Indian authorities.

Logistically, by helping in covert transportation and supply of arms and funds, the group assists militancy in the Valley.

Sources of Funding

Like all other Kashmiri separatist groups, the DeM also finds its principal patron in Pakistan's ISI. Illegal *hawala* transactions are instrumental to the group's funding network. Such transactions are generally through a series of middlemen and, in particular, to Islamic forms of commerce. Civil society groups of Kashmiri expats, such as the UK-based World Kashmir Freedom Movement, have also been involved in such transactions wherein, funds originating from the ISI, eventually find their way to the DeM. Hardliner Syed Ali Shah Geelani of the Hurriyat Conference was also once arrested for his involvement in these networks.⁶

Leadership

The chairperson and founder of the DeM is Asiya Andrabi, a radical Islamist religious provocateur and a vehement Pakistani stooge. In her own words in reference to her prior conversation with a Pakistani official, "I told them we are more staunch Pakistani patriots than they [the Pakistani officials] all were."⁷ Incidentally, she was married to Qaseem Faktoo, a founder of the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, the largest indigenous terrorist group operating in the Valley. Faktoo remains in jail for the murder of human rights activist HN Wanchoo.⁸ A large number of Andrabi's relatives have settled in Pakistan, with a nephew being an officer in the Pakistan Army.

Current Status

Despite the notoriety this group earned in the 2010s, its significance seems to be waning in recent years. Andrabi has been detained several times and several of her properties have been attached by the National Investigating Agency (NIA) on terror-financing charges. Elements of the *hawala* funding network have also been busted by Indian agencies in order to foil this group's activities.

The decline in the group's influence is not surprising, given that it often coerces the populace to adopt stringent and regressive customs. Condoning acid attacks on women for so-called 'un-Islamic' dress is evidently not the sort of posturing that wins popular support for a claimed 'social reform' movement. The group's success in the 2010 stone-pelting protests may be attributed to popular disaffection with the security forces and raked allegations against them over human rights violations, and not necessarily to public support for a fundamentalist Islamic regime under Pakistani sovereignty. The extreme stance of the outfit also carries with it a sort of stigma, as a result of which religious schools in Anantnag and elsewhere often deny association with the DeM, even when many among the school teachers are suspected to be members of the group.⁹

Other militant groups have begun to realise the declining influence of the group in Kashmir. For example, the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba has raised an all-women's outfit of its own, known as the Dukhtareen-e-Toiba (DeT), as an alternative to the DeM.

The DeT, unlike the DeM, have female recruits who undergo training to conduct attacks against Indian forces.

Conclusion and Future Prospects

While the DeM has had some success as a 'soft terror' group, blows recently dealt to its leadership and assets by the Indian authorities are likely to damage it in the long run. Its waning influence and excessive fundamentalism is likely to reduce its capacity for mobilising the populace and this is evidenced by the fact that important terrorist groups like the Lashkar-e-Taiba are turning away from it.

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THE HAMAS

Introduction

Hamas is a Palestinian Sunni Islamist extremist organisation-cum-political party. ‘Hamas’ is an acronym for the Arabic ‘Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiya’, i.e., the ‘Islamic Resistance Movement’. Its primary aim is to establish an independent state of Palestine under the Islamist banner. It is opposed to Israel’s occupation of the West Bank and its siege of Gaza, and is a political opponent of the secular Palestinian political party, the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO). Hamas has been implicated in a number of terrorist attacks on Israeli targets through suicide bombings, mortar shelling, launching rockets etc. Since its inception in 1987, it has refused to recognise Israel as a legitimate state.

Background

In the 1970s, following the Arab-Israeli Six Day War, Islamist activities linked with the Muslim Brotherhood was stepped up in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. Hamas was formed in 1987 as an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood in these territories.¹

The First Intifada

Hamas rose to prominence during the *First Intifada* (Uprising) in Palestine which was a popular movement against Israeli occupation. The First Intifada began in 1987, triggered by an incident in which an Israeli Defence Forces' (IDF) truck crashed into four Palestinian workers, killing them. Tensions between both communities were already high and the Palestinians alleged that the crash was a deliberate act of provocation. This led to widespread protests across the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in the form of rallies, civil disobedience movements, stone pelting etc. The highhandedness of the Israeli forces in quelling the protests, such as using live rounds against stone-pelters, only made matters worse.²

The Intifada involved moderate elements like the PLO, who were opposed to extremists groups like the Hamas, though all of them opposed Israel's occupation. Among them the Hamas gained notoriety for its attacks during the First Intifada. It had already begun to stockpile arms in the 1980s, prior to its official foundation, and by 1982, its military wing had been formed by Sheikh Ahmed Yassin. Sheikh Yassin was among the Palestinian refugees who had been displaced by the founding of Israel in 1948 to become a resident of the Gaza Strip; he later became a religious teacher.³ He was the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood in Gaza Strip, until breaking off from it in 1987 to be the principal founder of the Hamas.⁴

The First Intifada lasted six years until the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993. During the Intifada, the *Izz al-Din al-Qassam* Brigade was formed, which today is the principal military wing of the Hamas. This force became active in the 1990s and continues to be implicated in a number of terrorist actions.

The Oslo Accords

The First Intifada came to end in 1993 with the signing of the Oslo Accords between Israel and the PLO, which was then under the leadership of Yasser

Arafat. Under the Oslo Accords, the PLO accepted Resolutions 242 and 388 of the UN Security Council, which amounted to recognising the legitimacy of the State of Israel.⁵ The Accords also gave limited self-governance over the West Bank and Gaza Strip to the Palestinian National Authority (PNA).⁶ Hamas was staunchly opposed to the Accords and flatly refused the idea of a ‘two-state solution’.⁷ Thus, while the PLO agreed to abjure from violence under the Oslo Accords, the Hamas persisted with violent terrorism acts in the 1990s and even undertook suicide bombings against Israeli targets with the aim of derailing negotiations for the Accords.

The Second Intifada

The year 2000 saw Palestine blow up with the *Second Intifada*, also known as the Al-Aqsa Intifada. This Intifada was triggered by Palestine’s resentment against rapidly rising Israeli settlements in occupied territories. Matters came to a head when Ariel Sharon, the leader of the Israeli political party, Likud, visited the holy Temple Mount in Jerusalem which also has the Al-Aqsa Mosque, Islam’s third holiest site. This visit was highly controversial and was seen as Israel’s intrusion into Palestinian domain, triggering widespread protests and riots.⁸

Over the following months and years, the region experienced vicious incidents of violence, counter-violence and atrocities. During this period, the Hamas, along with another terrorist group called Islamic Jihad, carried out many bombings and acts of terror. The Hamas also gained significant political ground due to the PLO’s loss of legitimacy—first after the failure of the Camp David Summit between the US, Israel and the PLO, and then, after the decline of the PLO-led Palestinian Authority. Factions of the PLO’s political wing *Fatah* went over to join the Hamas and the Hamas began to gain public support for its role as an organisation that stood up to Israel and undertook social work for the welfare of the local population.

The 2006 Elections and After

In 2006, the Palestinian Authority elections were held in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The two main contenders were Islamists led by the Hamas, and moderates affiliated to the PLO, and represented by the Fatah Party. The Hamas achieved a clean sweep in the polls. However, the US and Israel refused to recognise the Hamas-led government. In the words of then acting Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, “Israel can’t accept a situation in which Hamas, in its present form as a terror group calling for the destruction of Israel, will be part of the Palestinian Authority without disarming.”⁹

Hamas stuck to its agenda of engaging in war with Israel and made this evident with a raid on the IDF, in which an Israeli soldier, Gilad Shalit, was kidnapped.¹⁰

Since Israel’s withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in 2005, the Hamas has engaged in the firing of rockets and mortars into the Israeli mainland, using the Gaza Strip as a staging ground.¹¹

These provocations finally led to Israel launching ‘Operation Summer Rains’ on June 27, 2006. Hamas leaders in Jerusalem and the West Bank were detained by Israeli security forces, while the IDF moved swiftly to target Hamas personnel and infrastructure in the Gaza. Ground operations, air strikes and drone strikes were used to target the Hamas. On November 26, 2006, Israel withdrew from the Gaza, and a ceasefire was signed between Israel and the Hamas. This was seen as a Hamas’ success in thwarting Israel’s attempt to crush it. However, the ceasefire remained fragile at best. In 2007, the Hamas continued firing rockets into Israel, prompting Israel to impose a blockade across the Gaza Strip, restricting the inflow of electricity supply, food and medical aid. It also conducted military raids in Gaza.

Operation Hot Winter

The conflict saw further escalation in 2008. Given the failure of the ceasefire

and the unrelenting rocket attacks by the Hamas, Israel decided to once again advance into the Gaza. On December 28, 2008, 80 Israeli aircrafts began bombing the Gaza Strip, thus starting the Gaza War also known as ‘Operation Cast Lead’.¹² In January, Israel began its ground offensive. Fighting came to an end later that month after 22 days.¹³ Both the Hamas and Israel have been accused of war crimes and human rights violations during this conflict. The Hamas, in particular, became notorious for its use of ‘human shields’ in violation of the Geneva Convention by having its fighters sheltered in civilian homes and neighbourhoods to deter Israeli attacks.¹⁴

Clashes between the Hamas and Israel have continued. Hamas has been consistent in targeting rocket attacks on Israeli settlements, while Israel has employed various counter-measures against these, with limited success.

Objectives and Ideology

Hamas is a Sunni-Islamist extremist organisation. Its principal aim is to establish an independent State of Palestine under an Islamic government. It does not recognise the legitimacy of Israel.¹⁵ As per its 1988 charter, Hamas subscribes to the Muslim Brotherhood’s founder, Hasan al-Banna’s assertion that “Israel will exist and continue to exist until Islam obliterates it.” However, in recent years, particularly by an announcement in 2017, the Hamas declared its intent to settle for a Palestinian State along the pre-1967 status.

Modus Operandi

Extremist Violence: The Hamas is principally an armed terrorist group. It has been prolific in the use of violent means, especially during the *Intifadas*, to further its agenda. In that, it has used bombs and suicide attacks, and in recent times, its weapons of choice are rockets and mortars fired into Israeli civilian areas. Armed with conventional small arms, it has often engaged in combat with Israeli forces.

Electoral Politics: The political wing of the Hamas is active in the Gaza

and the West Bank in advocating for an independent Palestinian State. It contested elections for the PNA in 2006 and engages in political dialogues with the moderate Fatah party and the governments of Israel and Egypt, among others.

Social Service: Taking a leaf out of the Muslim Brotherhood's book, the Hamas aims to win over local support through social welfare work. As per its covenant, "Members of the Islamic Resistance Movement [Hamas] should consider the interests of the masses as their own personal interests."

Given the Israeli restrictions and failure of the PNA, the Hamas has joined other NGOs to provide essential social services to the people of the Gaza Strip. The Hamas has played a key role in organising charity and setting up facilities for education, health, food, orphanages etc.¹⁶ This allows the Hamas to retain some popularity among the masses and assuages its image as a purely destructive and violent force. Interestingly, in 2021, the Hamas launched a Corona virus vaccination drive in the Gaza Strip using the Russian-made Sputnik V vaccine though shortage of vaccines remained due to the Israeli blockade. This was an unprecedented step of an internationally-designated terrorist group organising a mass-immunisation drive.

Global Reach

The Gaza Strip: The Gaza Strip is a part of Palestine and the primary centre of operations for Hamas. Most Hamas attacks against Israel emanate from Gaza, as a result of which Israel has blockaded and often raided the Strip.

West Bank and PNA: At present, the West Bank-based PNA functions as an interim government with limited self-governing powers over the Palestinian territories under Israeli occupation. It is led by the Fatah Party affiliated to the PLO. The Hamas and the Fatah have historically been rivals, having differences in approaches to secure Palestinian independence. While the Fatah is secular-moderate in its approach, the Hamas is Islamist-extremist.

Violence between both groups has been rife for years, especially since 2006. While Fatah supporters are targeted in the Gaza, the PNA, in tandem with Israeli authorities, targets Hamas supporters in the West Bank.¹⁷ However, in recent years, both groups have been moving towards reconciliation. In 2020, a breakthrough agreement was reached, when it was decided that elections will be held in Palestine—the first since 2006.¹⁸ It was agreed to form a national unity government for all Palestinian territories.¹⁹ Also, very significantly, the Hamas accepted the legitimacy of the Fatah-controlled PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people.²⁰ This process could bring an end to the intra-Palestinian conflict and to some degree restore the political legitimacy of the Hamas among the Palestinians, and possibly, with the international community.

Jordan: Since 1999, the Hamas has been banned in Jordan. However, it continues to attract support from Jordan's large Palestinian refugee population.²¹ Hamas' mentor organisation, the Muslim Brotherhood, has also been spreading pro-Islamist and pro-Hamas propaganda in Jordan.²²

Lebanon: Lebanon's political scene is dominated by the Hezbollah, a Shia Islamist extremist group. Historically, the Shia Hezbollah and the Sunni Hamas have had tense relations. However, in recent years, they have moved towards reconciliation. This reconciliation will allow the Hamas to open another front against Israel.²³ This will also allow the Hamas to bypass the Israeli blockade and get access to supplies and smuggled weapons.²⁴

Structure and Leadership

The organisational structure of Hamas consists of a Political Bureau, the Gaza Government and the Al-Qassam Brigades.

Political Bureau: This is the primary authority for Hamas and is led by Ismail Haniyeh since 2017. It has a *Majlis al-Shura* (the Central Council) as the main decision-making body for the organisation.²⁵

Gaza Government: This is the Hamas wing responsible for governance of the Gaza Strip. Following an internal election in 2017, Yahya Sinwar was elected as its head.²⁶ Following the Hamas-Fatah reconciliation deal, the governance of Gaza passed on to the PNA. Elections across Palestine are due to be held.

Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades: This is the notorious armed wing of the Hamas. It has executed suicide bombings, rocket attacks, mortar shelling, kidnappings and armed attacks against Israeli military and civilian targets. While on paper it comes under the authority of the Political Bureau, it has been found that this wing often operates independently without due authorisation.²⁷ It comes under the leadership of Mohammed Deif, who has been in hiding following a series of targeted Israeli airstrikes against him.²⁸

Sources of Funding

Donations: The Hamas gets a large proportion of its budget from charitable donations. Charity organisations based in the Gulf and the Western countries, along with the large Palestinian diaspora across the Americas, Europe and the Middle East, are the primary sources. These sources include the World Islamic Organisation (Saudi Arabia), Interpal (London) and Al Aqsa Fund (Germany).²⁹

Smuggling: Given the Israeli blockade of Gaza, the Hamas uses an extensive underground tunnel network to trade in goods with Egypt and Israel. In 2014, the Hamas generated revenue of around \$200 million through this tunnel trade. However, following an Egyptian clampdown on tunnels linking the Gaza to the Sinai Peninsula, the Hamas not only lost out on a great deal of this trade revenue, but also on essentials like cement and petrol, leading to an economic slowdown in the region.³⁰

Foreign Funding: It is well-known that countries like Qatar and Iran have been prolific in funding the Hamas. After its 2006 electoral victory, for some time, Iran provided the Hamas with nearly 15 million pounds per

month in financial assistance. While there was a slight dip in aid received due to conflicting interests during the Syrian civil war, Iran is once again was the Hamas' main supporter. As per Yahya Sinwar, Iran was the Hamas' "largest backer financially and militarily."³¹ Besides, as of 2020, over 260 million shekels worth of Qatari funding had been disbursed to the Gaza, most of it going to the Hamas.³² Together, the revenues from these and other sources allow the Hamas to meet its expenditures on governance, social welfare, infrastructure upkeep and extremist activities.

Recruitment

The Hamas has successfully tapped nearly all levels of Palestinian society, from doctors and lawyers to farmers, from men and women of all ages to minors below the age of 15 years.³³ Traditionally, the Hamas has relied on pamphlets to promote itself while also seeking recruits through mosques and educational institutions. It attracts more followers through its *Dawa* (social service and preaching) wing. Additionally, it attracts young recruits through schools, summer programmes organised by its military wing, sports clubs and other such associations. It has set up its own information centre, which harnesses modern social media to attract a larger following.³⁴

Current Status

The Hamas has been designated as a terrorist group by Israel, the US and the European Union (EU), among others. Some others like Japan, Australia and the UK consider the Al-Qassam Brigade to be a terrorist group, but have not classified the Hamas as a whole in this category. Russia, China, Iran, Syria and Qatar are some countries which do not consider the Hamas to be a terrorist group. The Hamas is also not designated as a terrorist group by the UN.

While the Hamas has limited classification as a terrorist group, in its form, it is also a political party and, through its social welfare work, a part of civil society. Through its recent agreement with the Fatah, it seeks to acquire greater political legitimacy. Unlike similar groups like the Muslim

Brotherhood, the Hezbollah and the Taliban, the Hamas is not a typical non-state terrorist actor. It is entrenched in Palestinian society and politics, with violence and terrorism being components of its overall functioning.

Further, unlike most Islamist terrorist organisations, the Hamas has no such objective like the establishment of a universal Islamic caliphate. Its policy is a mix of religious extremism and nationalism. It is not only an Islamist *jihad*, but also an armed struggle for the independence of the State of Palestine. This characteristic makes the Hamas unique and separate from most other Islamist terrorist organisations. Similarly, despite being a Sunni Islamist group, the Hamas does not adhere rigidly to sectarian differences unlike groups like the *Daesh* and Al-Qaeda who are fanatically anti-Shia. The Hamas gets aid from Shia nations like Iran and Qatar, and is moving towards cooperation with the Shia Hezbollah. This tolerance of sectarian differences also distinguishes the Hamas from other terrorist organisations.

Future Prospects

In recent years, the Hamas has to reduce its enemies. Its reconciliation processes with the Fatah, the Hezbollah and Syria are evidences of this fact. The reconciliation with the Fatah will give the Hamas legitimacy in Palestinian politics while making it easier for the international community to constructively engage with it. This will help the Hamas to shed off its pariah status. Should it be forthcoming in negotiations with Israel and desist from the further targeting of civilian targets, it will be seen less as a terrorist group and more as a political pressure group aiming for the self-determination of the Palestinian nation. Its reconciliations with the Hezbollah and Syria are more strategic in nature. These will give the Hamas more allies in its conflict against Israel. These processes will solidify the Iranian alliance system - a nexus of state actors like Iran, Qatar and Syria combined with non-state actors like the Hamas, the Hezbollah and the Houthis, with external backing from Russia. In the larger Cold War picture in the Middle East, this system would pit the Hamas against the Saudi Arabian bloc, which is closely allied with the US, Israel, the UAE and Egypt.

How the Hamas will balance these contradictory schemes of international legitimacy and armed resistance against Israel will come to define its nature and success in the coming years. An instance of failure to balance these was already in existence when Israel invaded the Gaza in the aftermath of the 2006 Palestinian polls. Despite its legitimate electoral victory, the Hamas was not allowed to enjoy its success due to it being a terrorist group and, therefore, was illegitimate as a governing authority.

In the coming elections (postponed indefinitely from July 2021), if the Hamas successfully sheds off its pariah status, it may well enjoy legitimate political power over Palestinian territories, which would be invaluable for it to be internationally recognised as a national representative. That would require the Hamas to make compromises like it made with the Fatah to gain legitimacy. Working along these lines in the future, the Hamas may perhaps cease to be a violent extremist organisation.

Inherent contradictions of being an armed terrorist group and a political party define the Hamas, and this characteristic, may prove to be either a strength or a cause for its downfall.

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12

HIZB-UL-MUJAHIDEEN

Introduction

The *Hizb-ul-Mujahideen* (Party of Holy Warriors or HM) is an Islamist separatist group instigating Kashmiri separatism through armed violence. It supports the merger of the Indian Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) with Pakistan. It is considered the Kashmir Valley's largest armed separatist group.

Background

Founded in 1989 on the advice of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency in North Kashmir by the Jamaat-e-Islami Party, the HM's prime aim is to perpetrate violence in support of separatism. Another reason for creating it was to undermine the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), an outfit that advocates the independence of J&K from both India and Pakistan.¹

The principal founders of the HM are Master Ahsan Dar and Yusuf Shah alias Syed Salahuddin. Salahuddin was earlier a member of the Muslim United Front, a political party in J&K and was a candidate in the state's controversial 1987 legislative elections. Following that election, he was arrested for inciting

violent agitations under the Public Safety Act (PSA) and after his release in 1989, he crossed the Line of Control (LoC) into Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), where he was prompted by the ISI to form the HM and start a '*jihad*' in Kashmir.²

In 1990, the HM formalised its structure. Salahuddin was made the 'patron' of the outfit, while Hilal Mir was appointed *Amir* (Chief).³ In 1991, with support from the Jamat-e-Islami, Salahuddin was made 'Supreme Commander', while Ahsan Dar was forced to step down after being charged for misappropriation of funds.⁴ Dar was subsequently arrested by the Indian authorities in 1993.

It was under Salahuddin that a rivalry between the two factions in HM began to emerge, with one faction led by Salahuddin and the other by Mir. This culminated in the HM splitting in 1993. Soon after, Mir was killed by Indian security forces. Following a gradual disarming of the JKLF, the HM achieved armed dominance across the Valley through the 1990s. With little or no armed resistance from pro-independence groups like the JKLF, the HM became the largest separatist group in the Valley, implying the dominance of pro-Pakistan groups in armed militant separatism. While the JKLF entered into peace negotiations with the Indian government, the HM stepped up its terrorist actions and set up 'death squads' to derail the talks. It went so far as to kill JKLF ideologue Abdul Ahad Guru in pursuit of this goal.⁵

In 1994, the HM moved to a closer affiliation with Pakistani terrorist outfits. Along with groups like the Lashkar-e-Taiba, Harkat-ul-Mujahideen and the Harkat-ul-Jihad-e-Islami, it collectively formed a common command structure called the United Jihad Council (UJC). This allowed all Pakistan-sponsored terrorist outfits to work together on their Kashmir '*jihad*'. However, it is also true that the HM continued to experience tensions with foreign fighters involved in the conflict. According to a 1999 statement by a surrendered HM commander, "We local militants clashed often with the foreigners over the ruthless killings of civilians."⁶

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

In 1998-99, India and Pakistan participated in the Lahore Summit to reach a peace agreement and to decide on certain Confidence Building Measures (CBMs). This being a bilateral process, it did not involve Kashmiri separatist groups or militant outfits as stakeholders. Thus, this period saw rising violence in the Valley instigated by outfits such as the HM in order to derail the Indo-Pak negotiations. One such incident took place in 1998, when HM militants carried out a daring attack in the neighbouring state of Himachal Pradesh and killed over 30 Hindu civilians.

In 2000, there was a halt to HM-led violence in the Valley following back-channel peace negotiations between the Indian Army and the HM leadership. This culminated in the HM declaring a unilateral ceasefire in July, with its commander Majid Dar calling for unconditional talks. This declaration led to a reduction in violence as the talks continued. However, this step was not appreciated by other separatist groups and the united efforts of the ISI and the Islamist militias ensured the failure of this breakthrough. Following the ceasefire announcement, other outfits like the Lashkar-e-Taiba perpetrated acarnage in the Valley as well as in Jammu, killing scores of civilians. In August 2000, terrorist attacks and retaliations claimed the lives of over 90 civilians within 24-hours.⁷

Further pressure from Pakistan and hardcore Islamists led to a marginalisation of Majid Dar in the HM, culminating in another split. The dominant faction emerging from this split was led by Syed Salahuddin, who was opposed to talks with India from the beginning.⁸ In 2003, Dar was killed by gunmen belonging to an Islamist group while several commanders loyal to him were side-lined, or murdered by pro-Salahuddin cadres. Reportedly, clashes took place between the rival factions' cadres in several HM camps. In this internal struggle for consolidation of authority within the HM, the Salahuddin faction went so far as to murder Parvaz Mohammed Sultan, the editor of the local News and Media Alliance (NAFA), who was prolific in reporting about the intra-HM conflicts.⁹

While the HM was embroiled in a violent tussle for leadership after Dar's killing and the collapse of talks, India resumed its counter-insurgency operations against the group. In a major operation in 2003, the group's 'chief commander of operations', Saif-ul-Islam, was killed by Indian security forces. On July 9, 2016, Indian forces killed Burhan Wani, a young HM leader in an encounter. Presenting a youthful face for militants against -India, Wani enjoyed much support from the Valley people and attracted a number of recruits to the HM via social media. His killing led to massive unrests and protests in the Valley against Indian rule. It was also a massive blow to the HM. In some of the worst protests in a decade, over 90 civilians were killed in clashes with security forces. The latter too suffered many casualties.¹⁰

The 2016 unrest demonstrated the HM's success in radicalising the Kashmiri populace against the Indian State. The killing of Wani gave it an opportunity to instigate ordinary citizens from different walks of life—primarily the youth—to join in street protests against the State, raise slogans, engage in stone pelting and even join militant groups as fresh recruits. A public funeral was held for Wani, where over 200,000 people were reportedly present, indicating his vast following as a separatist militant icon and his image as a 'martyr' for the Kashmir 'jihad'.

Following Wani's death, one Riyaz Naikoo rose to become the HM's J&K commander, with Salahuddin coordinating its activities from Pakistan as the 'supreme commander'.

Naikoo was responsible for attacking local government officials, killing police officers, and extorting local businesses and other crimes. He adopted Wani's *modus operandi* by weaponising the social media to radicalise the masses and drive the youth to join the so-called jihad. He carried a bounty of 12 lakh rupees on his head and was the most wanted terrorist in the Valley.¹¹ He was killed in an encounter with security forces in May 2020.

Over the years, security forces and HM cadres have been involved in various encounters and counter-operations, leading to fatalities on both

sides. The HM remains the largest indigenous Kashmiri militant group and a significant thorn in the state administration's efforts to restore peace and order in the Valley.

Ideology and Objectives

The HM is an Islamist jihadist extremist organisation. It believes in armed resistance against India with the objective of 'liberating' Kashmir and uniting it with Pakistan. It not only combats Indian forces, but also pro-independence elements like the JKLF, which the HM considers to be a 'traitor' to the Kashmiri Muslim cause. It targets non-Muslim local residents through selective killings. In the words of Burhan Wani, its ultimate goal is to "unfurl the flag of Islam on Delhi's Red Fort."¹² The HM represents a blend of narrow regionalism and religious extremism, a pattern common to most such Kashmiri separatist groups.

Modus Operandi

Like most Kashmiri separatist outfits, the HM indulges in insurgency against the state. It does not hesitate to attack civilian targets and is known to have targeted non-Muslims in and outside the Valley. Muslims deemed to be 'traitors' against their so called 'jihad' are also targeted. It uses assault rifles and grenades usually sourced to it by patrons in Pakistan. The HM also threatens to carry out suicide bombings, though, only a few such incidents by it have been recorded. In 2020, over 40 kg worth of explosives were seized from a HM cell, which possibly was to be used in a car bombing.¹³

Sources of Funding

The outfit has been funded by Pakistan's ISI since its inception to carry out anti-India activities in the Valley. Over the years, the HM has expanded its sources of funding to include more patrons. For example, in 2012, a court in Delhi charged the aides of the Hurriyat Conference leader Syed Geelani with indulging in *hawala* rackets (transactions through middlemen) to

finance the HM and other militant groups in the Valley.¹⁴ As per the National Investigation Agency (NIA), the racket was extensive and reached even up to Saudi Arabia.

The HM is also known to have sourced funds through charities, donations in religious events and extortion.¹⁵ On multiple instances in 2019 and 2020, Indian investigative agencies seized properties of local Kashmiri residents worth over one crore (10 million) rupees connected to money laundering schemes to finance the HM's activities in the Valley. One trust-fund of sorts which is said to have been involved is the Jammu and Kashmir Affectees' Relief Trust (JKART).¹⁶ Counterfeiting has also helped the HM in securing funds and to use this money to destabilise the Indian economy.

Network

For the outfit's founding and growth, the HM has always been closely associated with Pakistan's ISI. It is also allied to most local pro-Pakistan militant groups, while being hostile to pro-independence groups like the JKLF. It has often received support from the Hurriyat Conference, the political association which advocates Kashmiri separatism.¹⁷ Another socio-political group closely associated with the HM is the Jamaat-e-Islami, the group which is reportedly the parent organisation from which the HM first originated.

Through its association with Pakistan and its active role in the UJC, the HM enjoys close ties with foreign militant groups. It has often worked in tandem with the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) and the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) in coordinating terrorist attacks and providing logistical support to one another.

The HM-LeT nexus was evidenced when Salahuddin was photographed in Pakistan with the LeT leader Zaki-ur-Rahman Lakhwi following the November 2008 Mumbai attack. The HM has also cooperated with the Afghan group Hizb-i-Islami, headed by the infamous Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, having sent its cadres for training in Afghanistan with the group.

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

The HM has ties with Al-Qaeda and was a party to sheltering Osama bin-Laden before he was killed by US forces in 2011. The compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan, was owned by two brothers who were members of the HM.¹⁸ The other groups which allegedly support the HM, are the US-based Kashmir American Council and the London-based World Kashmir Freedom Movement.¹⁹

Leadership and Structure

The HM is led by a central command headed by an *Amir* (chief) and a commander-in-chief. Further decentralisation is affected through district and local commanders. To coordinate local operations in Kashmir, the HM is divided into five regional divisions. These are:-

- Central Division: Operating in Srinagar, the largest city in the Valley and the summer capital of J&K.
- Northern Division: Operating in the districts of Kupwara, Bandipora, and Baramulla.
- Southern Division: Operating in the districts of Anantnag and Pulwama.
- Chenab Division: Operating in Doda and Udhampur districts.
- Pir Panjal Division: Operating in Rajouri and Poonch districts.

Apart from its armed wings, the HM also has a propaganda wing known as the 'Kashmir Press International' and a women's wing, '*Banat-ul-Islam*'.²⁰

Leaders

Syed Mohammed Yusuf Shah alias **Syed Salahuddin**

He is the chief of the HM, and the highest authority in the outfit since the ouster of its founder Ahsan Dar in 1991. He is presently based in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, from where he coordinates the group's activities in the Valley. He is

also the head of the UJC, the umbrella organisation of anti-India Pakistani and Kashmiri terrorist outfits. He is on the 'Most Wanted List' of the Indian NIA and the US State Department's 'Specially Designated Global Terrorist'.

Saifulla Mir alias **Ghazi Haider**: In a UJC-HM meeting in 2020 following the deaths of Burhan Wani and Riyaz Naikoo, Ghazi Haider was appointed as the new head of operations for the HM in the Valley.

Ghulam Nabi Khan alias **Amir Khan** : He acts as deputy to Salahuddin. He was designated as a terrorist under India's Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) in 2020.

Zaffar Hussain Bhat: Bhat handles the financial matters of the HM. He was also designated as a terrorist under the UAPA in 2020.

Saleem Hashimi: He acts as the spokesperson for the HM.

Cadre and Recruitment

It is estimated that the HM has cadre strength of around 1500. It is an indigenous Kashmiri outfit, and, therefore, relies more on local Kashmiri youth as recruits and not as much on Pakistani or other foreign fighters. Most of these recruits cross the LoC into PoK or Pakistan to receive arms and training from the ISI, army, or some other terrorist outfits.

Anti-India sentiment pervading among the Kashmiri populace helps the HM in its recruitment of its fighters. Frequent crackdowns, arrests and allegations of human rights violations have further radicalised sections of the population to fight for *azadi* ('freedom') from India. Prolific use of social media has allowed the HM to capitalise on this sentiment. Social media 'icons' like Burhan Wani and Riyaz Naikoo thus managed to achieve popularity among the masses to attract large number of recruits.

The HM also tries to recruit Pakistani fighters to its cause. In 2012, Salahuddin and the leader of Al-Badr (an offshoot militant group of the

HM), Bhakt Zameen Khan, jointly addressed a public rally in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, to attract recruits for the Kashmir jihad.

Current Status

While Indian counter-insurgency operations have greatly weakened the HM by eliminating many of its fighters and its leadership, it continues to be the largest militant group in the Valley. Pakistan continues to support its activities to destabilise India and large sections of the Kashmiri populace continue to support it. The killing of Burhan Wani in 2016 and the revocation of J&K's special status in 2019 are two recent incidents that have exacerbated unrest in the Valley.

Through the ISI and the UJC, the HM has cemented ties with other terrorist groups, particularly Pakistani ones. Its cooperation with the LeT and the JeM in coordinating attacks is a worrying factor for the Indian authorities. The recovery of over 40 kilos of explosives in 2019 averted a potentially disastrous attack which was jointly planned by the HM and JeM. This incident indicates the potential dangers of cooperation between the HM and the other groups and the scale of havoc they can wreak in the Valley and even beyond, given their record of attacking outlying targets.

Future Prospects

The HM has been and will most likely remain the most significant indigenous Kashmiri militant group. Prospects for its disarmament and peace with India are few, given the failure of peace initiative undertaken by Majeed Dar. Not only will Pakistan and other Islamists oppose such a move, but as long as hardliners like Salahuddin remain at the helm of the outfit, peace will remain elusive.

While the radicalisation of the Valley continues to be a useful asset to the HM, this may not be the case in the near future. With the abrogation of the region's special status and its transformation into a union territory governed

for the time being by the Central Government, it is expected that the region may well see economic prosperity and political stability soon. These two phenomena would likely help in loosening the grip of extremism in the Valley and as the Kashmiris turn towards issues of development and prosperity, the HM may start to lose its significance. However, this is a long-drawn and sensitive process that depends on the success of the government's progressive plans for the region. But notwithstanding that, the HM will continue to be operative as long as the Indo-Pakistan dispute lasts. Pakistan's military establishment will continue to use the HM as a local proxy to destabilise India now and in the foreseeable future to meet its own political imperatives.

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13

HIZB-UT-TAHRIR

Background

Islamic fundamentalism has been an ongoing threat for the past five decades, expanding from its origin in the Middle East. Its idea was born during a turbulent time, a time in which European colonialism came to an official end and a new era of Arab independence began. New ideologies such as Arab nationalism, Pan-Arabism and leftist socialism filled the vacuum in the search for Arab unity, freedom and economic success. In reaction to these secular Arab ideologies, a new political ideology, based on Islam and the motto of ‘return to the original message of Islam’, sprang forth. So was Islamist fundamentalism born, and from its birth, it styled itself as nothing less than the ‘saviour’ of Muslims and the harbinger of their success and glory. One such movement against these secular forces was the Hizb- ut-Tahrir (Party of Liberation).

The Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HuT) is a transnational Islamic fundamentalist group operating in over forty countries with a focus on Europe, the Middle East and Asia. The group claims to be a political party that adopts non-violent means to propagate the ideology of Islam. Its objectives are strictly political,

i.e., to re-establish the caliphate with structures and conditions like the ones of early Islam.

The HuT was founded in 1953 in Hebron by Taqiuddin al-Nabhani (1907- 1977), previously a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, who was inspired by the Islamic activist and thinker Sayyid Qutub. Nabhani's book - *Nidham ul-Islam* - remains the ideological foundation of the organisation, as it contains 186 articles of the 'Constitution for an Islamic State'. The HuT rejects modern and secular state structures and democracy as "man-made, humanly derived and un-Islamic", and, therefore, does not participate in any secular electoral process. However, the HuT does not reject modern technology or its advantages. The group allegedly maintains its headquarters in London.

Objectives

One of the HuT's main objectives is to 'free' all Muslim societies from Western ideological influences by fighting against the dominance of 'imperialistic' Western regimes. It basically aims at the establishment of an Islamic state where all aspects of human life would be guided by the Sharia. The establishment of the Islamic state, according to the HuT, would be in three stages. In the first stage, the organisation would educate and indoctrinate its ideology to the common people; in the second, it would focus on spreading its ideas among the people who hold power in the government, military and civil services and in the third, it would proceed to establish the Islamic state. The Islamic state, according to the HuT, would be ruled by a Caliph or Khalifah. The caliph would appoint the Amir and the military head who would lead jihadi activities against non-Muslims (Sharma and Behra, 2014).¹

The HuT stresses on the practice of jihad in its publications. The group advocates waging jihad to seize power, with an emphasis on doing so in a non-violent way. Once in power, it is not clear if and how jihad will then be used to spread the message of Islam, which would be one of the obligations of all Muslims. In its proposed Constitution for an Islamic State, the group states

that its foreign relations with states such as England, America and France are to be considered as “at war”. Another issue that the HuT consistently addresses is the rejection of ‘infidel’ societies and ‘apostate’ state regimes. It has opposed the Arab regimes in the Middle East for their limited implementation of Islamic Sharia law and accused them of blasphemy. According to the HuT, notions such as democracy, liberty and sovereignty of states contradict the law of Islam.

HuT Ideology

The HuT aims at establishing a global caliphate and presents its Islamist ideology based on the writings of Taqiuddin Nahbani as an alternative to both capitalism and secular democracy. It insists that it seeks to re-establish the caliphate only in the Muslim world, not “in any of the western countries, including the US.”² As a solution to the problems in the Middle East, the HuT proposes the restoration of a caliphate and the end of Israel.³ It uses anti-Western propaganda to advance its Islamist objectives. For example, the HuT blames western domestic and foreign policies for purported anti-Muslim discrimination in the West as well as for the violence against Muslims in Muslim-majority countries.⁴

According to the HuT book titled, “The Methodology of Hizb-ut-Tahrir for Change”, the world is being governed by the *Kufr* (disbelievers) and hence it has become *Dar-ul-Kufr* (Land Governed by Disbelievers), and to overcome this problem, it is obligatory for Muslims to wage a war and implement Islam.⁵ Its method of making changes is inspired by the methods of Prophet Mohammad in establishing a state and society through the divine rules of *Dawah* (Inviting People to Join in Ummah). Likewise, the HuT works to re-establish a caliphate, bringing back the “rule of Allah” and conveying the message of Islam to the world by limiting itself to *Dawah* and not by violence. Through *Dawah*, the HuT also includes those Muslims lands which purportedly do not function as per its rules of Allah and, therefore, are not considered as *Dar-ul-Islam* (Land of Islam). The focus is to convert Islamic

lands to Dar-ul-Islam and then change their societies to Islamic societies. It also aims at defeating Jews and Christians to establish pan-Islamism.

Although the HuT claims to be a political party, which is truly Islamic in its ideology, it rejects the idea of secular and democratic political parties in Islamic States. If a party has to be established, it must be Islamic and must ensure proper and legitimate rule of a caliph as its head of the state. While the HuT promotes the concept of a caliphate, it does not recognise the so-called caliphate created by the Islamic State (ISIS or IS) because of it being an armed movement. On July 2, 2014, the HuT published a statement denouncing the ISIS's June 2014 declaration of an 'Islamic State' because it lacked the authority to create or secure a caliphate in Syria, both internally and externally.⁶

Methodology

The goal of the HuT is to establish a global caliphate under the divine rule of Allah. Its primary ideal of functioning comes from the Quran, the Hadith and the Sunnah. By proclaiming the divine Islamic way as the only acceptable path, the HuT has renounced everything else as *Kufr* (Disbelief).

The group considers all religions other than Islam like Judaism, Christianity, and ideologies like Communism, Socialism and Capitalism as *Kufr* religions and ideologies. It considers the followers of these *Kuffar* and those who believe in Capitalism, Socialism or Communism as *Kufr* (disbelievers).⁷

As mentioned, the HuT has positioned itself as a non-violent, pan-Islamist and fundamentalist political group that considers itself to be a superior socio-political party as compared to democratic entities. It urges people to give up the idea of nationalism and associate themselves with Allah and his divine rule. The HuT propagates an Islamist narrative of Muslim grievances and victimhood,⁸ as exemplified by its recent statements and protests against the French government⁹, or the statements favouring Kashmiri Muslims and criticising the Government of India.¹⁰

Although the HuT has been vocal about its views on non-violent methods of struggle, on several occasions, it has called for committing acts of violence against Jews through its propaganda machinery. In 2002, HuT leaflets found in Denmark urged Muslims to kill Jews “wherever you find them and turn them out from where they have (sic) turned you out.”¹¹ The HuT supports not only violence against Jews in general, but also promotes offensive jihad against Israel.¹²

Structure and Leadership

The Hizb-ut-Tahrir, as an organisation, is rigidly centralised and hierarchical in manner, comprising of a leadership committee and headed by the *Amir*. Not all of its leaders can reveal their identities, hence, the group is organised in small cells of five to six members. Its membership is spread out and led by provincial committees, which further delegate duties to local committees, who are in-charge of rural and urban centres. There are study circles which undertake the task of Dawah at individual levels in villages and towns.

The global leader of the HuT is Ata Abu Rashta (b. 1943), who is an Islamic jurist, scholar and writer. He gained proximity with the founder of the group, Taqiuddin Al Nabhani, and gained prominence during the First Gulf War. Later in 2003, he became the Amir of the HuT and is based in Beirut, Lebanon.¹³ Abdul Wahid is the chairman of the HuT in Britain, while Ismail al-Wahwah is the leader of the HuT in Australia. Prominent leaders of the Pakistan chapter are Naveed Butt, Imran Yousafzai and Shehzad Sheikh. Naveed Butt, who hails from Islamabad, did his degree in electrical and computer science from the University of Illinois and has been the media spokesman of the HuT in Pakistan.¹⁴ In Bangladesh, the group is headed by Mohiuddin Ahmed, a lecturer at the Institute of Business Administration, Dhaka.¹⁵

Hizb-ut-Tahrir Chapters around the World

After the death of Al-Nabhani in Beirut in 1977, the HuT spread to other countries. Although the support base of the HuT was small, it managed to create its presence in 50 countries, including the United Kingdom, Germany, and Middle East countries, Central Asia, Pakistan, and Bangladesh besides some Southeast countries. In South Asia, the HuT is active mainly in Pakistan and Bangladesh. The group is, however, banned by more than 20 countries of the Middle East, Central Asia, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. (Sharma and Behera, 2014).¹⁶

Apart from South Asia, the HuT is actively involved in radicalisation programmes in countries like the UK, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Russia, China, Tajikistan, Indonesia and Australia.

Recruitment and Membership

The group accepts Muslim men and women as its members regardless of whether they are Arab or non-Arab, white or coloured, since it is a party for all Muslims. It invites all Muslims to further Islam and adopt its systems regardless of their nationality, colour or *Madhabib* (Schools of Thought) as it looks at all of them from the viewpoint of Islam.¹⁷

Given the fact that the HuT has a wide base with more than a million members around the globe, its structure makes it difficult to actually estimate how many members and sympathisers it has. Its recruitment policy is heavily influenced by the region in which it is working. For example, in Central Asia, it targets socially hostile and unemployed widows and the youth. Numerically, it has its largest membership in Uzbekistan, estimated to be around 60,000. There are approximately 3,000–5,000 members in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, while in Kazakhstan, it has about 300 members.¹⁸

In Europe, especially in Britain, the HuT has attracted more-educated, lower to-middle-class people. In the past, students from colleges and

universities, lawyers, doctors, professional men and women have become followers of the Hizb-ut-Tahrir.¹⁹ Its strength in Indonesia is not known, but it organised an international conference on the topic “Reviving the Caliphate”, in Jakarta on August 12, 2007, which was reportedly attended by 80,000 people.²⁰ In Indonesia, the HuT has penetrated into educational institutions, mostly universities and has a sizeable number of followers. The HuT also has substantial followers in other Muslim countries like Iran, Iraq, Algeria, Sudan, Yemen, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Jordan.

The HuT has a well-maintained website which contains its message, literature and other information that would serve the purpose of enticing educated youth to the group. It makes full use of the internet to spread its ideology. Various web pages can be accessed in multiple countries and languages - all designed to target the full spectrum of Muslims. Intellectual, overly critical and challenging texts and books are offered as ‘enlightening’ documents for Muslims well-established in the “imperialistic Western world.”²¹

Online magazines and leaflets, on the other hand, deal with the day-to-day problems of Muslims in their regional environments. The content is highly propagandistic and often deepens the people’s wounds of their disadvantaged positions by demonstrating their “inferiority and helplessness” under their current regimes. Slogans and headers such as “Re-establishing the Khilafah State is the Only Way to Free Ourselves from the Oppression of the Western Colonial Powers”, or “Islam is the Only Permanent Solution to Crime & Corruption in Society”, are designed to offer the audience no other valid solution other than the Hizb-ut-Tahrir’s Islamic ideals.²²

Modus Operandi

HuT leaders follow the model adopted by Prophet Mohammad to claim Mecca by influencing small groups of citizens so that when the attack began, there would find assistance. Likewise, the HuT believes that it should build classrooms to engage with communities in what it calls informed and political

debates. Its work with the community is aimed at raising awareness about the HuT's ideas and consolidating itself by asking for support of powerful groups in the community.

In Britain, the HuT seems to have gone through many stages. Announcements of the hijacking Israeli and Jewish airlines were made public and a series of civil unrest instigated under the leadership of a Syrian immigrant and former Syrian Brotherhood member Omar Bakri Fostock, also known as Omar Bakri Mohammed and another Syrian, Farid Kass. The activities have included conferences held at the Wembley Conference Centre and Trafalgar Square. The HuT aims at forcing Muslim students to join the movement and intimidate Sikh, Hindu and Jewish students.²³

Funding Sources

Funding for group events is primarily obtained from private donations as well through public campaigns. Most of the money is made by the HuT centre in London. Private donations from supporters owning local businesses donate to regional HuT branch offices. While the HuT leadership committee receives support mainly from businessmen and Muslim supporters, it is also reported that its members pay 10 percent of their income to the organisation. Besides, the HuT is backed by rich sheikhs from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries who subscribe to the group's pan-Islamic agenda. In addition, HuT members make collections at the time of Haj. Apart from many prominent people like members of Parliament, there are rich businessmen, government officials, and military officials in Islamic lands who have been providing the HuT with finance, guidance and much more.²⁴

Arms Procurement

Although the HuT is not directly involved in armed operations, it is known to be supportive of militant activities. According to one HuT member in Central Asia, the HuT acknowledges Muslims fighting with guns in their hands against the American 'invaders'.²⁵ According to one source, the HuT

has an armed wing called the Harkat-ul-Muhajirin Britaniya founded by Abdulkuddum Zaiuum, a former HuT leader. The group has been training its cadres in chemical and bacteria war, in addition to dealing with sophisticated weapons, including bombs and landmines.²⁶

Hizb-ut-Tahrir at Present

The group has a presence in more than a dozen of countries. However, from 2001 onwards, it has been banned in many countries but nevertheless it continues to operate in most. Some of the HuT members have joined violent extremist groups like the Al Qaeda, ISIS, Nusra Front and the Ansarullah Bangla Team.

In spite of their use of Jihadi terminology and the fact that they play a part in radicalising Muslim youth, there is no evidence that the HuT is a direct participant in terrorism in the West. Its approach and actions are intended at manipulating and destabilising societies and its key elements. The HuT represents a long-term threat of Islamic insurrection. What makes the HuT dangerous is the way it legitimises the cause of creation of a caliphate. But its gradualist ideology has mostly failed to spread religious antagonism so far and its elitist recruitment policy is considered unlikely to favour its ultimate aim of overthrowing the established order.²⁷

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14

INDIAN MUJAHIDEEN

Background

The Indian Mujahideen (IM) evolved from radical groups like the Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI), the Student Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) and the Asif Reza Commando Force (ARCF).

Its emergence in the early 2000s happened not in the form of a group or a movement, but rather as a network of cells. The organisational foundation of the network lay in the idea which dates back to the period before India's independence.

1941 was the year when the JeI was founded by Maulana Sayyid Abu'l-A'la Mawdudi. His decision to form the group was motivated by a rise in nationalism among the larger Hindu population of the subcontinent in the 1920s and his apprehension about the Muslim league being able to adequately protect the interests of Muslims.

The Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JIH) was founded after the partition to focus on the activities of the organisation in India while, the JeI shifted its operation to Pakistan. The JIH is a key group promoting religious orthodoxy.

Its work is primarily focused on promoting the social wellbeing of the Muslim population. It also works on advocacy and representation of Muslim's rights. The SIMI's broad membership and support base included students from Madrasas with which it communicated by publication of periodicals. The JIH and its extension SIMI have disassociated itself with the terrorist activities of the IM. While the banning of SIMI was opposed by its parent organization, the JIH, it has maintained a distance from the activities of IM.

Introduction

Events which unfolded closer to the rise of IM was the creation in 1977 of the SIMI in Aligarh. SIMI was the student wing of JIH which was later banned by the Indian government. Asif Reza Khan's setting up of the ARCF was another vital development; The ARCF set up the attack on the American Centre in Kolkata with the help of SIMI and Pakistani terrorist groups. It is for this reason that the leadership of JeI, SIMI and ARCF have overlapped.¹

SIMI was a part of a larger movement brewing internationally. It got support in the form of funding and connections which helped it get access to resources in Pakistan and West Asia. Increased support was also facilitated by the movement of workers from India to West Asian countries. Exposure to the larger events and happenings in the Muslim world reshaped the views of the JIH and SIMI. A more assertive and radical approach was adopted SIMI following its members experiences in West Asia. This assertiveness was later translated into the activities of the IM.

Ideology

The belief system of these groups is shaped by the rise of Hindu nationalism in the 1920s and 1990s and the sense of insecurity caused by it amongst Muslims. The JeI and later the JIH were created to protect and promote the interests and rights of Muslims. The JeI evolved in its natural course which was completely different from the approach adapted by the JIH. Due to their background, all these groups are related to each other.

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

In its early years, the JIH's approach was to coexist with the larger population of India. It is for this reason that its style of functioning was accommodative; it also channeled its resources in organising charitable work. Till much later, its demands did not center around introduction or transformation of a political system according to its preference. Its focus post-independence was on Iqamat-e-Deen (Establishment of Religion).² The JIH had even been promoting secular and democratic values which were once seen as *haram* (forbidden).³ But these views were echoed only by a moderate section of the group. The radical section started the SIMI and was willing to openly call for Khilafat in India. Khilafat in India meant imposing the Quran and the Shariya as the *de facto* law and Jihad as a means to achieve that. The JIH advocated Islam and its laws not just for the Muslim population but also for everyone else as a solution for the problems faced by the country.

Objectives

The IM's intention can be gauged from the manifestos released by it. Its operations fulfil the sole purpose of inflicting terror by detonating a series of blasts in various parts of the country. The goals of IM can also be understood by looking at the rhetoric of SIMI in the 1990s. It incites violence and provokes Muslims to support the cause of creating a Khilafat (Caliphate) in India to 'safeguard' the Muslims. The creation of a Khilafat is the end goal, but in the meanwhile, its manifestos and pamphlets openly urged the Muslims to destroy temples and attack Hindus.⁴ To fulfill this goal, the IM reached out to Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), the JeI and other extremist groups in Pakistan to support in training of its volunteers.

Modus Operandi

The series of bomb blasts that happened between 2002 and 2013 were at first not claimed by the IM. The existence of the IM was not known as yet, which led to the Indian government believing that the attack was carried out by the Lashkar-e-Taiba, or any other Pakistani terrorist group. Connection between

the IM and these blasts was established only when some IM operatives were captured.

Officially, the existence of the IM only became known in November 2007. Over the years, 30 of its attacks have been documented across the country. Casualties from these attacks have around 600 deaths and injury to 2679 others.⁵ Attacks at the Varanasi's Dasashwamedh Ghat, the Shramjeevi Express bomb blast and the Diwali serial bomb blasts in Delhi in 2005 highlighted an impending crisis that was about to unfold in subsequent years. Next year, the Mumbai serial bomb blast led to the death of 209 individuals. In this period, the attacks also took place in both Tier I and Tier II cities though the places frequented by foreign tourists were avoided. The bomb blast in 2010 at the German Bakery in Pune had a slightly different approach. It was the first time that the IM had chosen a place which was frequented by both Indian and foreign tourists. After the attacks, the outfit was listed as a terrorist group by the Indian government and by the United States government the next year.

Recruitment and Membership

In the initial few decades after independence, the JIH was able to function freely as it was not associated with any terror charges. Regardless of that, the group represented the interests of the Muslim community and was associated with the Muslim masses. The SIMI was able to recruit members in huge numbers through the JIH because of the organisation's pre-independence roots. Muslim youth were attracted to the more radical rhetoric of SIMI when they felt insecure from the rising Hindu nationalism of the 1990s. In the following years, the membership of SIMI reached about 20,400, with 400 of those being full-time members and the rest being regular members.⁶ The membership mostly came from India while operatives from Bangladesh and Pakistan have also been found. The IM network has emerged from that lot.

Leadership

Asif Reza Khan of the ARCF was a vital cog in the setting up of the IM

network. He was able to expand his network to groups in Pakistan when he was imprisoned in Tihar Jail. While imprisoned there, he met Masood Azhar and Omar Saeed Sheikh, both of whom were of Pakistani origin. Masood Azhar, being the founder of Pakistan's Jaish-e-Muhammed (JeM) and a mastermind of the 2001 attack on the Indian Parliament, provided impetus to the IM network beyond the Indian border.

Asif Reza Khan and his brother, Amir Reza Khan, along with Aftab Ansari, have links with criminal syndicates operating both in India and the Persian Gulf region. They along with Mohammed Sadiq Israr Sheikh have developed ties with terrorist groups in Bangladesh and Pakistan. Mohammed Sadiq Ishrar Sheikh and Riyaz Ahmad Mohammed Ismail Shahbandri (also known as Riyaz Bhatkal) were crucial in recruiting volunteers to the IM cause.

Other key leaders of the IM are Abdus Subhan Usman Qureshi and Iqbal Shahbandri (also known as Iqbal Bhatkal), Riyaz Bhatkal's brother.

Sources of funding

Donations, direct funding, smuggling, extortion and kidnapping are the sources of funding for the IM network. Donations and direct funding from South Asians living in Persian Gulf are important cogs in the overall financing. Funding happens through the hawala network with the D-Company of Dawood Ibrahim being an important financier.⁷ Extortion and kidnapping to raise funds are also seen to be coming from Amir Reza Khan and Asif Reza Khan who ran their operations in Kolkata.⁸

Current Status of the Group

In 2008, the Batla house encounter in Delhi's Jamia Nagar helped put a halt on the operations of IM. The police managed to arrest Mohammed Saif and Afzal Mutalib Usmani in the raid and killed two others. Based on intelligence from arrests in the following days, the authorities managed to shut down dozens of cells and operations throughout the country.

On 28th August 2013, the Bihar Police along with the National Investigation Agency (NIA) arrested Yasin Bhatkal, one of the founders of IM, on the Indo-Nepal border. His arrest helped to convict operatives and terrorists who were arrested in the following years. In 2014, IM's chief bomb maker was arrested. Waqas is a Pakistani national who was involved in the 2013 Hyderabad blasts, the 2012 Pune blasts, the 2011 serial bomb blast in Mumbai and the 2010 Jama Masjid shootout.⁹ Three other operatives were arrested from Jaipur and Jodhpur based on the intelligence given by Waqas; it is said that they were planning an attack.

In 2018, IM operative Ariz Khan, who was involved in serial bomb blasts in 2007 and 2008, was arrested. He was arrested in Uttarakhand on the India-Nepal border. Ten years back he was present in the Batla house flat but had managed to escape. He was involved in the blasts outside the courts of Lucknow, Varanasi and Faizabad, the Jaipur bomb blasts in 2008, the Ahmedabad bomb blast in 2008 and the Delhi serial bomb blast of the same year. A total of 165 people had died in these blasts.¹⁰

In 2018, two terrorists arrested in connection with the 2007 Hyderabad bomb blast case, were sentenced to death while a third was sentenced to life imprisonment.¹¹ Riyaz and Iqbal Bhatkal remain at large in Pakistan as has been reported by Yasin Bhatkal.

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15

ISLAMIC STATE IN IRAQ AND LEVANT

Background

The Islamic State rose in 2013 and has its origin in the events that followed the death of the King of Jordan. As part of tradition, the new king anointed in 1999, granted pardons to inmates in the country's prisons. One of the inmates was Ahmad Fadil al-Khalayleh, who is more known as Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. He was in the Al-Jafr prison with other inmates who were notorious for their extremely radical drives to 'purify' Islam. The pardon granted to them was an error on the part of king's administration.

In prison, Zarqawi had become a leader with followers who were like family to him. After his release, he headed to meet Osama bin Laden, who was in Afghanistan at the time. A few years earlier he had volunteered to join the fight in Afghanistan against the Soviets. He arrived there in 1989 and became a veteran by the time he returned home in 1993. His second trip there led him to lay the groundwork for a future Islamic state. He struck a deal with Osama bin Laden to spread Al Qaeda's network in the Levant countries of present-day Turkey, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Libya, Iraq and parts of Palestine. Al Qaeda provided initial funds, coordination and support to

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

Zarqawi to establish its networks and training camps independently. Zarqawi decided to set up the first training base in Herat, Afghanistan, with the help of his contacts from Jordan and some former prison colleagues.¹ His second base of activities came up in Iraq after he was forced to flee Afghanistan following the US bombardment of Kandahar.²

Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad was the earliest version of the Islamic State, which was founded in the same year as Zarqawi's meeting with Osama bin Laden.³ In 2004, the organisation renamed itself as Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI); it had by then come under the scrutiny of intelligence agencies. To curb unwanted attention, a rebranding attempt in January 2006 led to the creation of Mujahideen Shura Council (MSC), Shura Councils being an important aspect of Islamist governance. A few months later, the MSC was again rebranded as the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) led by Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, as by now, Zarqawi had died in a US airstrike.

Introduction

'*Daesh*' is the name used by many in the Arab world for 'Al-Dawla al-Islamiya fi Iraq wa al-Sham' or the Islamic State of Iraq & Levant (ISIL) - Al-Sham in English is translated as Levant.⁴ The name Daesh is considered derogatory by the jihadists, who instead prefer to call it as Al-Dawla al-Islamiya, or simply the 'Islamic State' (IS). It is common to use the term ISIL, which gives a more accurate representation to what the group calls itself. Some in western media also use the name as 'Islamic State of Iraq and Syria' (ISIS) as the term 'Levant' is not in common use.

The rise of the IS and other terrorist outfits in West Asia happened in tandem with the creation of power vacuums from Iraq to Libya when the authoritarian regimes collapsed. The Arab Spring and the fall of Saddam Hussain gave opportunities to radical elements to take over. The endless cycle of violence and conflict in the Muslim world drew volunteers from far off countries to join the fight in these lands. For their involvement in these conflicts, the West and the United States (US) have been targeted by

these groups. The ISIS evolved by tapping into this perpetual crisis. Sectarian conflict in Syria and Iraq during the Syrian civil war and after the fall of Saddam Hussain's regime precipitated into the conditions that allowed IS to take shape. The Sunni population from various tribes in these states, who were against the Shia population over competing interests, joined and supported the emerging IS.⁵

Objective

The sudden rise and fall of the IS reflects the shortcomings of its objectives and methods of achieving it. Like Al Qaeda, it wanted to establish an Islamic regime and expand its imprints around the world. It was successful in achieving the first goal for a while after setting up a capital in Raqqa, Syria. Declaring the creation of a Caliphate symbolised its attempt to revisit the Muslim world's past glory. Zarqawi had once dreamt of fashioning himself after Nur ad-Din Zengi, a 12th century ruler from Damascus. Nur ad-Din Zengi is known for unifying numerous Muslim kingdoms and defeating a European crusader army.

Ideology

The overtly violent and radical nature of the IS distinguishes it from other terror outfits. IS cadres are followers of the Salafi sect of Islam, which preaches a version of the religion that prohibits any deviation from its mediaeval practices. Its interpretation of Shariya is unique, strict and self-serving for this very reason. The IS has shown intolerance and extreme violence towards people of other sects and religions like the Kurds, Shias, Christians and Yezidis. It even declared non-conforming Muslims not abiding by their views to be non-believers.⁶

Modus Operandi

One feature distinguishing the IS from other terror outfits has been their campaign to control territory, not just in the country of its origin, but

also beyond that. No other terror outfit had previously attempted that on a scale that it was able to achieve. It made this possible by arming itself with sophisticated weapons seized from the Iraqi and Syrian military. Its transformation from insurgency to full-fledged military acts happened with a mix of guerrilla and regular warfare tactics, and that helped it take over towns without resistance.

IS equally used social and traditional media through their Al Hayat Media Center which published *Dabiq*, its monthly magazine.⁷ *Amaq* News Agency was the other news outlet which contributed to the propaganda machinery.⁸

Leadership and Structure

In the order of succession, Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, Abu Ayub al-Masri, Abu Umar al-Baghdadi and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi are the four most important leaders of the IS.⁹ Abu Ayub al-Masri was an alias of Abu Hamza Al-Muhajir who took over the reins of Al Qaeda in Iraq after the death of Zarqawi. He was born in Egypt and was a member of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ). Like so many other jihadists he was trained in Afghanistan as a bombmaker. Abu Umar al-Baghdadi took over as Emir after the transition of AQI to the Islamic State of Iraq. He died in 2010 and was succeeded by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who led the expansion of the outfit to Syria and renamed it as ISIS. In June of 2019, it was estimated that the members and fighters of the IS was somewhere around 14,000 to 18,000, which had increased from 2,000 to 3,000 from the time of its earliest activities in Iraq.¹⁰

Recruitment and Membership

Economic incentives, indoctrination and inducements are the three methods that drove the IS membership.¹¹ Membership of the outfit mainly comprised of Sunni Muslims from Iraq, Syria and across the Muslim world who had volunteered to travel and join the cause. The idea of being part of a new Caliphate is believed to have attracted gullible volunteers who were especially targeted through a social media campaign.

Social media campaign was part of the indoctrination tactics used to lure foreigners both as members of the State and as fighters. Its social media campaign focused on representing life in the IS, its armed actions and the fallout of the war, besides targeting the US and its allies. The media campaign relied on the use of visual medium to better communicate the 'righteous' life in the Caliphate. This propaganda machinery is estimated to have attracted 25,000 foreign fighters by mid-2015,¹²

Economic incentives and inducements were focused on young soldiers. Inducements in the form of marrying them to what has become known as 'ISIS brides' in the media and payment of salaries in exchange for their services were exciting offers to a lot of marginalised youth.

Sources of Funding

Prior to taking the form of a State, the IS' initial funding as an organisation came from donors in Syria, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Kuwait.¹³ Later, extortions, ransoms, donations, sale of oil and natural resources, besides slavery, smuggling and looting became the usual sources of income to run the IS economy.

Like all economies, any attack on infrastructure in its territory affected the IS' revenue. Its revenue in 2016 was an estimated \$56 million, which was a drop from the previous year's collection.¹⁴ Income from its smuggling activities ranged from \$150-200 million a year, while its main source of income from the sale of oil was estimated to have earned them revenue of \$1.5 million/day.¹⁵ Other major sources of income came from the trafficking of migrants, selling of drugs and ransom extracted from foreigner entities. Kidnapped foreigners were publicly executed when ransom demands were not met. The execution of James Foley, displayed in the Global Post, was one of the most infamous instances which sent out a clear message of IS brutality. In another case, a Scandinavian company paid a ransom of \$70,000 to bring back their employee.¹⁶

Current Status

The IS was defeated in December of 2017 and operations to eradicate them from Syria took place by March 2019.¹⁷ Baghdadi was killed by US forces in October 2019. Since then, it has disintegrated into sleeper cells, and stateless terrorists have merged with the local population in various West Asian countries. Radicalisation of these individuals, both men and women, pose a challenge for governments around the world, impact of which has started to emerge. In recent years, the IS has adopted a new tactic wherein it claims responsibilities for attacks happening around the world. In 2015, the first of these attacks took place in Paris, which led to death of 129 individuals. Few years after their defeat in Syria, a bomb blast on Easter Sunday in Sri Lanka killed 321 individuals.¹⁸

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JAMIAT-UL-MUJAHIDEEN

Introduction

The Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen (JuM) is a pro-Pakistan Islamist extremist terrorist outfit which fights for the merger of Jammu and Kashmir with Pakistan. It emerged as a breakaway faction of the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM) in 1991.

In the 1980s, an Islamist separatist group known as Ansar-ul-Islam emerged in Kashmir to provide a pro-Pakistan alternative to the pro-independence Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF). The Ansar-ul-Islam was led by Hilal Ahmed Mir, alias Nasirul Islam, who hoped to unify Islamists under a common banner to wage armed *jihad* against India in the Valley. While Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) wished to turn this initiative into an armed wing for the Jamaat-i-Islami political party, Nasirul Islam opposed this.¹

Groups like the Ansar-ul-Islam united under the banner of the HM, Nasirul Islam maintained his opposition to the Jamaat. However, the HM's founder, Syed Salahuddin, a recipient of ISI's patronage, supported the association of HM with the Jamaat. These differences led Nasirul Islam to

create a breakaway faction known as the HM-Nasirul Islam in 1990 with the help of other HM leaders like Ghulam Rasool Shah and Manzoor Ahmed Shah. Sheikh Abdul Basit was named the group's chief.² In 1991, this group was renamed as the Jamiat ul-Mujahideen.³

Background

In 1991, the JuM assassinated a government official, Mohammed Sayeed. In 1992, it killed human rights activist H.N. Wanchoo. In 1993, the JuM carried out a bomb blast at an army cantonment, leading to 29 deaths. In September 2000, members of the JuM and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) infiltrated an army battalion headquarters in Budgam district and killed eleven army personnel. In January 2001, security forces thwarted the JuM's plans for a Republic Day attack when six militants, including Muzaffar Mirza, were apprehended in Srinagar and Kolkata, West Bengal.⁴ Later that month, the group's divisional commander, Showkat Ahmed, was killed by security forces.

In 2002, the JuM claimed responsibility for what is known as the "Kaluchak Massacre". A Pathankot-Jammu bound bus was boarded by three terrorists in combat uniform, who forced the bus to a halt near Kaluchak, close to Jammu, and killed the driver and conductor. They also attacked all other passengers. As army personnel approached the spot, the terrorists fled towards the army family quarters, and attacked family members of security personnel. The incident ended with the killing of all three attackers. The end toll was 31 dead and nearly 50 injured. Casualties included civilians, army family members and army personnel.⁵

The JuM is a member of the United Jihad Council (UJC), an umbrella organisation of several Pakistani and Kashmiri terrorist outfits, whose common aim is to wage *jihad* ('holy war') against India. The UJC, of which the JuM is a part, claimed responsibility for the 2016 Pathankot attack.⁶ Six heavily-armed attackers infiltrated the Indian Air Force base at Pathankot, Punjab, and in the attack that followed, seven security personnel and one civilian are said to have been killed. The UJC claimed responsibility for the attack.

Ideology and Objectives

The JuM is an Islamist extremist terrorist organisation. Its primary objective is the separation of Jammu and Kashmir from India and its merger with Pakistan. Like other Pakistan-sponsored groups, the JuM not only opposes India's rule, but also opposes pro-independence groups like the JKLF, which are against a merger with Pakistan. The JuM also opposes the All Parties Hurriyat Conference, which is a non-violent separatist political association in Kashmir. It rejects the Hurriyat's claim to be the legitimate representative of the Kashmiri people and is also against its talks with India.

The JuM strongly believes in an armed struggle to achieve its objective of 'Azad Kashmir' (Free Kashmir), and thus, is opposed to India-Pakistan peace initiatives.

Modus Operandi

JuM operatives use assault rifles, grenades and IEDs (improvised explosive devices) to cause havoc in their areas of operation. They are known for targeting military targets, often in *fidayeen*-style attacks. A *fidayeen* attack is essentially an attack carried out by a 'suicide squad' of sorts, with the fighters knowingly and willingly carrying out attacks where they are certain to be killed, thus achieving so-called 'shahadat' ('martyrdom'). They also conduct assassinations of individuals who they perceive to be threats or 'enemies' to their cause. Such individuals may be law enforcement officials, government officials, human rights activists etc.

Sources of Funding

Like most Kashmiri separatist groups, the primary funder of the JuM is Pakistan, specifically the ISI. Kashmiri expats across the world have also been involved in funding this outfit. Organisations like the UK-based World Kashmir Freedom Movement, along with individuals residing in Pakistan and Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) have been involved in actively sourcing

funds to the JuM. Criminal extortions in the Valley have also helped the group to raise funds for terror actions.⁷

Network

The JuM is a member of the United Jihad Council (UJC), thus allied to other Islamist groups in Kashmir and Pakistan. This allows the JuM to cooperate with groups like the HM, Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashkar-e-Taiba. While the JuM itself is a relatively minor group, it enhances its capacity for wreaking carnage by working in tandem with these much more powerful groups.

The group is also a member of the five-member Kashmir Resistance Group. This is an umbrella organisation, with its other members being the Muslim Janbaz Force, Al Jihad, Al Fateh, and Hizbullah. The JuM chief, Ghulam Rasool Shah, is also the head of the Kashmir Resistance Group.

Cadre and Recruitment

The JuM is a relatively minor group in the region. It mostly comprises of local Kashmiri youth, but due to a shortage of manpower, it also relies on recruits from Pakistan. Its cadre strength cuts across sectarian lines. The training of its cadres takes place in the Valley as well as in PoK, with Muzaffarabad being an important base.

Kashmiri citizens' disaffection against the Indian state is a key factor contributing to the radicalisation of youth who are motivated to turn to militancy. The JuM, like all other separatist groups, aims to capitalise on this sentiment. It publishes a monthly magazine called *Mahaz-e-Kashmir*, which spreads its propaganda and details of the group's various activities. Evidently, this magazine is another means by which the group attempts to draw recruits.

Areas of Operation

The group mostly conducts operations in the Valley, particularly in the districts of Srinagar, Kupwara, and Pulwama. However, on instances, it has struck in Punjab and Jammu also.

Structure

The JuM is headed by an *Amir* ('chief') as its political head. Its military hierarchy comprises a commander-in-chief and a vice commander-in-chief, under whom come four divisional commanders and then come the district and area commanders.⁸ It also has a specialised armed wing known as the Al Jabbar Squad.

Leadership

Hilal Ahmed Mir alias Nasirul Islam: He was one of the foremost Islamists at the inception of Kashmir militancy. By founding the Ansar ul-Islam, he led the Islamisation of Kashmiri separatism, and also contributed to the founding of the HM and the JuM.

Ghulam Rasool Shah alias General Abdullah: Following Mir's death, Shah became *Amir* of the group, and is believed to be residing in PoK from where he directs terror activities. He was earlier in Indian custody, but in February 2000, he escaped from Srinagar and is still at large.

Other Important Leaders: Engineer Mohammed Shah, chief commander; self-styled Col. Shamas, district commander; Ghulam Nabi Shah, general secretary; Abdul Malik, commander-in-chief; Ghulam Mohammed Butt, launching chief; and Jamil Ahmed, spokesman.

Current Status

The JuM has generally remained a relatively minor group and except maybe for one or two instances, it has not featured in any high-profile incident in the Valley. According to reports, its cadre strength has dropped below 100 in recent years. It was severely weakened in 1996 when many of its leaders were eliminated in encounters with security forces, which led to a near-collapse of the organisation. There is no evidence to suggest the group's recovery since then. It remains weak, and according to J&K Police, security forces are close to shutting down the group's operations entirely.⁹

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JAMMU KASHMIR LIBERATION FRONT

Introduction

The Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) is a separatist terrorist organisation advocating for a state of Jammu and Kashmir to be independent of India and Pakistan. It is distinct from other separatist groups in that it opposes Jammu and Kashmir's merger with Pakistan and also because it is not ideologically Islamist.

Background

The origins of the JKLF lie in the erstwhile Azad Kashmir Plebiscite Front, a political party operating in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK) and founded in 1965 by Amanullah Khan and Maqbool Bhat.

This organisation had an armed wing known as the Jammu Kashmir National Liberation Front (JKNLN). The Plebiscite Front was the first group to publicly assert Kashmiri independence as its cause as opposed to secession to Pakistan.

The JKLNLF was responsible for many acts of violence since its inception.

In 1966, Maqbool Bhat crossed the Line of Control (LoC) back into Indian-controlled Jammu and Kashmir with the aim of recruiting and training guerrillas for an armed struggle against India. In 1968, Bhat was nabbed by the Indian authorities and awarded a death sentence for murdering a policeman in Handwara. However, he managed to escape and crossed the LoC into PoK in 1969.¹

Following his escape, Bhat met Hashim Qureshi and Ashraf Qureshi in Pakistan. The Qureshis' were cousin brothers from a pro-Pakistan political family, and while they harboured pro-independence sentiments. Bhat convinced them to join the JKNLF. In January 1971, both brothers hijacked an Indian Airlines aircraft named 'Ganga', which was bound from Srinagar to Jammu and forced its diversion to Lahore, where they held all passengers hostage and demanded the release of 36 JKNLF prisoners in India.

However, when the Indian government refused to accede to the demand, the hijackers, under pressure, released the prisoners. They along with members of the Plebiscite Front and the JKLNF, including Amanullah Khan, were arrested by the Pakistani government. However, these arrests were primarily to absolve Pakistan of guilt rather than being a genuine crackdown on terrorism, especially after the Indian government banned Pakistani flights over Indian air space between what was then known as East and West Pakistan.

Following the hijacking, Amanullah Khan was jailed in the Pakistani province of Gilgit-Baltistan on charges of being an Indian agent. However, following public protests, the Pakistani authorities released him in 1972. With most of the Plebiscite Front and JKLNF now in tatters following the Pakistani crackdown, Khan migrated to the UK. On May 29, 1977, he founded the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) by transforming the UK chapter of the Plebiscite Front.

Bhat, who had also been released by the Pakistani authorities, once again crossed into the Indian half of J&K, but was arrested following a failed bank robbery attempt and awarded a second death sentence.² In 1984, the JKLF's

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

armed wing kidnapped Indian diplomat, Ravindra Mhatre, in Birmingham, UK, and demanded Maqbool Bhat's release. However, before the Indian government could respond, Mhatre was killed and in retaliation, Bhat was hanged by the Indian government.³ The British government cracked down on the JKLF following this incident and Amanullah Khan was deported from the UK, following which he returned to Pakistan.

In 1988, the JKLF was involved in a twin bomb attack on the Central Telegraph Office and the Gulf Club of Srinagar. This was the first major terrorist attack in the Valley. In the coming years, the JKLF would be responsible for killing bureaucrats, politicians, security personnel and Hindus in the Valley.⁴ Soon after Bhat's execution, a new leader emerged in the JKLF. Returning from training camps in PoK, Yasin Malik crossed into J&K in 1989 and became a part of the JKLF's core leadership. Malik was actively involved in planning terrorist operations and would eventually be responsible for several of JKLF's notorious actions over the next few years before being arrested by the Indian authorities.

In 1989, the JKLF was complicit in the infamous kidnapping of Rubaiya Sayeed, the daughter of Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, who was then India's Home Minister. The kidnapers demanded the release of five jailed militants in exchange for their hostage. With the Home Minister interceding, the Indian government accepted the kidnapers' demands and released the five militants. In exchange, Rubaiya Sayeed was released. This incident caused much public resentment against the JKLF and Mirwaiz Farooq of Kashmir (the Islamic religious head of the region) declared it as 'un-Islamic'.⁵ This incident also contributed to a declaration of a state of emergency in J&K by the Indian government, with the Army being given special powers to neutralise terrorist groups. Another fallout of this incident, was the creation of Al-Umar Mujahideen. Mushtaq Ahmed Zargar was one of the terrorists involved in the Rubaiya Sayeed kidnapping, and during this incident he developed differences with the JKLF. This resulted in him forming an offshoot group called Al-Umar Mujahideen, which would adopt a pro-Pakistan Islamist ideology.

Following the declaration of emergency and the escalation of counter-terrorist operations by security forces, the Valley plunged into chaos with militant groups like the JKLF at the forefront. The JKLF, along with groups like the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen contributed to the 1989 exodus of Hindu Kashmiri Pandits from the Valley. The Pandits, who were the original inhabitants of the Valley, were coerced by groups like the JKLF to leave their homes and occupations and overnight turn into internal refugees in their own country. The militants destroyed homes, public infrastructure, burned buses and attacked politicians, contributing to the chaos in the Valley in their attempt to force out all Kashmiri Pandits. It is alleged by the Indian authorities that Yasin Malik masterminded this forced expulsion of Pandits.⁶

In 1990, the top JKLF leadership, including Yasin Malik, were arrested by the Indian authorities in Srinagar and held in custody for the next four years. During these years, the JKLF established a significant armed presence in the Valley, particularly in Srinagar. Srinagar was said to be under a 'double curfew' -- one imposed by Indian security forces controlling the city centre, and the other imposed by JKLF-dominated militants who *de facto* ruled the outlying parts of Srinagar. In the same year, the outfit abducted and murdered the vice-chancellor of Kashmir University and his secretary.⁷ At the same time, Malik was also responsible for the murders of four Indian Air Force personnel.⁸

While the JKLF was consolidating its influence over Srinagar and South Kashmir from its PoK headquarters, in 1990, Amanullah Khan announced a 'provisional government' for an 'independent' state of Jammu and Kashmir.⁹ In 1993, the JKLF, along with separatist groups like the Jamaat-e-Islami, Muslim Conference, People's Conference, Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen, Awami Action Committee and the People's League, together formed the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC). The APHC was convened under the Chairmanship of Mirwaiz Umar with the broad agenda of opposing Indian rule.¹⁰

In 1993, a group of JKLF fighters attacked Indian paramilitary personnel

in a market in Sopore in broad daylight, killing one. The resulting crossfire is said to have caused 50 civilian casualties.¹¹ In the same year, the JKLF continued with its bold militant tactics. A particularly daring action was undertaken by the group in April when it occupied the Hazratbal shrine, one of the holiest Islamic sites in the Valley. Forty to fifty cadres of the JKLF and few other armed groups occupied the shrine along with other buildings and areas in and around the complex. One key leader involved was JKLF militant chief Idris Khan.¹² The Indian Army responded by imposing a siege on the shrine. Along with the occupation of the shrine, the militants had also held 170 civilians hostage, most of whom were worshippers who had come to visit the holy site. The militants further threatened to blow up the shrine if the security forces tried to enter it. Following negotiations between the government and militants, the siege was lifted and the latter was allowed safe passage with their weapons.¹³ Needless to say, this crisis was a major embarrassment to the Indian government and significantly displayed the power and influence that the JKLF wielded in the Valley. This act also allowed the JKLF to have a one-up on its rival, the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen.

The JKLF's bold militancy finally came to an end in 1994, when Yasin Malik was released from prison. Reportedly, Malik was released as part of an agreement with the government that the JKLF would disarm and have unconditional peace talks with the former. Malik's attempt to change the JKLF into a peaceful movement was opposed by the PoK-based leadership under Amanullah Khan. This led to a split in the JKLF, with the J&K wing being led by Yasin Malik and the PoK wing being led by Amanullah Khan, who accused Malik of "damaging the 'Azadi Movement' at the behest of the Indian government".¹⁴ However, while the Valley-based JKLF was no longer violent, it continued to maintain political opposition to India's sovereignty over J&K. Malik personally led a state-wide campaign in 1999 to boycott India's general elections, stating that the people of Kashmir did not wish to be a part of India. Besides, given its separatist stance, the JKLF was not allowed to contest any elections by Indian authorities despite the popularity it wielded among Kashmiri people.

Over the years, in the 2000s, Malik's JKLF faction began entering into peace talks with the Governments of India and Pakistan on many occasions, but separately. It also began to distance itself from terrorists. For example, in 2009, the group issued a press statement criticising Pakistani terrorists and accused them of 'hijacking the Kashmiri cause' and 'subverting the indigenous cause'.¹⁵ At the same time, the JKLF faced repression in PoK from the Pakistani authorities. In the 2009 legislative assembly polls in the Pakistani province of Gilgit-Baltistan, the JKLF (along with some other groups) was banned from contesting after it refused to declare an 'oath of allegiance' to Pakistan.

Objective and Ideology

The JKLF is secular in its ideology unlike other separatist groups who are Islamic fundamentalists. It opposes Indian rule, but also opposes Kashmir's accession to Pakistan. It aims at creating Jammu and Kashmir as a sovereign and secular state.

Modus Operandi

Until 1994, the JKLF was among the largest militant groups in the Valley. It bombed public places and security infrastructure, assassinated government officials, attacked members of security forces and intellectuals opposed to the JKLF, and engaged in clandestine warfare against the Indian armed forces. It also actively cooperated with Islamist pro-Pakistan groups.

After Yasin Malik's release and internal reforms in 1994, the JKLF eschewed armed violence and became a peaceful pro-independence pressure group. While it did not give up its objective, the JKLF pushed forth its agenda through negotiations and peaceful protest. However, Amanullah Khan's PoK-based JKLF faction disagreed with Yasin Malik's reforms and that resulted in a split. The PoK-based JKLF continued to support armed resistance.

In 2015, both factions moved towards reunification, with Amanullah Khan and Yasin Malik agreeing to a power-sharing arrangement and a dispute

resolution settlement.¹⁶

Sources of Funding

At the time of its inception, Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) had sponsored the JKLF. Despite its pro-independence stance, the group got the ISI's support as it was the first major militant group in the Valley. Reportedly, the JKLF was approached by the ISI after India's capture of the Siachen Glacier in 1984 and was encouraged to recruit and train fighters for armed insurgency in J&K against India, even while expressing support for Kashmiri independence.¹⁷

With the advent of pro-Pakistan Islamist elements and rising pro-independence sentiment of the JKLF, the ISI's support for the group waned. However, Kashmiri organisations and diaspora in countries like the UK and Saudi Arabia continued to fund the group. A Sikh-separatist organisation, the World Sikh Organisation, also supported the JKLF.¹⁸ Investigations have revealed that *hawala* transactions had been instrumental in funding the JKLF. These transactions were carried out by illegal middlemen usually under Islamic commerce.

Structure and Leadership

The group's structure comprises a Central Executive Committee (CEC), a Planning and Policy Committee, a Standing Committee and several sub-committees. The CEC comprises a chairman, senior vice chairman and three vice-chairmen. The CEC is the primary decision-making body of the group. In 2015, it created a Constitutional Council to reframe the JKLF Constitution.¹⁹

Leaders

Yasin Malik: Yasin Malik became an important leader in 1989. Through the 1990s, he carried out a plethora of terrorist attacks in the Valley until his

arrest by the Indian authorities. He is the pioneer of the group's transition to peaceful struggle and remains the JKLF Supreme Council's chairman.

Amanullah Khan: Amanullah Khan is the founder of the JKLF. Post the 1994 split, he was the chief of the PoK wing of the group. With both factions reunifying in 2015, Khan was named 'Supreme Head' for life, a post created exclusively for him.²⁰ He died in 2016 following lung disease.

Maqbool Bhat: He was also considered a founder of the JKLF. He founded its precursor, the JKNLF, and his actions at the time triggered a chain of events leading to the formation of the JKLF. Even as he was lodged in jail, Amanullah Khan created the set-up in Birmingham. Following the JKLF's assassination of Indian diplomat, Ravindra Mhatre, Bhat's death sentence was carried out by the Indian government.

Other leaders (Malik faction): These are: Basheer Ahmed Bhat, Sabir Ansari, Mohammed Rafiq Dar, Sheikh Abdul Rasheed, Parveiz Iqbal, Basheer Ahmed Kashmiri, Baker Ahmed Rather, Mohammed Latif, Noor Mohammed Kalwal, Showkat Ahmed Bakshi and Muhammed Siddique.²¹

Leaders of Khan faction: These are: S.M. Afzal, Sardar Sageer, Hafeez Anwar Samwai, Amnzoor Ahmed Khan and Rafiq Ahmed Dar.²²

Current Status

While the JKLF has remained a very influential separatist group, today its leadership is weakened. Amanullah Khan died in 2016 and Yasin Malik is in Indian custody facing trial for his various crimes in the 1980s and 1990s, like the killing of Air Force personnel and being one of the key players behind Rubaiya Sayeed's kidnapping. In 2019, the Indian government declared the JKLF a terrorist group under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) and banned it.

The JKLF faces pressure from both the governments of India and Pakistan as its pro-independence stance goes against the national interests of both. For

its refusal to pledge allegiance to Pakistan, the PoK branch has been banned from political participation. Pro-Pakistan groups also have targeted the JKLF. There have been instances of the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen sharing information with Indian forces regarding the movement of JKLF cadres, which have resulted in encounters against them.

Future Prospects

The JKLF has always enjoyed massive popularity among the Kashmiris, which is its greatest asset. Further, its disavowal of extremist Islamism and armed violence lends it legitimacy in the eyes of the people and the international community. Its peace talks with India may perhaps yield a fruitful compromise in the future.

Today, the JKLF is relatively weak. Through state and non-state means, India and Pakistan have pressurised the JKLF on account of its opposition to both. At the same time, given the JKLF's separatist ties and its violent history, India has banned the group and its leader Yasin Malik, who is now behind bars. This is bound to paralyse the group, at least in the short term. However, should the JKLF survive, it may well continue to be a dominant group for Kashmir's 'independence'. The recent reunification between the Amanullah Khan and Yasin Malik factions is also a signal of intent that it will continue to pitch for independence as a united front, to which end, the differences between their leaders have been resolved.

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18

LASHKAR-E-JABBAR

Introduction

The Lashkar-e-Jabbar (LeJ) is a little-known terrorist group operating in the union territory (formerly the state) of Jammu and Kashmir in India. This obscure outfit has primarily been involved in terrorist attacks to spread fundamentalist Islam in the Valley.

Background

The LeJ first gained prominence in August 2001, following a pair of attacks against women. In the first instance, unidentified youth poured acid on two school teachers in Srinagar. The next day, an armed militant intruded into a girls' school and threatened dire consequences unless an 'Islamic dress-code' was adopted. The LeJ subsequently claimed responsibility for these attacks.¹

It set a deadline of September 1, 2001 for all Muslim women to adhere to the appropriate dress code. The all-women's soft-terrorist organisation, Dukhtaran-e-Millat (DeM), led by Asiya Andrabi, hailing this initiative, asked for an extension of the deadline. Interestingly, the LeJ readily complied and extended the deadline by a week, raising suspicions about a connection

between both. ² This seemed likely, since the DeM, lacking in hard power capacity in the form of guns and bombs, had limited capabilities to enforce its direction on the people. It is believed—though there is a lack of evidence to back this claim—that the LeJ may have possibly been a creation of the DeM.

In other instances in the same year, there were reports of terrorists firing on unveiled women in South Kashmir, and the LeJ issued a statement that it meant “business in implementing the Islamic dress code in Kashmir”. In the coming weeks and months, it appeared that the LeJ’s coercive tactics were paying dividends. Local newspapers reported a rapid upsurge in demand for *burqas* (veils) among Muslim women, while the number of working women in *burqas* also increased significantly.³ The following year, the LeJ claimed responsibility for a bomb explosion at a polling station in the Kupwara district, saying it did not “believe in these elections.”⁴ In 2003, the group imposed another ultimatum on Muslim women, ordering them to quit their jobs by January 25, 2003.

The LeJ, however, failed to garner support from other Islamist terrorist organisations, particularly the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM) and the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT). When the LeJ imposed the deadline for women to don the *burqa* in 2001, the HM, LeT and Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen all condemned this move, and questioned the former’s credibility.⁵ But the LeJ has continued its radical campaign over the years, issuing several directions to citizens in the region. It issued directions for gender segregation on public buses, such that men and women were made to sit separate and apart from each other. Women were to cease going to school and have male escorts whenever they stepped outside the house and non-Muslim doctors were given an ultimatum to leave the region in 2012.⁶

The LeJ’s extremism not only disturbed the Indian authorities, but also attracted the ire of other Islamist and separatist groups. The HM, LeT and the All Parties’ Hurriyat Conference all condemned the LeJ, and claimed that its goal was to delegitimise the real separatist movement. Other Indian Muslim organisations, like the Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind and the Jamaat-e-Islami Hind

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

spoke out against the LeJ and its practices, which they claimed was giving a bad name to Islam. The group also did not garner much support among the Kashmiri populace due to its stringent application of regressive practices and repeated coercive harassment of locals. Further, such an extreme ideology was not compatible with the traditional secular and culturally homogenous nature of Kashmiri society.⁷ Most separatist Islamist groups in the region thrived on the political idea of defying Indian authority and not as much on overtly extremist Islamism.

Ideology and Objectives

The LeJ is extremist Islamist and believes in using violent coercion to achieve its goals. Its primary aim is to enforce medieval interpretations of Islamic law on the people of J&K. Due to its extreme radicalism; even other extremist groups like the LeT have condemned it. Ideologically, the LeJ is perfectly in sync with the Dukhtar-e-Millat which espouses similar diktats. Both have been particularly problematic for local women for their regressive policies of promoting gender segregation, pulling out girls from schools, child marriage and enforcement of the *burqa*.

Modus Operandi

The LeJ aims to achieve its ideals of a conservative Islamic society by coercing the population through its acts of terror. Assaulting and murdering women who transgress norms laid down by the LeJ is one way of inducing this fear. The LeJ is known to distribute pamphlets and posters with notices and ultimatums often pasted on mosque walls and public places to get its message across to the people. It has also used small arms and explosives to defy the Indian authorities and impose its own fiat in the region.

Sources of Funding

The group cannot rely on support from other separatist organisations given their aversion to its extreme radicalism. It is believed that Pakistanis and

other West Asian Muslim individuals have contributed to the group, through the Haqqania *Madrassa* (Islamic religious school). This *madrassa* is based in Pakistan and is believed to offer support to the LeJ.⁸ Interestingly, former Al Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden is also reported to have sponsored the LeJ through this school when he was active.⁹ Further, if it is true that the LeJ is a creation of the DeM, then Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) may also be complicit, given its sponsorship of the DeM. It has often been alleged that the DeM provides logistical support to militant outfits and the LeJ is a likely beneficiary of the same.

Current Status

The LeJ lacks sufficient support and faces a two-pronged source of hostility. On the one hand, the Indian authorities are opposed to the LeJ due to it being a terrorist group that is flouting law and order in J&K. On the other hand, other Islamist groups are opposed to it. Lacking support from other Islamists and being unpopular among the masses for its excesses, the LeJ faces bleak prospects. It is already a relatively minor outfit and will recede into oblivion in the near future.

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A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

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TEHREEK-UL-MUJAHIDEEN

Introduction

The Tehreek-ul-Mujahideen (TuM) is a pro-Pakistan Islamist terrorist outfit based in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). In 1990, one Yunus Khan founded the group. Khan was a close aide of Mohammed Abdullah Tairi, a former president of the Jammu and Kashmir Jamiat Ahle Hadith.¹

The J&K Jamiat Ahle Hadith is an Islamic religious organisation which aims at propagating Salafism, a conservative form of Sunni Islam. This organisation has been steadily expanding in the region, having built over 700 mosques and 150 schools.²

Security forces were swift in bringing this group to its knees early on. Barely a year after its formation, Yunus Khan was killed by security forces. Khan was succeeded by Mohammed Salim Mirom, a militant who had illegally infiltrated into J&K from Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK).³ In 1999, security forces killed TuM commander Abu Waseem Salafi⁴ and in 2002, its 'supreme commander, Abdul Gani Dar, was arrested by the Border Security Force (BSF) in Srinagar, J&K's summer capital.⁵ In 2018, eight

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

members of the outfit were eliminated in a series of encounters following a spate of grenade attacks on checkpoints and weapon thefts perpetrated by them.⁶

In 2019, the Union Home Ministry banned the TuM and designated it as a terrorist organisation under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA). In its statement, the ministry said: “The TuM carried out a number of terrorist attacks beside subversive acts, namely grenade attacks, weapons snatching incidents, supporting other terrorist outfits such as Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, Lashkar-e-Taiba, etc., in terms of financial and logistical support in the recent past.”⁷

Ideology and Objectives

The TuM’s primary objective is the merger of J&K with Pakistan. It is also a religious fundamentalist group aiming to promote a pan-Islamic identity.⁸ In particular, it promotes the Salafist Sunni ideology.⁹ It has also stood for the protection of the Asidih community, a small section of Sunni Islam.¹⁰ Given its foundational ties to the J&K Jamiat Ahle Hadith and its role in propagating Salafism, the TuM continues to have close relations with several religious organisations who offer shelter to its cadres.¹¹ Naturally, the TuM’s objectives include religious crusading, besides promotion of its pro-Pakistan political objectives.

Modus Operandi

The TuM is known to possess small arms, including assault rifles, pistols and grenades. The group has perpetrated several instances of weapon-snatching and theft to build its armoury. Another source of its weaponry is Pakistan’s ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence), which sponsors the TuM in its anti-India *jihad* (‘Holy War’). Fellow terrorist outfits like the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) are also important sources of weapons for the group.¹² Terrorist fighters, rifles, grenades and Pakistan-made explosives are smuggled into India, including via Nepal, for the TuM’s use in Kashmir.¹³ The TuM uses these weapons in

its violent activities across the Valley. In particular, it targets Indian security forces and launching grenade attacks on military checkpoints are a common tactic employed by it.

Sources of Funding

The principal sponsor of the TuM is Pakistan's ISI. The ISI is said to route funds to the group via the LeT. Residents of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, the UK, the US, Bangladesh and Gulf countries, who subscribe to the Ahle Hadith's Salafist ideology, have also been known to provide funds to the TuM, primarily through *hawala* transactions. These transactions involve middlemen and the commonly used and traditional Islamic banking practice. Most times, the funds are channelled through this hawala network and routed through Kathmandu, Nepal, where the TuM has established its cells.¹⁴

Network

Like most Islamist groups operating in J&K, the TuM is a beneficiary of the ISI's patronage. The ISI supplies the group with finances and weapons, thus propping it up and facilitating its aim of disruption of law and order in the region. The TuM is also a member of the United Jihad Council (UJC), an umbrella organisation of Pakistani and Kashmiri terrorist outfits waging *jihad* for J&K's merger with Pakistan. The affiliation with the UJC allows it to establish contacts with larger terror outfits such as the LeT, who, besides the ISI, patronise it. The Pakistani political party, the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F) is also a patron of the TuM.

The group is close to the Jamiat Ahle Hadith of J&K. While the TuM promotes the Ahle Hadith's Salafist ideology, Ahle Hadith's members provide support to its cadres. This connection has also allowed the TuM to expand its influence to far away Bangladesh. Local Islamist groups have been instrumental in supporting the TuM in Bangladesh. These include the Islamic Chhatra Shabir, Harkat ul-Jehadi-e-Islami, Islamic Okiya Jote, Imam Parishad, and the Islamic Shashantantra Andolan.¹⁵ Its contacts with the Ahle

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

Hadith, Bangladesh's youth wing, has allowed it to carry out cross-border infiltrations into India and also gain some influence as well as recruitment from the neighbouring Indian state of West Bengal.¹⁶

The outfit has also had close ties with the branch of the JKLF (Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front) based in PoK, which was earlier led by Amanullah Khan. Today, however, this branch has moved towards reunification with the J&K-based JKLF branch under the leadership of Yasin Malik. This branch of the JKLF has eschewed violence and entered into peace talks with the Indian government, thus being diametrically opposed to the violent policies of extremist groups like the TuM.

Leadership and Structure

The TuM's organisational structure comprises of a Management Wing and a Military Wing. The apex of the Management Wing includes the *Amir* (chief), a *Naib Amir*, an operational chief, a military advisor and an intelligence chief.¹⁷ The military wing is composed of district commanders and field-level divisional and regimental commanders.¹⁸

The TuM's *Amir* is Sheikh Jamil-ur-Rehman. Maulana Fazal-ur-Rahman, former Member of the Pakistan National Assembly and the chief of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, is the chief patron of the TuM.¹⁹

Current Status

The TuM has been designated as a terrorist organisation by the Government of India, and accordingly, Indian forces have consistently exerted pressure on the group.

The TuM has never attained much significance in its militant phase and continues to remain weak. The fragility of the group's position has been exacerbated by losses sustained by it in the face of India's counter-insurgency operations, which have taken a heavy toll of its cadre and leadership. Its founder, Yunus Khan, was killed by security forces in 1991; former

commander Abu Waseem Salafi was killed in 1999; and its former supreme commander, Abdul Gani Dar, was arrested in 2002. The group thus remains a minor on-ground presence and consequently its involvement in high-profile incidents has remained stymied.

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TEHRIK-I-TALIBAN PAKISTAN

Introduction

Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) is the largest radical militant outfit in Pakistan. The group is ideologically associated with Al Qaeda and also linked with the Afghan Taliban. The TTP is based in South Waziristan and has three central goals: to enforce Shariah law in Pakistan; to combat foreign forces in Afghanistan and to undertake jihad against Pakistan's security establishment.¹ In the long run, the group also intends to oust the Pakistan government and form an Islamic caliphate in Pakistan.²

TTP cadres mainly come from more than forty Islamist and Pashtun tribal groups from Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) province.³ It is also ethnically diverse, comprising of Arab, Uzbek, Afghan, Chechen and Punjabi militants in addition to its Pashtun majority. The most powerful factions within the TTP are the Mehsud Group and the Punjabi Taliban. The Mehsud Group forms the core of the TTP and is mainly committed to waging a jihad against the Pakistan government. The Punjabi Taliban is comprised of sectarian groups which are focused on the jihad in Kashmir. In addition to these main factions,

there exist other small groups within the TTP with separate objectives within its overarching goals.⁴

On July 10, 2007, after failed negotiations, the Pakistan government launched a commando operation against extremists who had occupied the Red Mosque in Islamabad, killing more than 100 militants. This attack prompted the Pakistan Taliban to declare war on the Pakistan state. The Pakistan Taliban subsequently began carrying out suicide bombings and ambushes against Pakistan's security forces.⁵ On December 14, 2007, a *Shura* of 40 senior Taliban leaders from across Pakistan formed the TTP as an umbrella organisation of various factions of the Pakistani Taliban to collectivise their terror capabilities.⁶ The Shura appointed Baitullah Mehsud as the *Emir* of the TTP, with Maulana Hafiz Gul Bahadur as his deputy and Maulana Faqir Muhammad as the third in line.⁷

The Pakistan government officially banned the TTP on August 25, 2008. It subsequently froze all accounts and assets associated with the TTP, banned the organisation from making media appearances, and placed bounties on the heads of prominent TTP leaders.⁸ In late December 2008 and early January 2009, Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden and Afghan Taliban leader Mullah Omar met with three dominant TTP commanders—Baitullah Mehsud, Hafiz Gul Bahadur and Maulvi Nazir. They encouraged these leaders to put their differences aside and reduce their activities in Pakistan in order to assist the Afghan Taliban in countering the impending increase of US-led coalition forces in Afghanistan.⁹ The three commanders agreed and formed a temporary alliance known as the Shura Ittihad al-Mujahedeen (Allied Mujahedeen Council).¹⁰

After the killing of these three leaders in a US drone strike, The Shura appointed Maulana Fazlullah as the leader of the TTP.¹¹ In 2014, the TTP experienced significant fragmentation due to disagreements over key strategic decisions such as whether the TTP should engage in peace talks with the Pakistan government, or if civilians qualify as acceptable targets for attacks.¹² In addition to these splits, the Pakistan Armed Forces' joint

operation ‘Operation Zarb-e-Azb’ put further pressure on the TTP.¹³ This was the Pakistan government’s first major, well-coordinated operation against the TTP. The effects of Zarb-e-Azb, combined with the effects of US drone strikes, as well as internal financial differences, caused many TTP militants, including key leaders, to escape from the FATA.¹⁴ However, despite these losses, the TTP was still able to launch major attacks in Pakistan. This was partially due to a lack of coordination between the Pakistan and Afghan governments on Zarb-e-Azb, which allowed militants fleeing from North Waziristan to find safe havens in Afghanistan.¹⁵

In February 2017, the Pakistan Army launched ‘Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad’ in order to eliminate residual threats of terrorism in Pakistan.¹⁶ These strikes on TTP commanders and allied groups handicapped the ability of the TTP to plan and execute attacks on soft and hard targets alike.¹⁷ The rise of the Islamic State (IS) also undermined the TTP’s hold, causing several of its factions to defect and pledge allegiance to the IS.¹⁸ The Pakistan government’s psychological campaign against the TTP’s extremist ideology also led to the increase in leadership defections.¹⁹ For example, in April 2017, a prominent TTP leader, Ehsanullah Ehsan, surrendered to the Pakistan security forces after admitting that the TTP had maligned Islam.²⁰

Despite the physical and ideological deterioration of the TTP, Fazlullah continually reaffirmed the TTP’s intent to reunify its member groups, practice jihad and ultimately implement *Shariah* law throughout Pakistan.²¹ One week after Fazlullah’s death in June 2018, the group named Mufti Noor Wali Mehsud from the Mehsud tribe as its new leader. Under the new leadership, the TTP has continued to carry out attacks in the region.

Ideology and Goals

Ideologically, the TTP is Deobandi-Wahabi in its sectarian orientation.²² Its founding goals are threefold. First, it seeks to implement and enforce an extremist interpretation of *Shariah* law throughout Pakistan.²³ In accordance with this belief, the TTP is strictly opposed to female education as was

evidenced by the 2012 assassination attempt on girls' rights activist Malala Yousafzai.²⁴ Third, it claims that its jihad against the Pakistan government is an act of self-defence against an apostate and puppet regime of the United States.²⁵ Some TTP leaders also profess global jihad to rescue fellow Muslims from *Kafir's* occupation, imposition of Shariah law and avenging the US' presence and its drone strikes in Pakistan.²⁶

Leadership and Structure

After the death of Baitullah Mehsud, the Shura appointed Maulana Fazlullah as the TTP's new leader.²⁷ This leadership change sparked a bitter succession dispute between TTP member groups, which led to splintering and a decline in the group's operational capabilities.²⁸ Because Fazlullah was not a member of the dominant Mehsud tribe, he was unable to maintain the original coalition of militant groups that was formed in 2007. In 2014, the TTP experienced a significant fragmentation due to disagreements over key strategic decisions.²⁹ Among the groups that splintered from the TTP was the Mehsud division—one of the largest and most powerful factions of the organisation.³⁰

Despite the physical and ideological deterioration of the TTP, Fazlullah continually reaffirmed the TTP's intent to reunify its member groups, practice jihad and ultimately implement Shariah law throughout Pakistan.³¹ But his death in 2018 threatened to disrupt the group's unity and success even further. Noor Wali Mehsud was named as the new TTP leader a week after Fazlullah, was killed by a US drone strike. The group under Mufti Noor Wali Mehsud's leadership continued to carry out violence in the region.

Mehsud previously, after 9/11, fought for the Taliban against the Northern Alliance. In early 2002-2003, he also served as deputy to Baitullah Mehsud. Mehsud is from the Mehsud tribe; the original two leaders of TTP also originated from this tribe.³²

According to United States Department of Defense report of 2019, there are 25,000 TTP militants in Pakistan³³ and 3000-5000 in Afghanistan.³⁴

Major Attacks

In 2001, before the TTP's official formation, many of its current member groups operated in the FATA independently. They operated as auxiliary groups for the Afghan Taliban until 2002, when the Pakistan military began to conduct operations in the FATA against militant groups fleeing the war in Afghanistan.³⁵ After the Pakistan government's action against the Red Mosque on July 10, 2007, the Pakistani Taliban declared 'war' on the Pakistani state and carried out suicide bombings and ambushes against Pakistani security forces.³⁶

Although the TTP primarily conducts attacks in Pakistan, the United States' increased its targeting of Afghan and Pakistani Taliban officials in 2008 and 2009 spurred that organisation to broaden its scope of operations.³⁷ In April 2010, the TTP released a video recording in which it said that it would begin targeting American cities in retaliation to US drone strikes on TTP leaders.³⁸ This threat was followed by an attempted bombing attack at Times Square, New York, in May 2010.³⁹

Funding

The TTP is financially independent. It funds its operations through four primary means. One, it conducts abductions —usually of wealthy businessmen, aid workers, journalists, soldiers and government employees— in order to collect money through ransom.⁴⁰ The TTP, which claims to condemn kidnapping for ransom, argues that such abductions intended to “advance Islamic agenda” are acceptable.⁴¹ Two, it smuggles valuable natural resources such as gems and timber, to secure a large part of its income. It has raised over \$100 million from timber from the Swat Valley alone.⁴² The TTP also receives financial boost by participating in the heroin trade, commandeering Pakistani mines and quarries, and looting archaeological sites in Swat.⁴³ Three, TTP extorts in the FATA, imposing taxes on the local population, charging fees to pass safely through the area and imposing protection taxes for transportations from local mines.⁴⁴

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

In particular, the TTP taps the Pashtun community in Karachi to secure revenue. Specifically, the businessmen in Karachi, who currently hold a monopoly on the transport business, pay the TTP to protect their transactions and deliveries.⁴⁵ The TTP also extorts money from non-Muslim minorities through a protection tax known as *jiziyah*. Further, those who violate the Shariah law are subject to monetary penalties.⁴⁶ Finally, the TTP receives large sums of money through donations and gifts from both Pakistani and international benefactors.⁴⁷ Allied groups also transfer money to the TTP. For example, in September of 2009, Pakistan's Criminal Investigation Department discovered that Al Qaeda contributed \$15 million to the TTP through a Saudi-based charity, Al-Hara-main Foundation.⁴⁸

In the past, the Afghan Taliban has reportedly financed the TTP and the Pakistan Taliban. Specifically, in March 2006, Mullah Omar allegedly provided Baitullah Mehsud with \$70,000 in exchange for the Pakistan Taliban's willingness to target diplomats of countries involved in the publication of cartoons depicting Prophet Mohammad.⁴⁹

Modus Operandi

The TTP's most common form of attack is bombings, including suicide attacks.⁵⁰ Preferred targets for these attacks are the Pakistan security forces and other symbols of the "un-Islamic" authority of the Pakistani government.⁵¹ For example, the TTP has targeted schools, particularly those that educate girls, or the children of Pakistani servicemen, in order to psychologically strike at its enemies. It promotes its mission by disseminating pro-TTP messages through illegal FM radio channels, CDs, DVDs, newspapers, and websites. The organisation makes significant efforts in recruiting children and young adults through youth-targeted propaganda.⁵² In particular, the TTP romanticises and idolises the concept of child martyrdom in its propaganda messages and training.⁵³ It indoctrinates masses of teenage boys to serve as suicide bombers.⁵⁴

The group sends its recruits to training facilities in the FATA to learn

to conduct guerrilla warfare and how to make bombs. Suicide bombers receive an additional four months of training in South Waziristan to prepare themselves for their missions.⁵⁵ In addition to suicide bombings, the TTP also conducts hit-and-run raids against Pakistan security forces. It usually chooses softer targets, such as remote check-posts, supply lines, and mobile patrols for such attacks. Raids are aimed at wearing down the morale of the soldiers, forcing them to maintain constant vigil to protect themselves. In major Pakistani cities such as Karachi, the TTP manifests itself as a mafia-like presence. For example, militants often threaten business owners with their or family members' death unless they agree to pay the TTP.

Security analysts have cited the TTP's presence in Karachi as particularly concerning as it threatens the security of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal. This concern was confirmed in August 2014 when TTP militants attacked a naval base in Karachi suspected to store a part of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal.⁵⁶

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THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD

Introduction

The Muslim Brotherhood is a Sunni Islamist extremist organisation rooted in Egypt, with some influence in other Middle Eastern nations. While it has indulged in violent activities and been designated a terrorist organisation by some countries, throughout its history the Brotherhood has also taken forms of a charitable organisation, a social pressure group and a political party. A complex organisation with a turbulent past, it remains significant not only for its actions, but also for its teachings and leadership which have played key roles in global Islamist and jihadist movements.

Background

The Muslim Brotherhood is amongst the oldest Islamist organisations in the world today. Established in 1928 ¹ by religious teacher Hassan al-Banna in the Egyptian town of Ismailia,² it started on the dual pillars of spreading Islamic teachings and opposing colonial rule. While the organisation's earlier activities were confined to social work, charity etc., it ventured into political territory in the 1930s.³ In the subsequent decade, it established its armed

wing in opposition to the British-dominated regime in Egypt. During this period, it was implicated in a series of violent acts, including the assassination of Egypt's Prime Minister in 1948,⁴ followed by the assassination of Al-Banna himself—a significant blow to the Brotherhood.

1952 was a historic year for Egypt when the Free Officers' Movement overthrew the British-dominated monarchy of King Farouk and established a republic under Gamal Abdel Nasser, thus ending British occupation of Egypt and Sudan. While the Muslim Brotherhood had been allied with the Free Officers Movement during that struggle, post-revolution the two drifted apart. The Brotherhood, with its objective of creating an Islamic society governed by Sharia law, was ideologically and politically incompatible with the Nasser regime, which had an Arab nationalist, socialist and secular outlook.⁵ A failed bid by the Muslim Brotherhood to assassinate Nasser only served to discredit it further.⁶

At this time, a section of the Brotherhood—the *Takfiris*—led by Sayyid Qutb, concluded that the Nasser regime was *kafreen*, i.e., apostate.⁷ While in jail as a co-conspirator in Nasser's assassination plot, Qutb produced a literary volume of Islamist extremist philosophy calling for jihad against the modern world and the West.⁸ His teachings led to further radicalisation of the Brotherhood, thus fundamentally affecting the global Islamist movement's ideology. For example, these writings inspired al-Qaeda and Hamas's ideologies; notably al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, who was once a Muslim Brotherhood member.⁹ Finally, the government executed Qutb in 1966.

A holistic understanding of the Brotherhood requires acknowledging the more moderate counter-trends prevailing within the organisation, such as its decision in the 1960s to eschew violence. The reasoning and justification for this decision lay in the 1969 book 'Preachers not Judges' by Hassan al-Hudaybi, the second supreme guide of the Brotherhood.¹⁰ Hudaybi's ideas became a competing school of thought not only within the Muslim

Brotherhood, but also within the Islamist movement as a whole. While the 'Qutbists' were drawn to violent jihadist tendencies, those in agreement with Hudaybi eschewed the path of armed resistance and instead aimed at non-violent activism without completely alienating non-Muslims. This reformist trend in the organisation is an important issue for debate as to whether the Muslim Brotherhood is a terrorist organisation or a legitimate political party.

In the 1980s, the Brotherhood remained suppressed under Egypt's Hosni Mubarak regime. However, Mubarak proved to be more tolerant than his predecessors. While the Brotherhood remained an illegal organisation, its members were permitted to contest parliamentary elections as independent candidates.¹¹ The Brotherhood's big break came in 2011-12, with the advent of the Arab Spring.

Self-immolation of a fruit vendor in 2010 sparked outrage in Tunisia, leading to a popular revolution, eventually forcing a regime change and triggering political reforms. The Tunisian Revolution was the spark which triggered mass protests, revolutions, armed rebellions and civil wars across the Arab world as a whole, with citizens expressing their disaffection with their corrupt, authoritarian and inefficient regimes. Egypt was no exception. Protests erupted in the country in 2011 and it was only a matter of time before Mubarak had to finally resign after three decades in power. The Muslim Brotherhood too sensed an opportunity and backed the protests against Mubarak, with its members actively demonstrating on ground. After some initial hesitation, its leadership decided to foray into democratic electoral politics.¹² It was thus that in April 2011, the Muslim Brotherhood established its own political party, the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP).

In the subsequent presidential elections, the FJP's candidate, Mohammed Morsi, became the first democratically-elected President in Egypt's history. The Muslim Brotherhood was now entrenched in the Egyptian polity and dominated the Constituent Assembly set up for drafting a new constitution for Egypt. However, if this was a high point in the organisation's history, its

lowest was soon to follow. On July 3, 2013, a military coup led by General Fatah al-Sisi deposed the Morsi administration after it had merely completed a year in power. Several causes led to this sudden collapse.

Immediately after Mubarak's ouster, the revolutionaries (comprising the Brotherhood along with secular and liberal parties) experienced deep rifts. While the Brotherhood was focussed on achieving an electoral victory to consolidate power further, the secular and liberal parties remained apprehensive of an Islamist-dominated legislature and Constituent Assembly. Protests erupted in Cairo, with Islamists calling for the establishment of an Islamic State.¹³ These events led to the alienation of the liberals, which also affected moderate elements within the Brotherhood itself, with many leaving and starting breakaway factions.¹⁴

The Brotherhood's lack of control over the Mubarak-era bureaucratic and judicial institutions,¹⁵ coupled with pressure from the military continued to beleaguere the organisation. Administrative inefficiencies combined with dissatisfaction among the military, elites and liberals triggered mass protests against the Morsi administration. On July 3, the military intervened and ousted the government followed by a swift crackdown on the Brotherhood. As Brotherhood members were arrested, its supporters took to the streets in protest. Military-sponsored counter-protests also erupted and clashes between the two factions led to much violence and many deaths. Following the explosion of a car bomb killing 14 people in a police station, the government pinned the blame on the Muslim Brotherhood and designated it as a terrorist organisation.¹⁶ Mass trials followed in 2014 and 2015, wherein hundreds of Muslim Brotherhood members were sentenced to death at a single go.¹⁷

At present, under the ruling Sisi regime, the Muslim Brotherhood remains suppressed within Egypt and effectively kept out of politics. In this charged environment, an increasing number of its followers have turned to more extreme attitudes, rejecting compromise and conciliation in favour of more confrontationist approaches.¹⁸

Global Reach

While the Muslim Brotherhood's focus has remained within Egypt, the organisation and its affiliates have some reach in the rest of the Middle East as well. **Syria.** Since the 1940s, the 'Syrian Muslim Brotherhood' had been operating as the organisation's Syrian branch. However, its political activity was restricted in the 1960s (similar to the crackdown following the Egyptian Free Officers' Movement) as the Arab nationalist Ba'athists came to power. The organisation was finally banned in 1964. In response, the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood formed an armed wing and in the following decades engaged in terrorist activity. This prompted the Hafez al-Assad regime to crush the group, culminating in the 1982 massacre in Hama, Syria, when 10,000-40,000 Brotherhood members and civilians were killed by the armed forces. This significantly weakened the Brotherhood in Syria where it continues to struggle for relevance.¹⁹

Israel and Palestine. The Palestinian terrorist organisation 'Hamas' was initially founded as a Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood.²⁰ The Brotherhood took up arms against Israel in the First Arab Israeli War and also recruited a large number of Palestinians in the ensuing refugee crisis.²¹ However, more radical alternatives like Hamas, Hezbollah, Al-Qaeda etc. eventually grew in appeal, and the Brotherhood began to wane in significance in Israel-Palestine. Today, the group remains strongly opposed to the Arab countries' normalisation of relations with Israel and refuses to recognise the State of Israel.

Turkey and Qatar

Both Turkey and Qatar have been supportive of the Muslim Brotherhood. Consequently, many members and leaders of the group have often been found in these countries.²² Qatar's alleged support for the Brotherhood was a trigger for the 2017-21 Gulf diplomatic crisis when a Saudi-led coalition of Arab countries blockaded Qatar. Qatar's support to the Muslim Brotherhood is due to the organisation's soft-power potential against Qatar's Arab rivals,

including Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Further, the organisation's spiritual guide, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, has been a resident of Qatar since the 1960s and was instrumental in building up religious and educational institutions in Qatar which had newly become independent from the British.²³

Objectives

Throughout its long history, the Muslim Brotherhood's predominant objective has been to create an Islamic state ruled by a Caliph and governed by the Sharia, or religious law.²⁴ While this objective has remained constant, there has not always been a consensus on the means to achieve the same - for instance, Qutb vs Hudaybi differences.

Ideology

The Muslim Brotherhood is a Sunni Islamist organisation. Sections of the organisation propagate violent jihad to achieve its objectives and targets the *kafreen* (apostates), while others in the group advocate for peaceful social and political means to achieve its ends. However, its goals remain the same throughout—a Caliph-ruled Islamic State and unifying all Islamic nations under a common banner.

Modus Operandi

Historically, the Muslim Brotherhood has been involved in violent terrorist activities. During the Nasser-era in Egypt and in Syria until it was nearly wiped out in 1982, the Brotherhood perpetrated many violent activities. However, with certain relaxations introduced by Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, wherein Brotherhood members were allowed political participation as independent candidates, reforms took place in the organisation, a trend that continues to the present day. A large section of the group prefers peaceful measures like those that existed and were applied during the post-Mubarak elections.

Even then, the Brotherhood continues to retain ideological ties with terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda and has been implicated in a number of terrorist actions - though evidences regarding these is still inconclusive.²⁵

Structure and Leadership

Present Leader. Mohammed Badie is the Supreme Guide of the Egypt Muslim Brotherhood. He has been imprisoned by the Sisi regime and faces several life imprisonment sentences and a death penalty.²⁶

Prominent Leaders of the Present Day:

- Mahmoud Ezzat is a top-level leader who has often acted as Supreme Guide in the past. He also faces several sentences of life imprisonment and death in Egypt. Egyptian authorities claim that he is in custody, which the Brotherhood denies.²⁷
- Mahmoud Hussein is the secretary-general of the Muslim Brotherhood and has been responsible for its coordination with the Freedom and Justice Party's political wing. He is close to the top leadership of the Brotherhood and the Hamas.²⁸
- Yusuf al-Qaradawi is a Qatar-based preacher who is often considered a key spokesperson for the Brotherhood. He went into exile to Qatar in 1961 due to Nasser's crackdown and resides there even today.²⁹ His literary and philosophical work and a series of fatwas form the ideological bedrock of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Members. The number of members of the Muslim Brotherhood remains unknown.

Recruitment

The organisation focuses its recruitment efforts on the youth, particularly students. Students in universities and colleges who display signs of religious inclination are approached by members of the organisation, but are not directly

induced to join. They build relationships and seek to evaluate and boost their piety, and through interactions over a year, conclude the recruitment process for each individual, by which time they are finally indoctrinated into the Brotherhood.³⁰

Presently, the Brotherhood is also focusing on recruiting young children from schools, sporting clubs and youth centres.³¹ The setting up of a ‘Young Lions Committee’ aims at outlining a comprehensive programme for the recruitment of children.³²

Sources of Funding

Islamic societies such as the organisation of ‘Islamic Relief Worldwide’ have been key sources of funding for the Brotherhood.³³ Further, it has been widely alleged that Qatar has been involved in funding the European chapters of the Brotherhood³⁴ - a revelation creating mass controversy for Qatar which was already reeling under a diplomatic crisis over allegations of state-sponsored terrorism. Qatar was an active sponsor of the Morsi administration when it was in power, lending around \$7.5 billion while approving grants and undisclosed financial transfers to the Muslim Brotherhood.³⁵ Further, Qatari state-owned news network Al Jazeera has also been accused of providing financial aid to the organisation.³⁶

Current Status

At present, the Brotherhood’s influence remains relatively muted, partially due to its decision to abjure violence and primarily because of the Sisi regime’s decisive crackdown. Most of its leadership and a large proportion of members are either imprisoned, on death row, or executed. Further, the Gulf diplomatic crisis which concluded only in January 2021—wherein a Saudi Arabia led coalition, including Egypt, blockaded and boycotted Qatar for its support to the Brotherhood—was a significant setback for the group.

Presently, eight countries have listed the Brotherhood as a terrorist

organisation, including Russia, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Syria. The Trump Administration had signalled its intention to follow suit, though this never materialised.

Future Prospects

The Muslim Brotherhood presents a dilemma over classification. Its inherent nature has left the international community and academic observers divided as to whether it is indeed a terrorist organisation or not, considering its decision to eschew violent means despite its extremist ideology and its links to violent groups. Further, it blurs the line between the state and non-state actor classification considering that it has acted as a pressure group, an armed resistance and a political party with experience in the legislature and executive. In this manner, it can be called a hybrid actor³⁷ while the jury is still out on its 'terrorist' nature.

Today, a significant shift in West Asia's geopolitics is being witnessed. Firstly, Arab nations are easing their stance on Israel and moving towards normalisation of ties with the Jewish State, something which was unheard of in earlier decades. Secondly, the Saudi-Iranian conflict has been exacerbated and spread to a multitude of theatres, be it Syria, Iraq, or Yemen. Further, the so-called 'Arab Cold War' has also developed competing alliance systems, making intra-Arab and Gulf interactions more complex as it was witnessed in the Gulf diplomatic crisis, wherein Qatar was 'punished' for its ties with Iran. Thirdly, violent Islamist groups have faced several setbacks in recent years with near eradication of the Islamic State (IS) and al-Qaeda affiliates from Iraq and Syria. While traditional non-state actors have begun to die out, 'hybrid actors' continue to thrive - like the Hezbollah and Hamas who wield guns and yet rule through political office.

In these fast-changing realities, where will the Muslim Brotherhood find itself? As the Arab world seeks to bring in modernity, stability, reforms and closer ties with the West and its Jewish neighbour, the Brotherhood may well continue to be perceived as an undesirable tumour in Arab society. The

experience of the Arab Spring and Morsi's electoral victory in 2012 will from the group and will keep up efforts to suppress it.

Despite the Brotherhood's rejection of violence, it has remained mostly inflexible in its ideology, thus making it incompatible with the Arabs' vision for the future. Whereas Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt and others are moving towards closer ties with Israel, the Brotherhood, with its close ties to Hamas and support for Hezbollah, will act only as a spanner in the works, something which the parties involved will actively seek to put a check on. As the Sunni-oriented Muslim Brotherhood continues to remain close to Qatar, and as a consequence, to Shia Iran, it will not only face an ideological dichotomy, but will remain alienated in the Arab space it is active in. The battle-lines in the Arab Cold War are clearly drawn and Qatar's continued support to the Brotherhood will shape the group's orientation.

Finally, the flight of non-state Islamist extremists to Afghanistan and Africa, away from the Arab world, has set a precedent. Presently, extremist tendencies within the Brotherhood are on the rise due to frustration against the Sisi regime's crackdown. However, if it were to nip these tendencies in the bud and continue to abjure violence while simultaneously de-radicalising its ideology, it may one day find itself legitimised once again in the distant future. Like its resurgence in the Mubarak era after having reformed itself, only a moderate ideology and modus operandi will allow it to remain an active and influential player in the changing Arab world.

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A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

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THE POPULAR FRONT OF INDIA

Introduction

There is an understanding that political views are polarising in two zones: one dominant far right and others attracted to the far left. On those lines, the first indication in India came soon after the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) was announced. The nation was divided into two factions and those opposing the Act joined in various modes of protests. Some took it to social media, some to print media and some took to the streets with support of certain extremist organisations. One such suspected organisation which is under investigation is the Popular Front of India (PFI). Since the beginning of 2020, the PFI has been vocal about its contestations against decisions taken by the Indian judiciary. It has now been found to be involved in the anti-CAA protest.

The PFI is registered under the Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860 at Delhi. The organisation has been using passive methods to attain its larger goals and objectives which are detrimental to the social fabric of India. Its involvement has been found in several trans-national terror activities and social and political conflicts in India. PFI members have been exposed on

Facebook as being Islamic State (IS), Harkat Ul Jihad al-Islami, Hizbul Mujahideen, Lashkar-e-Tayyaba and Al Qaeda sympathisers.

This article elaborates on the structure, aim and activities of the organisation and how it has been able to manage becoming a pan-India movement. At the end, the article concludes with a discussion on some recommendations to resolve the challenge of proscribing groups like the PFI.

Background

The Popular Front of India (PFI) – *Naya Caravan Naya Hindustan* – is regarded as an incarnation of the National Development Front (NDF) set up in 1994 in Kerala. In 2006, the NDF dissolved itself and re-emerged by the name of PFI, presumably to focus on socio-economic issues ailing minorities; the Kerala-based Muslim community in particular. Before going further into the structure, it is essential to understand one unique feature of such organisations. The PFI is not just an incarnation of the NDF, but there exist multiple shells like the *Matryoshka* doll (Russian dolls one inside another) out of which the PFI has emerged.

The story of such radical outfits starts from 1947 onwards with the division of the All India Muslim League in 1948 into India and Pakistan factions, when the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) came into existence. The IUML is a political party in Kerala, recognised by the Election Commission of India, which later became a leading part of the United Democratic Front (UDF), led by the Indian National Congress in Kerala, since the 1970s.

Next in line was the Islamic Sevak Sangh (ISS), established in Kerala in 1992, to counter the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). It is a pan-nationalist movement, which superficially claims to be working for the welfare of minorities. The ISS came into limelight during the Babri Mosque demolition in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, in 1992. It was discovered that ISS leaders had connections with the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) of Pakistan. Eventually, the Government of India banned it. As the government proscribed

the ISS, it morphed into the NDF, which was formed in 1994 in Kerala, to focus on the socio-economic issues of the minorities, with a focus on Muslims of Kerala. The NDF's modus operandi is *Da'wa*, which means missionary work and propagation of Islam to other communities as well.

The NDF came into the limelight only after the Student Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) started getting noticed for their extremist jihadi activities and when for their call for the 'liberation' of India to make it an 'Islamic land'. One of the SIMI members in Kerala, Professor P. Koya, began to attend mosque prayers and hold post-prayer interactions with the Jamaat-e-Islami to form this group called the National Democratic Front (NDF).

After the SIMI was banned in 2001 post the 9/11 attack, the NDF reincarnated itself as the PFI in 2006. As stated, the PFI is registered under the Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860 at Delhi, with the ostensible purpose of establishing a classless society in which freedom; justice and security are enjoyed by all.¹ The Societies Registration Act 1860 Section 20, specifies "... charitable societies, the military orphan funds or societies established at the several presidencies of India...to work towards...philosophical inventions, instruments or designs."

The PFI has its headquarters in New Delhi and a presence in 23 states, and is prominently active in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Assam, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. Interestingly, the PFI's preamble states that it works towards the socio-economic, cultural and political empowerment of the deprived, and works for welfare of Dalits, tribals, religious, linguistic and cultural minorities, backward classes and women of India.² With these objectives, the PFI has justified its existence under the Societies Registration Act. People above the age of 15 years can join the organisation on a payment of a membership fee of Rs.10 per month. The PFI has its own monthly magazine -- *Thejas*. Some of its key objectives are:

1. To mobilise people against the violation of human rights and protect the civil and political rights of the people of India.

2. Endeavour to protect the cultural, social and religious identities of tribals, Dalits and minorities.

Although, the PFI has not been proscribed by the central government as yet, several states have appealed to the Centre to do so on grounds of its acts of terror. The PFI is under the scanner of several intelligence agencies for its alleged anti-India ideology for years.³ The Government of Jharkhand has banned the organisation as also the Government of Uttar Pradesh. It is time that scholars and experts on terrorism and violent extremism study the group and understands its functioning.

Modus Operandi

Though the organisation came into existence to work for Muslim empowerment, its Muslim agenda is only a side show. It keeps the issues of vulnerable societies (women, labourers, farmers, Dalits & Adivasis) at the forefront as a cover up and keeps the government distracted. Through that disguise, they have been able to manage not get banned.

As stated, the PFI was formed in 2006 in Kerala as a successor to the NDF.⁴ Security agencies allege that the SIMI ideology influences its leaders and its ultimate goal is to replace the democratic system of India with an Islamic State-styled government. It asks for 'total Muslim empowerment', and is under the scanner for its alleged anti-India ideology.⁵

The PFI runs projects like '*School Chalo*' to encourage education for all up to the secondary level, as well as 'Sarva Siksha Gram' and 'Adopt a Students' campaigns. These projects not only provide legitimacy to function openly, but also provide cover for their religious mission. PFI members state that India being a democratic country, they have a right to protest for political and social reasons but the government is reaching for their necks. They believe that if their rights are breached, they will be left with no choice but to follow their holy text that has provision for jihad and will not be reluctant to utilise that provision to justify their acts. The writings of Sayed Abu Ala Maududi,

Allama Iqbal and Osama Bin Laden influence PFI members. The group has been maintaining the image of a charitable organisation while working for the ultimate goal of establishing an Islamic state by using conversions and spreading fear through terror acts.

The organisation very ingeniously has used one of the features of its preamble on the Dalit and tribal uplift and protection of their political rights. That has helped the PFI in gaining support of the Bhim Army led by Chandrashekhar Azad, which works for Dalit welfare, and who also joined the anti-CAA and anti-National Register of Citizenship (NRC) protests. Further, in some of the PFI organised programs and activities in various parts of Rajasthan, Assam, Uttar Pradesh and Kerala, it has seen success in spreading its missionary programmes and gaining popularity among non-Muslims as well, especially the youth and women.

The PFI pursues a strategy aimed at communalising the Indian polity, enforcing their brand of Islam, heightening existing social divisions and maintaining a trained bank of volunteers for carrying out actions in the field.⁶ “PFI had consistently been indulging in actions detrimental to overall national security,” the National Investigating Agency (NIA) said while blaming the outfit for seeking to impose religious orthodoxy on Muslims and using sister outfits like ‘Sathya Sarani’ based in Malappuram to carry out forcible conversions⁷ while seeking opportunities to enforce religious obscurantism on Muslims.⁸ The PFI has been linked with an alleged case of ‘love jihad’ in Kerala; in 2017, the NIA, which was then investigating 94 love jihad cases registered by the Kerala Police, held four PFI-linked men in the Hadiya case for forced conversion of Akhila Ashokan.⁹

Though the PFI does not have faith in the Constitution of India and the judicial system, its members do not hesitate to use these for their benefit. (Already mentioned above) This shows the outfit’s fundamentalism, its false interpretation of Islam and disrespect for the Indian democratic system. “PFI had unswervingly been indulging in actions that are damaging to national security,” the NIA has said.¹⁰

Members of the PFI not only stood against policies which they felt were anti-Muslim, but also indulged in radical political confabulations. These ranged from domestic policies, Hindutva ideology, Israel-Palestine issue, capitalism, American culture, the government and many such issues, which according to it undermined the spread of Islam. The group also promotes anti-Zionist and pro-Palestine activities across the country. In July 2014, inspired by a series of rallies that took place in several parts of the world, it started a campaign called “I am Gaza” for nationwide solidarity in favour of the Palestinians.¹¹ These steps helped the NDF to isolate and polarise Muslim youth and develop a sense that there was a need for the educated youth to respond to the urgency of remaining steadfast for the cause of Muslim welfare.

Cadres of the banned outfit SIMI are fast regrouping under the banner of the PFI. The PFI has expanded its tentacles to the North after carrying out initial recruitment in South India. The spreading tentacles of the PFI and its political outfit, the Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI), came to light only when its members were influenced by the *Taqreer* (speeches) of Zakir Naik. Interestingly, just days after Naik’s Islamic Research Foundation (IRF) was banned, the PFI organised massive protest rallies in different parts of the country. Intelligence sources say there is electronic evidence of increasing interaction between members of these two groups, especially since the ban of the IRF.¹²

Questionable Activities

As the world is battling the pandemic and trying to discover a vaccine, this phase is being used by terror groups to advance their designs. The PFI has thus advanced its anti-government agenda and propaganda. It organised an online conference called 'National Lockdown Fascism-Unmask the Hidden Agenda' on May 10, 2020. This event was attended by more than ten thousand people from across India through various social media channels like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, and the locked chatroom of Zoom as well.¹³ This online conference called for a mass protest against the Government of India,

calling it 'Fascist'. Prominent members of the PFI and the SDPI, along with an ex-IAS officer Sasikanth Senthil, Raj Ratan Ambedkar, National President of the Buddhist Society of India and Islamic scholar Khalilur Rehman Sajjad Nomani participated in the conference. In this conference, speakers gave inflammatory and provocative speeches against the government and suggested ways to continue the struggle. The conference discussed the situation of the national lockdown due to Covid-19 and blamed the government for using Covid-19 as an opportunity to 'eradicate the minority communities and create Islamophobia' in the minds of the people in India and abroad. Some of the issues that were discussed in this conference were:-

- a. The speakers compared the Government of India to Hitler's Nazi Germany and to the dictators of the Roman Empire. A part of the talk was on how in America the maximum number of people dying of Corona were Black American Muslims facing racism and being denied adequate medical attention. Giving the example of the Al Aqsa mosque, Anis Ahmad, General Secretary of the PFI, argued that just like the Israeli forces stopped Muslims from entering the mosque, similarly, the Indian Government will eventually stop Muslims from going to mosques in the name of social distancing under Covid-19.
- b. Speakers targeted the RSS and 'informed' the people as to how the land of Babri Mosque was snatched away from its true heirs (Muslims) and asked for donations for the construction of the Ramjanam Bhoomi temple in Ayodhya.
- c. Media personnel were also targeted and called as '*genocide journalists*' who were 'sold into the hands of big business houses like Reliance'. PFI members targeted media houses who 'help the government in setting the anti-Muslim narrative, which has led to genocide in the nation'.
- d. Speakers asked all liberals, Left and PFI members to come together and form a strong opposition against the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

to fight for the rights of women, youth, Dalits, farmers, labours, Lingayat tribe of Karnataka and Muslims. They called for the continuity of struggle against the 'Hindu' government to defuse its 'agenda' of Islamophobia. The conference unanimously condemned the police investigation on members of the Tablighi Jamaat and the Maulana Saad.

- e. One of the speakers from the Buddhists Society urged the people of India who sympathise with the PFI to approach the United Nations Human Rights Commission and plead for intervention against 'the supposed Muslim 'pogrom'.
- f. As per Maulana Sajjad Nomani, "the government is using every opportunity to set (the) narrative against the Muslims and holding Muslims responsible for the spread of coronavirus in India. However, the truth remains that the government plans to de-populate the nation by killing people belonging to the weaker section of the society and the minorities under in the name of economic crises." He further created fear amongst the Muslims by claiming that the government will soon put army boots on the ground, control them and keep them on surveillance. Maulana Nomani further said, "the people are being tortured in Xingjian, Palestine and in India because they belong to (the) Muslim community." He told the audience that people from other religions like Christians, Sikhs and Buddhists were also not safe in India till the time BJP government was in power".
- g. Tasleem Rehmani, National Secretary, SDPI, who also contested elections from the Okhla constituency during the last Delhi Assembly elections, asked all Muslims of India to boycott big factories and business houses. He suggested that one of the ways to fight back this anti-Muslim government was by quitting jobs and refusing to join back because as per the government, Muslims were responsible for Covid-19. Rehmani said that when Muslims stop going back to work, then all big industries will have an economic downfall and

eventually understand the importance of the Muslim workforce that is being exploited by them. He further asked the people not to be frightened of death because it was inevitable and thus there was nothing to lose, and hence, one must be ready to sacrifice for larger goals.

- h. Anis Ahmad, General Secretary PFI, asked the audiences to refuse the use of the Arogya Setu App. He informed the audience that through this application, identity, security and privacy would be sacrificed, and 'witch-hunting' will continue even post Covid-19. He stated that such Apps are made to keep a surveillance on citizens of this country and that all such policies will continue even after the Covid-19 pandemic is over.
- i. Members and activists involved with the PFI were urged to actively work on identifying and filing cases against those individuals who were shaming Muslims on public fora, and appealed to conference participants to actively report such individuals who were making hate speeches. So far, the PFI has registered 1256 cases in which 34 people have been arrested.¹⁴

The PFI has been protesting across India against the CAA, NRC and the National Population Register (NPR), with its epicentre being Shaheen Bagh in New Delhi. It has been successfully exploiting the sense of insecurity created in the Muslim community and misleading the people by false projection of the entire narrative. Previously, members of the Kerala-based PFI were arrested on charges of instigating violence in UP and Assam. It was also accused of fanning flames in Karnataka against the North-Eastern people, resulting in a mass exodus.¹⁵ Next, it was the CAA-2019, which actually relates to the persecution of minority communities in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh. False narratives over NRC and CAA gave misguided Muslims to capitalise on an opportunity to spread fear of violation of human, civil and political rights of the people of India. This is one of the examples of how the PFI has been propagating its objectives by twisting facts and specific

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

government policies to suite their organisational and ideological purposes.

Soon after few members of PFI were arrested in connection to the Jafarabad riots, the Enforcement Directorate found that it was receiving funding from various sources and collected in around 73 bank accounts. It amounted to approximately Rs.120 crore. About ten of these accounts were linked to PFI members and five to seven accounts to the Rehab India Foundation (RIF). These transfers were done in such a calculated manner that every day there were deposits and withdrawals of cash, and payments were kept at less than Rs.50,000 so as not to provide PAN card details.

In 2010, the PFI members organised a march to Parliament demanding 10 percent reservation for Muslims. The reasons they gave were: One, constitutional rights of the individual to seek equal opportunity for self-growth and two, minutes of a high-level government committee meeting which confirmed the backwardness of the Muslim community to argue for reservations. In 2012, the PFI launched a promotional campaign called "why the Popular Front of India?", where they reiterated their mission to restore the rights of the depressed and marginalised sections of Indian society.

On March 10, 2020, a couple was arrested from the Trilokpuri area of Delhi on suspicion of them being involved in assisting the PFI in organising an attack similar to what took place Christ Church in Sri Lanka. Many PFI members were arrested by the Delhi and Uttar Pradesh Police. Lucknow Police reported, "Three PFI members -- Shakilur Rehman, Shabi Khan and Arshad -- have been arrested for their involvement in the violent anti-CAA protest that took place in the old city area of Lucknow and at the Parivartan Chowk in December last year."¹⁶ Lucknow Police arrested around 108 PFI members in connection to the CAA- NRC protests from various districts of Uttar Pradesh. This included PFI State President Waseem Ahmad and Divisional President Ashfaq.¹⁷ The Intelligence Bureau (IB) found that some radical organisations, including the Kerala-based PFI, making efforts to send messages to countries in West Asia about the updating of the NRC.¹⁸ Sources said that the IB had intercepted a few messages sent to West Asian countries

by some radical organisations against the updating of the NRC.¹⁹

One of the significant cases in which the PFI was suspected was a case of 'Love Jihad'. India Today TV released a sting operation on Zainab A.S., the head of the PFI's women's wing, accepting that the organisation's sister concern, Sathya Sarani, had been carrying out massive conversions. "(In) that institute of ours... around 5,000 people have converted to Islam over the past ten years now," Zainab revealed and these included both Hindus and Christians. Given the frequent forced religious conversions and marriage cases, the Jharkhand Assembly also passed an anti-conversion bill.

Linkages with Terror Outfits and Trans-national Activities

Since its inception, PFI's linkages have been found in numerous cases under various sections of Indian Penal Code (IPC), Unlawful Assembly (Prevention) Act (UAPA), Arms Act and Explosives Act. While it has a strong foothold in Kerala, the PFI has expanded itself across the country and included similar-minded groups such as the Tamil Nadu-based Manitha Neethu Pasarai and the Karnataka Forum for Dignity, among others into their fold. The PFI also has been suspected of being involved in several political killings and religious conversions. Its members have been exposed as 'ISIS sympathisers' on Facebook and with the Harkat-ul- Jihad-al-Islami, the Hizbul Mujahideen, Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT) and Al Qaeda.²⁰ Investigation agencies have also claimed that the PFI has been involved in sending youth from Kerala to Afghanistan, Syria and Turkey to join the Daesh or the IS.

On March 25, 2020, in Gurudwara Har Rai Sahib in Kabul, Afghanistan, an attack took place, killing 25 people and injuring approximately 80. One of the suicide bombers was 29-year-old Muhammad Mushin alias 'Abu Khalid Al- Hindi' from Kerala, an active PFI member. It was with the support of PFI, that Mushin was able to travel to Dubai and thereafter to Afghanistan's Nangarhar province to join the Islamic State-Khorasan Province (ISKP) in 2016. In May 2019, the IS announced through its *Amaq* News Agency that it had established its first province in India.²¹ After the attack on the gurudwara

in Kabul, the ISKP took responsibility and shared an image of the Kerala boy. Their magazine *Al Naba* captioned it with 'he avenged the atrocities on the Muslims in India'. In a statement issued through its *Amaq* News Agency, IS said the attack was carried out as an act of revenge for Kashmiri Muslims.²² However, it is not entirely established that the youth involved in the Gurudwara Har Rai Sahib attack was a PFI member, but the investigation is still on.

The PFI's role has been established in the Easter bombing case in which two of its members -- Riyaz Aboobacker and Azaruddin -- had been providing support to Zaharan Hashmi, the mastermind, who was found to be linked with the IS module in India. Azharuddin started a Facebook page called 'KhilafahGFX' through which he propagated the IS ideology.²³ Further investigations exposed that Zahran Hashmi's organisation, the National Thowheet Jamaat, had links with the Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen, an Indian unit of parent organisation Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB).

The PFI's role has also been found in the Pune German Bakery case where it was providing support to the Indian unit of the LeT. Himayat Baig, the alleged mastermind of the German Bakery blast case (February 13, 2010) in Pune, received training from LeT operatives in Sri Lanka.²⁴ His primary job was to recruit and send youth for training to Pakistan. He became a PFI member for the same purpose.²⁵ Links of PFI have also been found with terrorists involved in the Mumbai 26/11 terror attacks. The LeT plotted the 'Karachi Project' with the help of the ISI to execute the attack by using the former's local network support in India and make it appear like a 'home-grown' terror.

The NIA busted an IS module in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, which was allegedly planning to carry out major strikes in several parts of South India. The probe revealed that one of the senior members of the module — Mujeeb *alias* Omar Al Hindi, was associated with the PFI and was inclined to the ideology of the so-called 'caliphate' led by Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi.²⁶ According to reports, Omar Al Hindi was an important cog in this IS module which was

collecting explosives for its activities. Omar was working in Qatar and came to India few months before the attack.²⁷

Security agencies have also stumbled upon a large amount of money transacted into the bank account of Mohammad Tausif Ahmed, a PFI activist from Qatar.²⁸ It was believed that it might be *hawala* (illegal money transaction) money that was sent to Bihar for helping anti-nationals. The module headed by him was plotting Nice (France)-like attacks on community events, particularly on one all-religion gathering in Kochi (Kerala).

Financing of PFI

The financing of the PFI is mostly through its membership schemes and also through donations from individuals in the name of *Zakat* which is one of the five main principles of Islam. PFI members travel to the Gulf and Saudi Arabia for such fundraising events. Also, people living in the southern parts of India and working in that region come back for festivals and donate large amounts. There are several people in Iran and the Middle East also who send donations for welfare activities. Donations mostly come in the name of social welfare - for girl child education, mosque construction or madrasa (religious school) expenses. However, it doesn't reach the actual organisation but gets used for unethical activities. There were several such organisations and societies which were found involved in illegal activities and had their licence cancelled under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA).

According to a dossier put together by the Ministry of Home Affairs in the wake of anti-CAA protests, the PFI has been receiving significant funding from multiple sources in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and Oman.²⁹ PFI members have been functioning vigorously in the UAE through front organisations such as the Rehab Foundation, the Indian Social Forum and Indian Fraternity Forum in Bahrain and Kuwait. PFI leaders maintain an office at Muraba, behind the Lulu Hypermarket in Al Ain in Dubai and are focused on propagating Islamic fundamentalism and raising funds to be used for their pan-Islamic goals. PFI members travel to Muslim majority nations

to raise funds and expand the organisation simultaneously.³⁰

Most of the money comes through hawala channels via foreign countries. In fact, on the issue of hawala transactions in Kerala, former Union Home Secretary G.K. Pillai said that "the funding (for Muslim organisations) seems to be more from outside than from locals". He further stated that the Muslim Relief Network (MRN), an NGO started by the PFI, is another entity through which it organises funds, particularly from West Asia, in return for raising voices for the Palestine cause and to pressurise the Indian Government. The MRN receives donations from the Islamic Development Bank in Jeddah under the mandate of the Organisation of Islamic Countries. The PFI also receives funds from the Jeddah-based World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY), which is linked with Al Qaeda and has been working in Africa as well. It also assists the Muslim World League's (MWL) local representatives to organise religious propagation, relief activities and education.

Assessment

The PFI is found to be spreading its wings in all directions and gaining the support of several sections of society. It has gained popularity amongst the youth, Dalits and some members of intelligentsia by simply arguing better and projecting a sober façade, which makes it difficult for law enforcement agencies to catch them in action. Nonetheless, it is a serious threat that is yet to unravel completely. It also seems to have links beyond India's boundaries.

From early 2020, the PFI has been attracting media headlines for its support to Maulana Saad, anti-CAA protests and for its call to all Muslims to join hands against the government. It took advantage of the Covid-19 situation and mobilised people to strongly oppose the government. It managed to gain some support from international media and certain Gulf countries. Thus, there have been all kinds of reactions from around the world over the Tablighi Jamaat event and the government's reaction to it. Some PFI backed NGO's could also be a plausible reason for the governments of Kuwait, Qatar and the rest to show their solidarity with it. Similarly, many

Muslim majority countries have spoken about the so called 'discrimination and violence against Indian Muslims'. Unfortunately, the international media too has not bothered to highlight efforts made by India's civil societies and the government to urge citizens to maintain peace and harmony and to think on the lines of universalism, brotherhood and humankind.³¹

Sources conclude that the PFI is linked with cases of *jihadi* terror and the promotion of Islamic fundamentalism. The Centre is mulling a crackdown on radical outfits of the PFI, including banning it under the UAPA for the alleged involvement of its cadres in terror activities. After the NIA submitted a dossier detailing four terror cases in which PFI cadres have been charge-sheeted or convicted under UAPA, sources in the Union Home Ministry have said, "We have enough material on PFI's terror links. The time has come to act and carry out a crackdown on it." There are numerous cases registered against the PFI by state police, the National Investigation Agency and other intelligence units. Charges include instigating violence over the CAA, inciting Covid-19 lockdown protests, decrying police investigation of Maulana Saad and communalising the issue of coronavirus. The Uttar Pradesh government has written to the Home Ministry asking it to ban the PFI and there are reports that the governments of Karnataka and Assam have followed suit.³²

According to intelligence officials, IS-related content on social media is highly accessed in the southern states of Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Maharashtra. Youth in J&K are also drawn to IS ideology and go through phases of radicalisation. As an indigenous outfit, the PFI is accused of systematically radicalising many youth and the government is working on a proposal to declare it an 'unlawful association'.

Analysis

Looking at the group's history and the role it has been playing at the grassroots level, it becomes clear that why there are so many hurdles in proscribing the outfit. As the organisation is registered under the Societies Registration Act 1860, it is showcased to be working for the uplift of the weaker sections

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

of society, but behind the curtains, it is working as an anti-establishment organisation and is executing jihadi activities. Under such circumstances there are three options that the Government of India can consider depending upon the criticality of the situation. These are: banning the outfit; negotiations; or revisiting the age old Societies Registration Act 1860 under which PFI is registered as a non-profit organisation.

On the first solution of banning the PFI, the Home Ministry is reviewing dossiers submitted by the investigative agencies. However, it is conceivable that like its predecessors, the PFI too will mutate into another organisation, which is no less dangerous and lethal. Also, the constitution of the PFI mentions under Section 24 titled 'Dissolution of the Organisation' that in any situation when the organisation is to be dissolved, then:-

1. It may be dissolved only by a resolution of the PFI's National General Assembly (NGA) taken by 2/3(two-third) majority.
2. Movable and immovable property and cash shall be transferred to any duly constituted organisation/ society/ trust working on similar objectives.

The second point is a Catch-22 situation as the problem will be repackaged with the same old elements. Therefore it is necessary to look for a permanent solution to contain the growth of such miry and anti-national elements in society. Two methods could be:-

1. Cancelling the license of PFI under the Prevention of Terrorism Act 2002. As per POTA, a 'terror act' is defined as "with intent to threaten the unity, integrity, security or sovereignty of India or to strike terror in the people or any section of the people". This charge can be put on the PFI as well their members recent involvement in the anti-CAA protests and their planning and plotting of the Jafarabad riots in Delhi.
2. To revise the Societies Registration Act 1860, Delhi, it may be a time

taking exercise, but the result will be satisfactory and favouring the Indian system.

Not-for-profit entities in India continue to be regulated by this pre-independence era statute and over the years, it has been subjected to multiple state amendments and mixed state-level implementation mechanisms. It is imperative to bring transparency and accountability in such entities by adopting new technologies and advanced mechanisms. Along with reference to the Expert Group Report of 2012 and fast-tracking the ongoing investigations to confirm the involvement of PFI in illegal domestic and transnational acts of terror, the Government of India can take some steps to curb its spread and put a brake on its notorious activities. Apart from banning the outfit, another option is that the government initiates dialogue with the PFI leadership to understand issues of contention. Conflict resolution and reconciliation strategies have been a successful mode to resolve several conflicts and disputes.

Lastly, it is essential for the government to take cognisance of the matter on a priority basis and take necessary steps keeping in mind the sensitivity of the situation. It is vital to expedite the process before this organisation tears at the social fabric of India. To address these pertinent, clear and present threats, we need to seize the opportunity to clean up subversive elements at the right moment.

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BOKO HARAM

Background

Boko Haram, a combination of Hausa and Arabic, means ‘Western Education is forbidden’. It is one of Africa's most prominent and deadliest terror groups. It is active mainly in North-Eastern Nigeria but has presence in four Chad Basin countries – Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon and Chad. Founded in 2002 by Salafist preacher and proselytiser Mohammed Yusuf as an Islamic sectarian movement, the terror group imposes its radical version of Islam, prohibiting Muslims from taking part in activities not derived from Islamic tradition.¹ The group’s goal is to set up societies like in the Islamic caliphates. It portrays Islamic revivalism as a solution to corruption, poor governance, poverty and other problems that plague Nigerian society. The group blames Western influence for the Nigerian Government and society becoming ‘un-Islamic’.² It wants to overthrow the Nigerian Government and create an Islamic state in Nigeria.

Since 2009, the terror group has carried out unsuccessful revolts, assassinations, kidnappings of school-going children and random massacres of the public and security personnel, totalling over 30,000 people.³ It is also

directly responsible for displacing over two-and-a-half million people in the Chad Basin. In March 2015, the group under its leader Abubakar Shekau, pledged allegiance to the Islamic State (IS/ISIS).⁴ The Nigerian Government has claimed several times to have defeated and finished the Boko Haram, but each time the group has remerged more violent.

Introduction

Boko Haram is the moniker of *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunnah Lidda'awati Wal Jihad* (People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad) founded by Mohammed Yusuf in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno state. The sectarian movement began at a mosque and an Islamic school (madrasa) in a village located in Muslim majority North Nigeria. It initially sought to establish a community based on the Wahabi ideology of Islam to which Yusuf subscribed and rejected western education and secularism as un-Islamic. Till 2009, the group was largely non-violent and worked to keep the radicalised community under its control and isolated from wider society.

The movement gained more followers mainly due to Mohammed Yusuf's charismatic personality and what he preached through his religious and social sermons. In July 2009, following a conflict with the police over law, the movement transformed into an armed militant group and tried to overthrow the Nigerian Government.⁵ The rebellion was crushed by Nigerian security forces resulting in the death of over 800 Boko Haram militants. The founder himself was murdered in police custody. This was a turning point for both Boko Haram and Nigeria. Under Yusuf's hard-line successor Abubakar Shekau, in 2010, the group declared jihad and resorted to indiscriminate violence to seek revenge and capture territory. The group caught international attention in August 2011 when it used a VBIED (vehicle borne improvised explosive device) to attack a UN compound in Nigerian capital Abuja.

In 2012, members opposed to the killing of Muslims split from the Boko Haram to form Ansaru, which lasted till 2014. The terror group achieved worldwide notoriety when in April 2014; its fighters kidnapped

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

276 schoolgirls from a dormitory in Chibok town and held them captive for many years.

In 2015, Boko Haram splintered again due to the Islamic State's (IS or ISIS) influence. With its new faction called Islamic State's West African Province (ISWAP), the IS proclaimed Mohammed Yusuf's son Abu Bakar an-Barnawi as the leader. Both groups use similar tactics, which makes it difficult to make out any difference between the two.

Objective

Initially, the group focused on opposing western education in Nigeria. The goal of Boko Haram as an Islamic Revivalist movement is to create an Islamic state where society is governed based on its interpretation of Sharia law. The group justifies the use of violence as it claims that its end goal is 'pure'.⁶ At its peak in 2014, the group declared the area under its control as an Islamic Caliphate. Although the group is active in all Chad Basin countries, it controls territory in Nigeria. It has links with all major terrorist organisations to gain access to resources and receive training from them.

Ideology

Mohammed Yusuf despised the West and considered it to be the reason for the ills in the Nigerian Muslim community. He considered the Nigerian Government to be un-Islamic and corrupt. Boko Haram was thus started as a sectarian movement to establish a government based on Islamic laws. He had a significant following among the poor, some upper-class members and university student groups. The group adheres to Wahabism and strictly follows the Wahabi understanding of *Tawhid* (monotheism). Like other extremist groups, Boko Haram's ideology rejects the secular values of Nigerian society in which the south is a Christian majority and the north is Muslim-predominant. The group considers a Muslim an infidel if it perceives him to be collaborating with the government and rejects the traditional Islamic establishment in northern Nigeria.

Modus Operandi

Boko Haram began with attacking those it considered complicit in the extra-judicial murder of its founder and those associated with the Nigerian government. This led to the assassination of several police and military personnel. In 2011, the group targeted the UN for supporting the Nigerian government in economic development and helping to combat the Boko Haram insurgency. Abductions and mass kidnappings are the preferred methods of the group to find recruits and ransom. Females are abducted to provide wives for their fighters. The group has also adopted the tactic of using female and child suicide bombers. For the same purpose, it has resorted to the kidnapping of schoolgirls and brainwashing them. The UN has verified the use of 90 children for suicide bombings in Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger, a majority of whom were girls.⁷

The group recruits and uses children as child soldiers in direct hostilities, for planting IEDs, burning of schools or houses and in a variety of support roles. Schools have been targets of choice for the Boko Haram and the UN estimates that 1,500 of these were destroyed since 2014, with at least 1,280 casualties being teachers and students. The group uses suicide bombing to attack places of worship and busy markets as these are considered un-Islamic. It has also resorted to bombing and indiscriminate shooting to loot villages and cities.⁸ The group also attacks mosques which do not conform to Salafist preaching.⁹

Boko Haram operates from their base in the Sambisa forest in Borno State, making it difficult for security forces to target them. The group's founder, Yusuf, was able to attract followers from other Chad Basin countries who were inspired by his sermons and social service schemes. Later, the group exploited cultural, ethnic and religious links that Chad, Niger and Cameroon share with the Northern Nigeria to recruit fighters and smuggle weapons, and supplies across the borders.

Due to a flourishing mining industry, knowledge of explosives is common

among the northern Nigerian working population. As most Boko Haram fighters come from this area, they are adept at making improvised explosive devices (IED). Stolen vehicles are used for carrying out vehicle-based IED suicide bombings. Interestingly, most of the arms that Boko Haram fighters use come from the government's armoury, which indicates the presence of Islamic extremists and Boko Haram sympathisers within the military.¹⁰ Occasionally, the group's fighters also poison water sources, which lead to the death of cattle.

Structure and Leadership

After the death of the group's founder, Mohammed Yusuf, in a failed uprising, his deputy, Abubakar Shekau became the group's spiritual leader. Mamman Nur, a Cameroon national, who was Yusuf's third-in-command, brought Shekau into the organisation. Under Shekau, Boko Haram turned indiscriminate in its violence, killing even Muslim villagers in northeastern Nigeria. He was instrumental in expanding Boko Haram operations to all the Chad Basin countries and was also the mastermind of the attack on the UN headquarters.¹¹

After Shekau declared jihad in July 2010, AQIM (Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb)-trained Boko Haram members, Khalid al-Barnawi and Abubakar Kambar led cells that conducted over 20 suicide bombings between 2011 and 2013.¹² Kambar served as Boko Haram's principal liaison with al-Qaeda and al-Shabaab. Competition for the leadership of Boko Haram between Shekau, Khalid al-Barnawi and Mamman Nur soon caused factionalism in the group. This led to the formation of the 'Ansaru' group under the leadership of Al-Barnawi; he was arrested in early 2016. Further disagreements over doctrine, ideology, targets and tactics caused a significant split in August 2016 leading to the emergence of at least two factions, each in control over several cells. One faction, the Boko Haram, is led by Abubakar Shekau. The other faction, ISWAP, is headed by the IS-appointed Abu-Musab al-Barnawi, the son of Mohammed Yusuf. Earlier, Barnawi had worked as a Boko Haram

spokesperson, but later he defected to Ansaru. He re-joined Boko Haram in 2014 after the Ansaru group's defeat.

At its peak in 2014-15, Boko Haram had about 15,000-20,000 fighters in its ranks.¹³ The current strength is not known, but is estimated to be around 1000-2000 fighters.

Recruitment and Membership

The original leadership of Boko Haram emerged from Al-Qaeda affiliated religious schools. Later, Mohammed Yusuf was able to recruit several youngsters from different classes of society for his cause through his speeches and proselytization. His religious schools also helped him get recruits. Poverty in northern Nigeria meant there was no shortage of recruits for the Boko Haram. Under Shekau, Boko Haram prefers to recruit children as they are easy to manipulate. Testimonies from children retrieved from Boko Haram indicate that many were abducted, but some joined the group due to financial incentives, peer pressure, familial ties and ideological reasons. In some cases, parents gave up their children willingly for economic gain.¹⁴ Many poor parents still refuse to send their children to government-run 'western schools', sending them to madrasas instead.

Against this background, a charismatic Mohammed Yusuf formed the Boko Haram in Maiduguri in 2002. He set up a religious complex, which included a mosque and an Islamic school. Many poor Muslim families from across Nigeria and neighbouring countries enrolled their children at this school. In line with its political goal to create an Islamic state, the school became a recruiting ground for jihadis. Cultural and religious ties among the tribes of Chad Basin countries meant that Boko Haram could also get recruits from other countries - Yusuf had followers in these countries as well.

The primary response to Boko Haram has been to fight the terrorists through military intervention. In this, the government is backed by western nations, including the US. With troops from Chad Basin countries, a

Multinational Joint Task Force (MJTF) has taken the lead in that counter-action since 2015. Nevertheless, this situation has reached an impasse with the MJTF being blamed for driving more recruitment into terror groups.¹⁵

Sources of Funding

Kidnapping is a significant source of revenue for the Boko Haram. The group kidnaps foreign nationals for ransom. In 2013, it kidnapped a French family in Cameroon and released them in exchange for over \$3 million in ransom plus release of Boko Haram fighters.¹⁶ This has become a standard tactic of the group to raise money. Boko Haram fighters regularly attack villages, markets and loot residents.

Over time, the militant group has diversified its funding sources from foreign terrorist groups, bank robbery, cattle rustling, drug trafficking, extortion, engagement in shady businesses, collecting levies and kidnapping for ransom.¹⁷ From time to time its link with other terror groups like al-Qaeda and al-Shabaab has allowed it to obtain arms and funds for its fighters.

Current Status

The group's strength has waned since 2015, and the government has been able to free most of the areas once under the control of the Boko Haram. Factionalism and infighting have weakened Boko Haram considerably. A pro-government militia called the Civilian Joint Task Force is also fighting the Boko Haram in northeastern Nigeria.¹⁸ Still, on the Global Terrorism Index, the Boko Haram is ranked as the second deadliest terror group in 2019.¹⁹ As the largest producer of oil in Africa, the stability of Nigeria is essential for the region, but the Boko Haram and other Islamist groups continue to complicate the security situation.²⁰

Despite repeated claims by the government that the Boko Haram has been defeated and decimated, the group has managed to grab headlines by its actions. But certainly, the group has weakened due to factionalism and

a government offensive. The number of killings has come down, yet Boko Haram remains a big threat in Chad Basin countries as its leadership is intact. Shekau remains Boko Haram's undisputed leader and he intends to create an organisational model with the Sambisa Forest as its hub and the states of Zamfara, Niger, Lake Chad and Cameroon acting as spokes.²¹

Under the MJTF, Nigeria is working with other Chad Basin countries to counter the Boko Haram and regain territorial control. This has forced the Boko Haram to resort to ambush tactics.

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EGYPTIAN ISLAMIC JIHAD

Introduction

Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ) or Al-Jihad is a terrorist group which emerged in the 1970s in Egypt with such aims that have expanded over the years. Egypt has been vocal on secularism and decolonisation. Its then president, Gamal Abdel Nasser, played a vital role in forming the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM), often called the ‘Third Block’ in the Cold War. The Egyptian movement of 1952 was an incident that stoked revolution against monarchy and authoritarian governments in the Arab world. The revolution gave mixed results as it also benefited some extremist organisations in carrying forward their goals and ideologies through violent means.

The base of the EIJ traces itself to Tanzim al-Jihad, a violent extremist group formed by a former Egyptian army officer and intelligence member, Abuud al-Zumar.¹ When Zumar was arrested for the assassination of Anwar Sadat, his group was shut down. Later, in the 1980s, the Tanzim was restructured by Sayyid Imam al-Sharif and Muhammad Abd al-Salman Farraj under a new name “EIJ”, or “Society for Struggle”. The EIJ executed many violent attacks inside Egypt, especially in the border areas and in neighbouring countries.

When the Muslim Brotherhood denounced terrorism and violence, many EIJ members parted ways to form new outfits. They formed close links with the Jamaat-al-Islamiyah, which had the same goals as the EIJ and was involved in the fight against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. It had also triggered the *coup d'état* (1981) that resulted in the assassination of then Egyptian president Anwar Sadat. Later, the highest leadership of the Jamaat-al-Islamiyah apologised for their involvement in Sadat's killing and denounced both the EIJ and Al-Qaeda.²

Objectives

The prime objective of the EIJ is to overthrow the secularist and democratic government in Egypt and establish a regime based on Islamic laws. The EIJ coalesced out of many small organisations with similar aims and ideologies. The purpose of establishing Islamic states brought EIJ closer to al-Qaeda. Under the auspices of Al-Qaeda, the EIJ's new focus was to uproot western intervention in the Middle East region of Muslim governments. It denounced the presence of US forces in the region and opposed Israel and Arab governments, who had close ties with Washington, western ideology and secularism. Due to its anti-secular approach, one of the EIJ's aims was to oppose the 1979 peace treaty between Israel and Egypt under Anwar Sadat.³ In the 1980s, because of US intervention, many members of the EIJ and the Jamaat-al-Islamiyah left Egypt to fight in Afghanistan.

Ideology

The group is a radical Salafi Jihadist organisation based on the Sunni Sect. The ideology it follows is influenced by the treatise of Sayyid Qutub and Omar Abd-al-Rahman, which advocates Jihad against a secular Egyptian government. Although the ideology of the EIJ was anti-western, it did not embrace the ideology of *Takfiri*, which defines all non-Sunni Muslims as infidels.⁴ Because of this early ideology, its attacks or area of operation was limited to Egypt. Additionally, writings of EIJ mentor Muhammad Abd

al-Salman Farraj – namely *Al-Faridah al-Ghaibah*, or *The Neglected Duty* - emphasizing that Muslims embrace violence to establish an Islamic state, became an ideological platform for the EIJ.⁵

Structure and Leadership

The group's structure is mainly hierarchical. Information regarding its top leaders is scarce. Some of the prominent leaders of EIJ are:-

1. Muhammad Abd-al-Salman Farraj: Former member of the Muslim Brotherhood. After the Muslim Brotherhood denounced violence in 1979, he parted ways and created the EIJ. He was one of the top minds behind the assassination of Anwar Sadat and was arrested by the Egyptian government.
2. Ayman -al-Zawahiri: He is believed to be one of the world's vilest terrorists. He is an eye specialist who was associated with the EIJ since its beginning. He became the top leader of the EIJ in 1991, till the EIJ's merger with al-Qaeda in 1998. He is also believed to be the mastermind of the 9/11 attacks on the US' World Trade Centre. He assumed al-Qaeda's top leadership after Osama bin Laden's death in 2011.
3. Mohammad-al-Zawahiri: A brother of Ayman - al-Zawahiri, Mohammad is a top military commander of the EIJ who was later arrested by Albanian forces.
4. Omar Ahmed Abdul Rahman: Omar is a religious and spiritual leader of the EIJ, arrested for his involvement in the bombings of the World Trade Centre in 1993.
5. Abbud-al-Zumar: He was a nominal leader of the EIJ in the 1980s, who replaced Farraz as a top leader when the Egyptian forces arrested him in 1981. Zawahiri succeeded him in 1991.
6. Saif-al-Adel: He is a top military commander of the EIJ. Later, following the merger of the EIJ and Al-Qaeda, he assumed the same

role and became the chief of Bin Laden's security force. He was arrested for his role in the attack on US embassy in Albania (1998).

7. Ahmad Salama Mubarak: He is the chief of the membership cell of the EIJ, who was arrested by the CIA in Azerbaijan and extradited to Egypt. Egyptian security forces found a list of EIJ members and their addresses on his computer. This helped them arrest two more prominent members of EIJ who were leading the European cell of EIJ - Ahmad Ibrahim al-Naggar and Ahmad Ismail Osman.

These are the high-profile members of the EIJ before its merger with al-Qaeda. Some of them have renounced violence, and some have joined other terrorist organisations.⁶

Funding and Support

Although many like-minded groups supported the EIJ, the primary source of the EIJ's funding before its merger with al-Qaeda is still unclear. Before and after assuming the top leadership of the EIJ (1991), Zawahiri travelled to many places, especially to Arabian countries, to raise funds for the organisation. Sources said that the places he visited frequently were California, Iran and Lebanon. He might also have raised funds as an eye surgeon and for some other hidden business activities. After Egyptian forces' cracked down on the EIJ, it became difficult for Zawahiri and other members to get funding.

When the EIJ joined al-Qaeda, it became heavily dependent on Osama bin Laden for funding and support. Consequently, the objectives and ideology of the EIJ also broadened under the lead of al-Qaeda - that shifted from installing Islamic states in Egypt to Bin Laden's global Jihadist agenda. Because of this collaboration, for many years the EIJ did not undertake any violent activities in Egypt. Later, the EIJ was overshadowed by Al-Jamaah-Al-Islamiyah, another Jihadist group, carved out of it. Founded by Omar Abdel Rahman, Al-Jamaah was a far crueller organisation, being involved in many bloodier operations in Egypt against local people, government officials, national forces and tourists.

The total number of EIJ members is difficult to guess. Although government officials of Egypt blamed Iran for supporting and funding the EIJ, that charge was not proved. Because of its involvement in Khartoum, it was getting ample funding and was a haven from the Sudan government till 1996, when the EIJ was evicted from its territory.⁷

Modus Operandi and Current Status

As per data available, the most common mode of EIJ operations was conspiring and targeting high ranked government officials by bombings, extortion, hijacking and arms attacks. As it aimed to overthrow the secular government in Egypt, the assassination of Anwar Sadat (1981) and failed assassination attempt of Hosni Mubarak (1996) in Ethiopia were the EIJ's high-profile attacks. Additionally, bombings of the Egyptian embassy in Islamabad (1995), the failed assassination attempt against the Egyptian Interior Minister Hassan al-Alfi and Prime Minister Atef Siddiqui (1993), attacks on US installations in Tanzania and Kenya (1998) and failed bombings attempts on the US embassy in East Africa (1998) were its most known actions.⁸ The EIJ's operations were slightly different from other factions in Egypt, as they did not target civilians, foreign tourists and low ranked security officials. Because of its tactical training programmes, the group succeeded in a short time. According to *New York Times*, the EIJ gained experience fighting along with the mujahedeen in the Afghan War, the Sudan and Yemen civil wars that brought it close to al-Qaeda.⁹ As per sources, the EIJ activities were based on a 'blind-cell' structure. Information of one cell was unknown to others to avoid information leak in case any member of any cell was captured.

After its merger with al-Qaeda, the EIJ was named Qaeda al-Jihad to execute attacks globally. Since 2001, when the UN mentioned of a split in the group just after its merger with al-Qaeda, there is little known about the EIJ. Because of its activities, the EIJ was designated a terrorist organisation in many countries. UN Resolution 1267 banned it in 1999. The EIJ was also named a terror outfit by the governments of Australia, Russia and Canada.

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

Britain and the US State Department also designated the EIJ as a foreign terrorist organisation in 2000 and 2005. Under Egypt's 2007 de-radicalisation process, a few top members of the EIJ were released, including Sayyid Imam al-Sharif, when then publicly renounced violence.¹⁰

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HARKAT-UL-JIHAD-AL-ISLAMI

Introduction

The *Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami* (Islamic Jihad Movement, HuJI) is an Islamist terrorist group based in Pakistan with an affiliate body in Bangladesh as well. Areas of operation of the group and its affiliates include Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K).

Background

In 1979, the Soviet Union invaded and occupied Afghanistan to prop up the Communist regime in the country. This occupation was fiercely resisted by local warlords and Islamists. The latter united under the banners of various *Mujahideen* (Islamic warriors) groups, which the USA and Pakistan supported. One of these was the *Jamiat Ansarul Afghaneen* (Party of Friends of Afghanistan, (JAA), a precursor to the HuJI.¹

The JAA was formed in 1980 by Qari Saifullah Akhtar with his associates, Maulana Irshad Ahmed and Maulana Abdus Samad Sial. These individuals were students of the Jamia Uloom-ul-Islamia Madrassa² based in Binori Town, Karachi.³ This is an Islamic university following the traditional *Darul Uloom*

system, a model of a religious seminary first instituted by the Darul Uloom, Deoband—from where the Deobandi movement originated. In other words, the Jamia Uloom-ul-Islamia Madrassa is a Deobandi educational institution.

Towards the end of the Soviet-Afghan War, the JAA was renamed the Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HuJI), and this group began to focus on Jammu and Kashmir. In the early 1990s, the HuJI merged with the Pakistan-based Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HuM) to form the Harkat-ul-Ansar, and then, in 1992, the Harkat-ul-Ansar's Bangladesh unit was established.⁴ Later, a unit was also established in Myanmar's Rakhine state, which is where the majority of Muslim Rohingyas live. This unit was the HuJI-A (Arakan).⁵ Till 1997, the Harkat-ul-Ansar carried out several terrorist attacks in J&K against civilians and Indian security forces.⁶

Following its designation as an FTO (Foreign Terrorist Organisation) by the USA in 1997, Harkat-ul-Ansar was effectively disbanded. In some areas, the it was renamed as Harkat-ul-Mujahideen,⁷ while the Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami broke off as an independent group again.⁸ The Harkat-ul-Ansar's Bangladesh branch was renamed as the Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami Bangladesh (HuJI-B).⁹ For some time following its inception, the HuJI-B functioned under the Jihad Movement of Bangladesh, led by Fazlur Rehman, a Pakistani Islamist politician and the head of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam party. Fazlur Rehman was also one of the signatories to Osama bin Laden's 1998 declaration of 'holy war' targeted at Jews and crusaders.¹⁰

In 2001, with the US-led invasion of Afghanistan, the HuJI faced a significant setback. It lost its base of operations in the country and had to retreat to Pakistan. Qari Saifullah Akhtar, one of the outfit's founders and its *Amir* (chief), found a haven in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (which has since been merged with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province). Other cadres fled to Pakistan's Pashtun-dominated areas and still others to Central Asia and Chechnya.¹¹ It continued carrying out terror operations across India, Pakistan and Bangladesh to Islamise South Asia.

While the HuJI was active in J&K in the 2000s, it spread to carry out terrorist attacks deep within the rest of the country. One of its earliest attacks was in January 2002, when a pair of shooters fired with AK-47s at the American Centre in Kolkata, West Bengal. Then in March 2006, three bomb explosions in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, caused 28 deaths.¹² In 2007, authorities apprehended several of its cadres and local level commanders in Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and J&K, often with seizures of weapons and explosives.¹³ 2007 also saw two bomb blasts in Hyderabad, the then capital of Andhra Pradesh.¹⁴ On May 18, 2007, Hyderabad's Mecca *Masjid* was targeted by a bomb blast leading to nine deaths. While after years of investigations and trials no one has yet been formally found guilty for this act, reports point to a HuJI involvement. On August 25, 2007, twin bomb blasts in Hyderabad killed over 40 people. Several reports pinned the blame on the HuJI's Bangladesh unit.¹⁵ In November 2007, the HuJI was reportedly responsible for the bomb blasts targeting courts in Varanasi, Faizabad and Lucknow in the state of Uttar Pradesh, leading to 15 deaths.¹⁶ Next, in September 2011, a bomb was detonated in the Delhi High Court. This attack led to 15 deaths, and the HuJI claimed responsibility though Indian agencies have not confirmed this claim.¹⁷

The HuJI and the HuJI-B have also been implicated in many terrorist attacks in Bangladesh. On April 14, 2001, multiple bombs were set off in Dhaka at an event commemorating the Bengali New Year, killing nine people. In May 2004, a bomb blast was carried out at the Shah Jalal Shrine in Sylhet, Bangladesh, where three people were killed and a hundred were injured. In August of the same year, the HuJI-B detonated grenades at a rally of the Awami League in Dhaka where its leader Sheikh Hasina was present. While Sheikh Hasina survived, 24 people were killed. Several members of the Awami League's rival, the BNP (Bangladesh Nationalist Party), were also implicated in this attack and sentenced to death along with 38 HuJI cadres.

The HuJI has also been active in Pakistan, its home base. One of the most notable attacks of the group in Pakistan was the suicide bombing of the US

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

Consulate in Karachi which led to four deaths, including that of American diplomat David Foy.¹⁸

The outfit's terrorist activities across the sub-continent prompted its proscription by several countries. As per India's Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 2004 (UAPA), the HuJI is a banned terrorist outfit. In 2005, Bangladesh banned the group. In 2010, the USA designated the outfit as an FTO.¹⁹ And, in the same year, the UN named the HuJI as a terrorist organisation and added it to the Al-Qaida sanctions list under Security Council Resolutions 1844 and 1904.²⁰

Ideology and Objectives

HuJI is a radical Islamist outfit belonging to the well organised Deobandi movement. Its larger motive is to Islamise the entire sub-continent. Its terrorist attacks within Pakistan, Bangladesh and India point to the outfit's determination to impose Islamic rule over the region through violence. The group is explicit in its aim of 'liberation of Kashmir from India by waging *jihad* (holy war).^{21,22} To this end, it targets non-Muslims like Christians, Jews and Hindus, as well as the security forces, government assets and progressive-thinking Muslims.²³ In Pakistan and Afghanistan, it targets Westerners. The group's close relations with the Taliban and Al- Qaeda motivate it to wage a *jihad* against American forces to drive them out of Afghanistan.²⁴

Modus Operandi

The HuJI believes in using violent *jihad* to achieve its ideological and strategic goals. As listed earlier, it has a proclivity for using conventional explosives in public areas to cause high casualties and inflict terror, as it did across India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Its fighting experience in Afghanistan and J&K also means that its cadres are trained in the usage of small arms. Security forces in J&K have uncovered many HuJI weapons caches.²⁵

In their quest for the complete Islamisation of the sub-continent in line

with radical interpretations of *Sharia* law (Islamic religious law), the group targets non-Muslims and those Muslims who do not conform to its agenda. Its radical agenda is pitted in opposition to South Asian governments and political leaders as well as the presence of Westerners in Afghanistan and Pakistan. It targets public institutions like courts of law in India, while in Bangladesh it has tried to target some of the country's most prominent politicians. Like most other radical Islamist outfits in Pakistan, the HuJI targets Americans and their institutions like the US Consulate.

Sources of Funding

One of the main sponsors of the HuJI is Pakistan's ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence). Ever since its inception during the anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan, the HuJI has been propped up by the ISI. With the ISI's support, this group now fights for the separation of J&K from India whilst inflicting human and economic losses on India and Bangladesh through its terrorist attacks. The ISI provides training camps for the group in Pakistan. Cadres originating from these camps were instrumental in the 2002 attack on the American Centre in Kolkata. The ISI is also reportedly involved in planning such attacks, some of which are planned from Dhaka. In 2008, India's Union Ministry for Home Affairs accused Pakistan and the ISI of backing the HuJI and HuJI-B. According to a report of the Home Ministry, "The hand of Pakistan-based terrorist organisations — Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) —and increasingly of the Bangladesh-based HuJI, known to have close links with the ISI, has been observed in most of these cases."²⁶

Network

One of the organisations that abet the HuJI is the Students' Islamic Movement of India (SIMI), an India-based Islamist terrorist group. It has aided the HuJI and HuJI-B by helping them in planning attacks and in providing logistical assistance and shelter to their cadres. Members of the SIMI are also known to join the HuJI to directly participate in its acts. To enable the HuJI's operations

in India, many times SIMI and other terrorist outfits like the JeM and LeT have collaborated. For example, the 2006 Varanasi bombings were carried out by the HuJI with assistance from the SIMI and JeM.²⁷

HuJI also has links to armed separatist groups operating in northeast India, which shares porous borders with Bangladesh and where the HuJI-B already has a substantial presence. Indian rebel groups like the Assam-based United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) and the Manipur-based People's United Liberation Front (PULF) operate in these states. HuJI cooperates with them to target Indian security forces and to facilitate infiltration of its cadres from Bangladesh to carry out attacks in India. Reportedly, HuJI runs some of the ULFA's camps in the Indian state of Tripura and in the Chittagong Hill Tracts along the Bangladesh border.²⁸

Leadership

Maulana Irshad Ahmed: In 1979, Ahmed co-founded the HuJI's parent organisation, the Jamiat Ansarul Afghaneen (JAA), which aimed at mobilising the Pakistani *mujahideen* to fight the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. He was a product of the Karachi-based Jamia Uloom-ul-Islamia Madrassa, a Deobandi seminary. During the years he was operational, he would recruit young Pakistanis from *madrassas* (Islamic religious schools) to join the anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan. In 1985, he was killed fighting the Soviet forces in Sharana, Afghanistan.^{29 30}

Qari Saifullah Akhtar: He was another co-founder of the JAA and went on to lead the outfit after its rechristening as the Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami. After Maulana Irshad Ahmed's death, Akhtar took over as *Amir* (chief) of the outfit and continued to retain leadership until he died in 2017. Akhtar was also closely affiliated with Al-Qaeda and acted as the commander of its military wing, Brigade 313.³¹ A Pashtun from the Pakistani tribal region of Waziristan, he was also a product of the Jamia Uloom-ul-Islamia Madrassa. After the founding of the JAA (later HuJI), Akhtar conducted operations from a base in Kandahar, Afghanistan. After the 2001 US-led invasion of

Afghanistan, Akhtar fled to Pakistan. He was implicated in several major terrorist attacks in India and Pakistan, including the 2008 bombing of the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad. In 2017, Akhtar was killed by Afghan security forces in the Paktika district of Afghanistan.³²

Maulana Abdus Samad Sial: He was another co-founder of the JAA. He remains a prominent leader of the HuJI and acts as its patron-in-charge in J&K.³³

Muhammed Ilyas Kashmiri: He served as the operational commander of the HuJI and was a top leader of Al-Qaeda's Brigade 313.³⁴ He was responsible for running a training camp for militants in North Waziristan. He was reportedly responsible for orchestrating the 2008 assassination of General Amir Faisal Alvi, who was the head of Pakistan's Special Services Group. Kashmiri was killed in a US drone strike in South Waziristan in 2011.³⁵

Shah Sahib: Sahib was a Taliban commander selected to replace Ilyas Kashmiri as operational commander following the latter's death in 2011. He was also a chief of Al-Qaeda's Brigade 313. His present status is unknown.³⁶

Bashir Ahmed Mir: He was the outfit's commander-in-chief for India-based operations. He was trained in Pakistan and was involved in numerous terrorist attacks, including the blast at the Ajmer Sharif shrine in Rajasthan, the Uttar Pradesh court-bombings, and the 2007 bombings in Hyderabad, India. Mir was a resident of J&K and he joined the Harkat-ul-Ansar in 1992. He went over to Pakistan, where he received training and was also involved in training recruits. In 1999, he returned to India, operated under a J&K unit of the HuJI, and was finally appointed commander-in-chief in 2004. In 2008, he was killed in an encounter in J&K with Indian police forces.³⁷

Shahid Bilal: He is reportedly the operational chief of the HuJI and is responsible for numerous attacks in India. In 2002-03, he received training in Saudi Arabia and returned to India in 2005. He is implicated in the 2007 Mecca Masjid blasts in Hyderabad as well as the assassination of Haren Pandya, former Home Minister of the Indian state of Gujarat.³⁸ Unconfirmed

reports state that Bilal was killed in Karachi in 2007 and that Muhammed Amjad succeeded him in 2008.³⁹

Mohammed Tariq Qasmi: He was the head of operations for the HuJI in Hyderabad, India, and also functioned as the outfit's area commander in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. He was implicated in the 2007 blasts in Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh, and in the court bombings in that state in the same year. Security forces arrested him in December 2007 and in December 2019, he was sentenced to life imprisonment by the court.^{40 41}

Cadre and Recruitment

It is not clear about the present cadre strength of the HuJI, but it is estimated to be in the range of 500-750.⁴² Main regions from where it recruits its cadres are the Pakistani provinces of Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (formerly the North-West Frontier Province) and the Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK). The group relies on madrassas to source potential recruits. It has links with the Tablighi Jamaat, an international Deobandi Islamic missionary movement and so, Raiwind, the Pakistan headquarters of the Jamaat, is also a fertile recruiting ground for the HuJI.⁴³

The HuJI is said to focus more on armed training of its recruits rather than on religious training and education. Until the US-led invasion of Afghanistan, the HuJI thrived under the country's Taliban regime. Its headquarters is in Kandahar and there are six training camps in Kabul, Khost and Kandahar. The HuJI's most extensive training camp used to be located in Kotli, in PoK. This was later shifted to Razmek in North Waziristan with the efforts of Ilyas Kashmiri.⁴⁴

Current Status

The HuJI is one of the most active Islamist terrorist groups with a pan-South Asian influence extending from Afghanistan to Myanmar. In the 2000s and 2010s, it notched up several high-profile terrorist attacks, particularly in

India, Bangladesh and Pakistan. The group's strength is augmented by its close relationship and influence with Al-Qaeda, one of the most potent global terrorist outfits; many HuJI leaders have commanded Al-Qaeda's Brigade 313.

The group has faced several setbacks in recent years. For example, for almost a decade it has failed to successfully conduct any significant terrorist operation in India. This may be attributed to improved counter-terrorism strategies in the country, leadership losses over the past decade and a decline in its strength due to sanctions imposed by the UN and the US. The loss of operational commanders Ilyas Kashmiri and Shahid Bilal have undoubtedly hindered the HuJI's capabilities in India and Pakistan. The elimination of Bashir Ahmed Mir, the commander-in-chief for the outfit's operations in India in 2008, was also a significant hit. 2017 saw a significant loss for the group, wherein Afghan security forces killed the group's founder and *Amir*, Qari Saifullah Akhtar. Then in 2019, Mohammed Tariq Qasmi, a prominent HuJI commander in Hyderabad and Uttar Pradesh, was condemned to life imprisonment by an Indian court.

Apart from these factors, the recent surge in Indian military actions in J&K and the abrogation of the state's special status is likely to strengthen the counter-insurgency operations and cause more significant difficulties for the HuJI. Problems for the group are compounded if reports of a possible *détente* between India and Pakistan are to be believed. But more realistically, the withdrawal of the US from Afghanistan allows the Taliban to thrive and, under its wing, Islamist terrorist outfits like the HuJI would also thrive. It was in Afghanistan where the HuJI first came into being and in Afghanistan, it may revive itself again.

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A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

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HARKAT-UL-MUJAHIDEEN AL-ALAMI

Introduction

The Harkat-ul-Mujahideen al-Alami (HuMA) is a Karachi-based Islamist terrorist group and a subscriber to the Deobandi movement. This organisation came into existence in 2002 as an offshoot of the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HuM).

Background

In 2001, following the 9/11 attacks, the Pakistan government banned the HuM under international pressure to move against Islamist terrorist organisations. Following this, the group was pressurised into merging with the Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen (JuM). There was much opposition within the HuM against this proposition and the resulting differences led to a faction breaking away, naming itself the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen al-Alami.¹

In April 2002, the group was implicated in a failed assassination attempt against the then President Pervez Musharraf when it attempted a car-bombing on the President's cavalcade in Karachi. Its first major attack was a June 2002 car-bombing attack at the US Consulate in Karachi, which led to deaths of 12

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

people. In July 2002, three members of the group were arrested. Two of these were the most influential leaders of the group—Muhammed Imran, *Amir* (chief) of the HuMA, and Muhammed Hanif, *Naib Amir* (deputy chief) and head of the outfit's armed wing. In the course of interrogation, their complicity in a spate of terrorist attacks in 2001-02 was revealed, including murders of police officers, theft of weapons, grenade attacks, bomb attacks and notably a rocket attack on the Jinnah International Airport in Karachi. In April 2003, Muhammed Imran and Muhammed Hanif were both sentenced to death by an anti-terrorism court. In October 2003, a Pakistani court convicted three HuMA terrorists for the assassination attempt against President Musharraf and awarded them ten years imprisonment.² In 2004, another HuMA member, Kamran Atif, was arrested for his involvement in the failed assassination attempt and was handed a death sentence in 2006 by a Pakistani anti-terrorism court.³

The group was also involved in many other attacks. In September 2002, eight militants from the group connected with attacks on the US Consulate and the Sheraton Hotel on May 8 were arrested by Pakistani authorities. The latter was a suicide car bombing targeting French engineers and causing 14 deaths. In 2010, Pakistani authorities arrested a HuMA commander in Sindh, and later in the year, a cadre of the group was shot dead by unidentified gunmen.⁴

HuMA has, to a significant extent, merged with the Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) in 2014. Its cadres joined the AQIS in large numbers and effectively took over its Pakistan branch. In the words of a Sindh police officer, Raja Umar Khattab, "HUMA is the face of AQIS in Pakistan."⁵

Ideology and Objectives

HuMA is an Islamist extremist outfit. It is explicitly against western nations, most notably the United States. Many of its attacks have targeted Christians and westerners and the Pakistan government which is seen as pro-US.

Modus Operandi

HuMA uses conventional explosives to carry out attacks thoroughly, including car bombings. This tactic was used in the attempted assassination of former President Pervez Musharraf, the Sheraton Hotel attack and the US Consulate attack. Further police investigations have detected caches of bomb detonators and rocket launchers in the group's possession.

Network

Pakistani authorities discovered that the HuMA often procured weapons from tribal leaders in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), who supplied arms to Al Qaeda also. Another link between the HuMA and Al Qaeda is a Pakistani businessman named Saud Memon. This man is among the most prominent financiers of the HuMA; he also owned the property where American journalist Daniel Pearl was murdered by Sheikh Omar and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed - the latter was one of the senior-most leaders of the Al-Qaeda under Osama bin Laden's leadership who also masterminded the 9/11 attacks.

Officials in the Pakistan's Sindh Province state that despite HuMA's separation from the original Harkat-ul Mujahideen (HuM), both groups continue to maintain relations. HuMA is also said to have close links with the Taliban.⁶

Leadership and Structure

Not much is known about the exact organisational structure of the HuMA. Two essential bodies within its framework are the Consultative Committee and the *Askari* (military) wing. The former is the forum where the HuMA leadership decides on targets; until 2002 it was headed by Muhammed Imran.

Muhammed Imran was the first *Amir* (chief) of the outfit. He was sentenced to death in 2003 for his involvement in terrorism and for his

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

attempt to assassinate President Musharraf. Reportedly, he was later freed but killed in a US drone strike in Afghanistan.⁷

Muhammed Hanif was Imran's deputy and head of the Askari wing. He was given a death sentence at the same time as Imran for the Musharraf assassination plot.

Zubair Mufti was arrested in September 2002 for his involvement in the Musharraf assassination plot. According to Sindh police, he was among the technical masterminds of the group.⁸

Ashraf Khan was the treasurer of the outfit. He was arrested in 2002 in connection with the US Consulate bombing.

Cadre

HuMA is a relatively small terror outfit and reportedly has cadre strength of fewer than 100. As already noted, from 2014 onwards, the group's members have assimilated with the AQIS.

Current Status

HuMA is more or less a defunct organisation at this point. Apart from a few attacks and many failed terror plots in the early 2000s, the present organisation has few high-profile names or incidents associated with it. Most of its leadership and cadre had been mopped up in and around 2002-03 - as of 2003, only around 40 cadres were at large, while over 20 were imprisoned. From 2014 onwards, it has effectively merged with the AQIS and does not retain much of an independent status at this point.

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THE HOUTHY MOVEMENT

Introduction

Yemen has been going through a long civil war that has devastated all life and pushed civilians to starvation and placed them at the mercy of international aid. The ongoing conflict has a long history of clashes between contending stakeholders. One such stakeholder is the 'Houthi' who belong to Shiite Islam. Like traditional politics in the West Asia, the war in Yemen is again a conflict between two sects of Islam - Sunnis and Shias.

After ruling for hundreds of years, the Zaydis were removed from power in 1962 following a revolution led by Egypt. Since then, the group has made endless efforts to revive its historical legacy. The Houthi group was formed in the early 1990s and named after its leader Hussein-al Houthi. The Houthis are also named as 'Ansar Allah' (supporters of God).¹ Houthis have called themselves as descendants of Prophet Muhammad and laid claim to rule the Muslim community. The campaign to revive the Zaydis' golden rule was run by their prominent leader, religious teacher and preacher Badr Al-din Al-Houthi with the assistance of some sectarian and tribal groups, mainly from northern Yemen.² Since the 1980s, the Houthis have undertaken clandestine

operations and a series of coups. In one of the coups, an attempt was made to topple the then Yemen president Ali Abdullah Saleh. Saleh himself had become the president of Yemen after many coup attempts in 1987 and ruled for the next 33 years.

After the 1962 revolution, the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979 became a key factor in boosting the Houthis' prominence. This was the time used by Badr Al-din Al-Houthi and his four sons - Hussein, Yahya, Mohammad and Abdulmalik - to spread Zaydism and create networks among political parties and foreign nations – Iran mainly. They started criticising the government on corruption and launched several campaigns against misgovernance. Social and cultural programs and intermarriage among tribals and the families of the Sa'ada province were some tools by which they tried to increase their influence. They took the help of Iran to contain the spread of Salafism and deal with border tension with Saudi Arabia.

Since 2000, the Houthis have also started talking about Yemen's foreign affairs. They have criticised both America and Saudi Arabia for their interventions in Yemen and Iraq. They also took a stand against American 'brutalities' on the people of Afghanistan in the name of the "war on terrorism". Amongst their many adopted slogans, the main one was "Al-Shi'ar", which means, "The Screams: "Death to America, Death to Israel, Curse upon the Jews, and Victory to Islam."³

Objectives

The primary objective of the Houthis is to bring back the Imamate in Yemen. Being Zaydi ethnics, they want only the descendants of Prophet Mohammad to rule the Muslim world. Badr al-din al-Houthi set this objective for the movement in order to 'save Islam'. Houthis did not consider Saleh, the legitimate president, competent to rule as he did not belong to the Hashemite bloodline of Prophet Mohammad. They are also extremely anti-American. Their significant demands are stated as: Stop discrimination and social and economic marginalisation of Zaydis and the northern tribes; stop

corruption and despotism in the government; block promotion of Salafism and Wahhabism in Yemen; and cut all networks with America and the Jews.⁴ The demands have increased with time, asking for more autonomy and own government in Yemen.

Ideology of the Houthis

After the fall of the Umayyads, the first dynasty in the Islamic world, the Zaydis came to power in 867 AD. Houthis belong to the Jaroudi, a sub-sect of the Zaydi Sect of Shia Muslims. They claim descent from Prophet Mohammad's cousin and his successor son-in-law as the rightful person to lead the Muslim community. Regarding Islam, the Zaydis believe in knowledge, scholarship and freedom to practice one's religion. But the Jaroudis are authoritarian and fixated over the right of the descendants of Mohammad to rule. Houthis traditionally live in the North and North-Western provinces of Yemen towards the South of Saudi Arabia. They follow an ideological document called 'Al-wathiqah al-fikriyya', which implies Ahl al-beit exceptionalism over the entire Muslim world. Zaydi Shiites make up around eight per cent of the Shia population (around 70 million).

The Zaydi Shias belong to the 'Fiver' Shiites community, as distinct from the 'Twelver' Shia community of Iran, Lebanon and Iraq. Houthis believe that Zayd, the great-grandson of Ali, the fifth Imam, is the Muslim community's leader. In contrast, the Twelvers believe that Zayd's brother, the twelfth Imam, Mohammad Al-Baqir, is the leader. The Zaydis reject the Twelver idea as their Imam is considered infallible.⁵

The Zaydis ruled Yemen as Imams up till 1962; Imams claiming to rule the Muslim world are also called Sayyids. However, not all Sayyids embrace the Houthis, and Houthis do not represent all Sayyids. During the Imamate rule, Yemeni kings came from the Sayyid family till the fall of the empire in the 1962 revolution. The Houthis, since then have made efforts to back Sayyid rule, and for this, they preach in public the right of Ahl al-Beit (descendants of Prophet) to rule and guide the Ummah (Nation).

Structure and Leadership

Houthis have a strong foothold in the Sa'ada province of northern Yemen. Since 2000, they have expanded at an incredible pace, growing stronger and gaining capacity to counter the Arab coalition. In 2015, they captured Sana'a and moved towards the city of Aden in southern Yemen. They have already established a formidable presence over the Red Sea and strategic locations of the Strait of Bab al-Mandeb and Hodeidah province. When it was decided to divide Yemen into six federal regions by the Hadi government during the National Dialogue Conference in 2014, the Houthis started the civil war, allied with ousted president Saleh, and captured large parts of Amran al-Jauf and Hajja.⁶

Among the leaders, Badr al-din al-Houthi started the movement for the revival of Sayyid rule. His son Abdul Malik a-Houthi was a preacher spreading his ideologies. He was the group's spiritual, political, and military leader during the six Houthi wars from 2004 to 2009. Abdul's brother-in-law, Youssef al-Madini, was a deputy leader in the Houthi movement. Abdullah Eida al-Razzami and Abdullah al-Hakim (Abu Ali) were their high-ranked military commanders who were fascinated with Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).⁷

Support System and Funding

Politics in West Asia is based mainly on ally formation and religious issues. With its Shia majority, Iran is providing all possible help to Shia people in different countries of the region who are facing atrocities and discrimination. Iran and Hezbollah (its Lebanese proxy) provide funding and technical support to the Houthis to carry out their operations in Yemen. By this, Iran has posed serious threats to other nations and taken a step to be a major player in the Gulf Peninsula. As against the Arab coalition's spending around five to six billion dollars per month on Yemen's war, Iran spends just a few million dollars a year.⁸ Since the start of the Yemen civil war, Iran and Hezbollah have provided it with weapons, food and other support to fight against the Arab coalition.

After the Arab Spring, Iran organised workshops to train Yemen's female activists and non-government organisations. Houthis were very impressed with Hezbollah's operations in Lebanon as well as the Revolutionary Guard Corps of Iran, and saw them as their inspiration. They also sought advice on all their activities from Iran. In 1990, Houthi's prominent leader and preacher Badr al-din al-Houthi visited the city of Qom in Iran. Since then, Iran has a religious and political impression over the Houthis. Iran's direct support to Houthi rebels was evident during the Sixth Houthi War when they engaged against Yemen's Saudi Arabia supported government. Iran also supported Yemen's Southern separatist movement.⁹ Houthis were ideologically strong and militarily capable but lacked planning, central coordination and resources to tackle the Saudi-led Arab coalition forces.

In 2009 and 2013, the Yemeni government and the US Navy Ship *Farragut* blocked two large shipments of weapons from Iran. After the blockade of Houthi-controlled Yemen, the Al-Hodeidah province seaports of Midi and Salif gained importance. Saudi-led Arab coalition forces intercepted Iranian air transported supplies to Houthis through the Sana'a airport. In her speech in 2018, the US envoy to the United Nations revealed evidences of use of Iranian weapons by the Houthis.¹⁰ Next year, the UN Security Council released data to show that Iran had provided 30 million dollars of fuel to Houthis every month. Iran and Houthis also collaborated closely to save the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) negotiations and to avoid international sanctions on Iran.

Modus Operandi and Current Status

When they started their revolution against the political and democratic system imposed in 1962, the Houthis were not violent. They started peacefully by public preaching and political activities. To lead the campaign peacefully, Hussein al-Houthi became active in politics, joined the pro-government Al-Huqq Islamic party and became a member of the Yemen parliament from 1993 and 1997. Badr al-din al-Houthi and his sons started networking and

made connections with politicians and tribes. Believing youths (Muntada al-Shahabal-Mu'min) were organised in summer camps and social programs to align with the Al-Huqq party. In early 2000, President Saleh aligned with US operations in Iraq and West Asia. This act was openly condemned by Hussein in the streets of Yemen while holding mass movements against Saleh and America.

Yemen's security forces killed Hussein al-Houthi in 2004, and that fuelled the fire. Many youths and tribes across the country joined the rebel Houthi movement. In 2004, the first Houthi War began with use of violence in the Houthi movement. From 2004 and 2009, six Houthis wars took place and Yemen is going through one of its worst humanitarian crises. During the first war, around 2000-3000, Houthis could not defend even their caves and clans in the northern region. Soon, the numbers increased. During the sixth war, when Iran allegedly supported them, the rebels grew to 100,000 and successfully held up government functioning in six provinces, and forced Yemen's military brigades to surrender. In 2009, the government undertook operation 'Scorched Earth' with American aid to re-capture schools, hospitals, government buildings, military installations, mosques and other installations from the Houthis.¹¹

In 2011, the Arab Spring began in Yemen with a mass movement rising against then President Ali Abdullah Saleh. He was ousted after 33 years of rule and was replaced by his former vice president Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi, a supporter of Saudi Arabia and America. Yemen then again went back from where it started when the Houthis shook hands with Saleh to remove Hadi, defeated anti-Houthi Salafism and prevented Arab coalition forces and other sectarian and tribal forces (*Islah*) from operating against them. Since then, millions of dollars have been spent from both sides to assume control, but with no outcome. In the fight between Houthi rebels and the government, Al-Qaeda took advantage and managed to secure large swathes of land in the central provinces, besides gaining control over seaports and oil wells.

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THE ISLAMIC FRONT

Introduction

The Islamic Front (IF) is a Sunni Islamist militant organisation established on November 22, 2013. It is an umbrella organisation formed in Syria against the national government. It opposes democracy based on legislation and parliamentary laws, wherein elected representatives have the authority. In contrast, they believe in Islam, wherein all powers belong to Allah and that only he has the right to make laws.

The group was formed in 2012 as the Syrian Islamic Front (SIF) with its 11 factions merged into seven in 2013 and was given its official name -- IF. Among these, the major groups having a notable impact on Syria's Bashar al-Assad's government were the *Ahrar al-Sham*, *Al-Tawhid* and *Jaysh al-Islam* movements. The IF is an umbrella organisation of autonomous factions and not a single unified group.¹ The seven factions controlled different provinces and major cities in Syria. They are:-²

1. Liwa al-Tawhid Brigade: Has strong control over the city of Aleppo.
2. The Suqour al-sham Brigade has influence over the North-Western

province of Idlib.

3. Ahrar al-Sham movement, one of the most potent factions in the IF, controls most parts of Syria.
4. Liwa al-Haqq Brigade has influence over Homs.
5. Jaysh al-Islam Army has strong roots in Damascus province.
6. The Kurdish IF.
7. The Ansar al-Sham Battalion has strong control over Idlib and Latakia.

The merger came as retaliation to pro-government forces that had captured large areas in the provinces of Damascus and Aleppo from the rebel-backed militia. The pro-government forces included the Syrian military force, the Lebanese Shia Islamist group Hezbollah and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC).

Objectives

The objective of the IF is to form an independent organisation to depose Bashar-al-Assad as President of Syria and establish an Islamic state based on Sharia laws. The aim of the group, which has been posted on Facebook says, "This independent political, military and social formation aims to topple the Assad regime completely and build an Islamic state where the sovereignty of God almighty alone will be our reference and ruler."³

According to their manifesto, the IF's aim is "to establish an independent state where God's merciful law is sovereign and where people enjoy a dignified life". IF does not believe in democracy and secularism.⁴

Ideology

The group was created in 2013 when civil war began in Syria following the Arab Spring. As it was not a composite union, its factions continued to work under their respective leaders who had their ideological agreements and disagreements. The group's focus varied from time to time based on religious

issues, anger against the western powers and foreign sources of funding. Unlike other single groups, the ideology of IF is brutal even towards its members.

Before merging, the seven factions of IF, particularly the Suqour al-Sham, Al-Haqq Brigade, Tawhid Brigade and Al-Islam Brigade, believed in separate ideologies and religious rhetoric. Many of their leaders were associated with Salafism, some believed in the Muslim Brotherhood and many others tried to follow their interests. A leading member from Al-Haqq Brigade said that many fighters in the group were conservative Muslims who became more religious because of the civil war. Although these factions have much diversity at the ground level, they strive to come up with a composite ideological face. After forming the IF in 2013, these factions came up with a joint manifesto to propagate the Ahrar al-Sham's views on orthodox Salafism, countering democracy and the civil war.⁵

Structure and leadership

After an initial period of chaos, the IF came up with a new command structure where different faction leaders assumed different tasks:-⁶

Shura Council: Headed by the former head of the Syrian Islamic Liberation Front (SILF), Ahmed Issa al-Sheikh, who is now a leader of the Soqour al-Sham. SILF has aligned with the supreme military command (SMC) of the Free Syrian Army (FSA). Abu Omar Hureitan of Liwa al-Tawhid is the Shura Council's Deputy Leader.

Political Bureau: Headed by Hassan Abboud alias Abu Abdullah al-Hamawi of Ahrar al-Sham, who is also the head of the Harkat Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya.

Military Department: Headed by Zahran Alloush of the Jaysh al-Islam.

Sharia Office: Headed by Abul-Abbas al-Shaami of the Ahrar al-Sham.

General Secretary: Sheikh Abu Rateb of Al-Haqq.

A spokesperson of the IF said that the membership of the group has gradually increased and that there were many requests from different groups, smaller and bigger, under consideration. One representative said that the IF was controlling about 70000 fighters (unconfirmed).

Funding and Support

Politics of West Asia is primarily based on religious and ethnic issues. With its Shia majority, Iran is suspected of supporting the militias fighting against Sunni majority governments. Iran supports the Syrian government of President Bashar al-Assad, who is an Alawite, who are considered very close to the Shias.

The ideology of Salafism, which is followed by most of the IF's leaders, comes from Sunni-led Saudi Arabia. The rebellion of the IF against the Shia government is supported by Saudi Arabia: although not proved, some reports say that Saudi support runs the Al-Islam faction. Though estranged from Saudi Arabia, Qatar also is considered to be supporting the IF by providing money and weapons. There were some reports about close links between Qatar and the Tawhid Brigade before IF's formation. Later, just before the IF's formation, Qatar's Foreign Minister Khaled al-Attiyah took part in a meeting with commanders of different factions. The Turkey government under Recep Tayyip Erdogan also supports the IF.

It is difficult to confirm these nations' involvement in religious funding and support from the available reports. Saudi Arabia and Qatar, who have a long history of differences, supporting the same organisation, raises some doubts. Salafi support networks running in Kuwait and other places are some other sources of funding the IF.⁷

Modus Operandi and Current Status

The group's way of working is different from other rebel factions in

Syria as well as in other West Asian countries. Ideologically, the IF stands somewhere between the West and militant factions like the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and the hard-line Salafi Jihadist group Al-Qaeda. **The** IF did not include Al-Nusra in its organisation and even criticised and fought against it. It claims to be a rebel group against the Syrian regime, but not a terrorist organisation. Moreover, none of its seven factions have been declared by the US as terrorist organisations. Because of this reason, many American officials want to negotiate with them although the Ahrar-al-Sham, a hard-line Salafist rebel faction, heading the group's political and Sharia office, publicly distances from America.⁸

Today, the IF is fighting with both the Syrian government and other jihadist factions like the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL) and Al-Qaeda. It aims at uniting the Muslims under one state, and for that, it uses the tools of political harmonisation. It does not want to repeat the mistakes of the SIF, which was disbanded soon after forming in 2012.⁹ It is expanding its organisation and taking in many people from poor, marginalised and tribal sections. As compared to the SIF, it is stronger having grown from 25000 in 2012 to 70000.

In its political manifesto, the IF claims that it does not wish to compromise with the Assad regime. It wants a complete downfall of the government - which means knocking down all of its agencies, legal frameworks, judiciary, executive and military forces. In any forum discussing the peace process in Syria, it has refused to sit with America to talk, or to accept the UN sponsored Geneva II Conference aimed at ending the Syrian civil war. A spokesperson from the Tawhid Brigade called the conference "an attempt to extend the regime's life". It even rejected the proposal made by the 'National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces', a group of exiled politicians backed by the US, to participate in the Geneva II Conference. In an interview with Al-Jazeera, IF leaders questioned as to what would they negotiate for when there will be no hand over of power to them.

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JAISH-E-MOHAMMED

Introduction

Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), which means ‘Army of [Prophet] Mohammed’, is a Pakistan-based Islamist terrorist outfit that internationally designated terrorist Masood Azhar leads. The JeM is one of the most notorious terrorist outfits operating in South Asia, particularly in India. It has been implicated in some of India's most prominent terrorist attacks, some of which have sparked off significant international crises and fears of full-fledged war taking place between India and Pakistan.

Background

The JeM is one of the more recently created terrorist outfits in the region—while most other terror groups were formed in the 1980s and 1990s, the JeM came into being in 2000. However, the roots of the JeM date back to the 1990s, when two terrorist outfits—the Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami and the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HuM)—merged to form the Harkat-ul-Ansar.

Masood Azhar is the son of a cleric and after dropping out of school at an early age, he joined the Jamia Islamia seminary in Karachi. Following

his graduation from this seminary, he joined the HuM and even attended a HuM training camp in Afghanistan. He toured around the world to raise funds for the newly formed Harkat-ul-Ansar and his travels brought him into contact with Al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden. He supported Al Qaeda's war in Somalia and assisted in the group's training in Yemen. By 1994, Azhar was appointed General Secretary of the Harkat-ul-Ansar (HuA). In February of the same year, Azhar was arrested by the Indian authorities in Kashmir for engaging in terrorist activities.¹

The HuA made several attempts to free Azhar but failed. On December 31, 1999, HuM terrorists hijacked Indian Airlines flight IC-814, carrying 155 passengers, and landed at Kandahar in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan. With the support of Pakistan's ISI and the Taliban, the terrorists negotiated with the Indian government for the release of Masood Azhar, Omar Sheikh (who would later be responsible for the murder of Daniel Pearl) and Mushtaq Ahmed Zargar (who would later form the Al-Umar Mujahideen, a Kashmiri separatist terrorist outfit).²

Following his release, Azhar decided to form a new outfit -- Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM). On February 4, 2000, the JeM was formally formed during a congregation at Masjid Falal in Karachi.³ In forming this new group, Azhar had the support of Osama bin Laden, Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and the Afghanistan Taliban.⁴ Azhar also was supported by top Deobandi scholars, particularly Mufti Nizamuddin Shamzai of the Jamia Binori Mosque in Karachi and Maulana Yousuf Ludhianvi, the former leader of the Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan.⁵

The JeM first rose to prominence with a suicide attack on an Indian Army base in Srinagar in April 2000. It was also implicated in the 2001 attack on the Jammu and Kashmir State Assembly and the notorious 2001 attack on the Indian Parliament, leading to a large-scale military escalation between India and Pakistan. Thus, the JeM emerged as a significant player in the nexus of pro-Pakistan Islamist terror outfits targeting India, specifically in Jammu and Kashmir. Notably, the April 2000 attack was also the first-ever suicide attack in the Kashmir conflict.

In December 2001, the USA's State Department designated the JeM as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO). It imposed sanctions on it and the Pakistani authorities arrested Masood Azhar in the same year, though he was released soon through a Lahore High Court order. Following 9/11 and America's declaration of a 'War on Terror' in 2001, President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan decided to side with the West and crackdown on Islamist terror in his country. As part of this new policy, Musharraf outlawed the JeM in 2002 even as allegations of ISI support to the group remained. In the same year, the JeM was implicated in the murder of Daniel Pearl and in multiple assassination attempts against Musharraf.⁶

In the 2000s, the JeM continued with its attacks in Pakistan, J&K and Afghanistan. The group made several assassination attempts against Musharraf while also targeting religious minorities in the country. For instance, in August 2002, a Christian convent school in Islamabad and a nearby Christian hospital were attacked by JeM-affiliated gunmen, leading to ten deaths. In J&K, the group attacked local politicians, Indian security forces and human rights activists. It was implicated in the February 2002 murder of National Conference politician Abdul Hafeez Mirza and in the May 2006 attack on a Human Rights Commission vehicle. But apart from this, given Musharraf's commitment to the War on Terror and the resultant arrests of multiple JeM leaders by Pakistani authorities, the group also faced several setbacks during the decade.⁷

In 2003, the JeM split into two factions—Khuddam-ul-Islam (KuI) and Jamaat-ul-Furqan (JuF). The former was led by Azhar himself, while Abdul Jabbar led the latter. The Pakistan government officially banned both factions in 2003.⁸ The Azhar faction remained dominant and to date, is seen as the face of the JeM.

The 2010s saw a significant uptick in its attacks against Indian targets. Several high-profile incidents can be attributed to the JeM in this period. In 2016, the Indian Consulate in Mazar-i-Sharif in Afghanistan was attacked by the group. 2016 also saw two significant attacks on Indian military targets.

The first of these was the January attack on the Pathankot airbase, reportedly planned and executed by the JeM in tandem with the United Jihad Council (UJC). Around five cadres attacked the base with assault rifles and explosives before being eliminated. They managed to inflict eight fatal casualties. The more severe was the September attack on an Indian Army base near Uri in J&K. In this attack, where the perpetrators used assault rifles and grenades, there were 21 Indian Army fatalities. This attack caused huge outrage in India, leading the Indian government to retaliate through surgical strikes on terror launch pads in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). There was a considerable strain on India-Pakistan bilateral ties following that 2016 strike.

In 2019, the JeM claimed responsibility for a suicide car bomb attack which resulted in the deaths of 40 Central Reserve Police Force personnel. This attack led to a significant escalation between India and Pakistan, resulting in both countries conducting airstrikes on each other's soil.

Ideology and Objectives

JeM is an Islamist extremist outfit that advocates the idea of an Islamic Caliphate in the Indian subcontinent. It believes in using violence to achieve its means and states that Hindus, Christians and all western presence must be expelled from the region. It is a pro-Pakistani outfit that advocates the violent separation of Jammu and Kashmir from India and its merger with Pakistan. The JeM has links with the Deobandi fraternity and groups like the Sipah-e-Sahaba and the Taliban, and thus, is ideologically opposed to Shia Islam.⁹

Modus Operandi

The JeM uses violent means to spread terror and achieve its strategic and ideological objectives. It makes use of assault rifles, grenades and improvised explosives to conduct attacks against military, political and civilian targets in India, Pakistan and Afghanistan. The JeM was also responsible for the first-ever suicide attack in the history of the Kashmir conflict. It has conducted several suicide bombings, notably the 2019 Pulwama car-bombing. It also

executed *fidayeen* attacks, when 'suicide squads' are sent in to spread terror before being eliminated by the security forces. Some of its notable attacks are the 2001 attack on the Indian Parliament and the 2016 Pathankot and Uri attacks. It is also known to carry out kidnappings.¹⁰

Sources of Funding

The JeM receives considerable funding from its sympathisers in Kashmir and has a dedicated financial wing responsible for collecting donations. There are multiple trusts which fund the JeM. Two of these are Al-Rehmat Trust and Al-Furqan Trust, which the Pakistani government has banned since 2019.¹¹ Another trust which finances the JeM is Al-Rashid Trust, which India has banned for its links to the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. Al Rashid Trust collects funds from the Pakistani provinces of Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa.¹² It also reportedly manages the foreign funds of the JeM.¹³

Leadership and Structure

The JeM's structure is divided into different departments, each with a specific function. Some of these are:-

- **Department of Dawat and Irshad:** Responsible for publicity and religious preaching
- **Military Department:** Responsible for training of fighters and conducting terrorist operations
- **Martyrs' Department:** Maintains records of fighters killed in the group's operations
- **Matrimonial Department:** Arranges marriages for cadres
- **Broadcasting and Publication Department**
- **Grievance Redressal System.**¹⁴

Leadership

Maulana Masood Azhar: A former operative and leader of the HuM, Azhar founded the JeM in 2000; he remains its *Amir* ('chief'). He had close ties with Osama bin Laden and was responsible for planning and organising terrorist attacks in Somalia and the UK, apart from actively orchestrating acts of terror in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India. He was arrested by the Indian authorities in J&K in 1994 and released in 1999 when the Indian government was pressured to do so because of the IC-814 hijacking incident.

Maulana Asmatullah Mu'awai: He is a former cadre of the Sipah-i-Sahaba and is now the *Amir* of the Kashmir wing of the JeM.

Maulana Sajid Usman: He was the deputy chief of the Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami and now heads the finance wing of the JeM.

Maulana Qari Mansoor Ahmed: He heads the JeM's propaganda wing.

Shah Nawaz Khan alias Sajid Jihadi: He is a chief commander in charge of operations in J&K.

Gazi Baba: He is also a chief commander in J&K.

Sheikh Omar Saeed: He is a British citizen of Pakistani origin who was initially associated with the Harkat-ul-Ansar. He was imprisoned in India in 1994 for the kidnappings of Australian and American tourists and released following the IC-814 hijacking incident. He remained associated with Azhar and the JeM and was responsible for the abduction and murder of Daniel Pearl in 2002. He was arrested by Pakistani authorities the same year and remains imprisoned.

Network

The JeM is a member of the United Jihad Council (UJC), an alliance of various Pakistani and Kashmiri radical Islamist terrorist outfits. The UJC was

created under the auspices of Pakistan's ISI and continues to be patronised by it. The JeM also reportedly receives support from the Pakistani establishment. Additionally, the JeM is closely associated with Deobandi seminaries and preachers who supported Masood Azhar in creating this outfit. It is politically aligned with the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) faction led by Maulana Fazlur Rehman. The JUI-F is a Pakistani political party that propagates Sunni Deobandi ideology.

Since its inception, the JeM has been associated with Al-Qaeda, given Azhar's earlier ties with Osama bin Laden. It also has ties with Lashkar-e-Taiba, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Sipah-i-Sahaba and the HuM. At the same time, some unverified reports indicate that the JeM has rivalries with some of these outfits. However, it is ideologically aligned with all such groups, sharing their pro-Pakistan and anti-India stance, and their acceptance of Sunni Deobandi ideology, which is hostile towards non-Muslims and the Shia Sufi sects. The JeM and Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) have close ties due to the relationship between Azhar and Maulana Azam Tariq, the SSP President. Prominent SSP leaders often affirm their support to the JeM in public rallies and appearances. Meanwhile, reports of hostility between the JeM and HuM have been widespread and some clashes have occurred between the two groups. This is attributed to Azhar's split from the HuM to form the JeM.¹⁵

Cadres and Recruitment

The JeM is said to have thousands of cadres, with around 300-400 fighters operational. It primarily recruits from *madrassas* (Islamic religious schools) in small towns and villages of Pakistan and major cities such as Karachi, Lahore, Dera Ismail Khan, Rawalpindi, and Muzaffarabad (in PoK). Additionally, it operates its own *madrassas*, from where it radicalises recruits to its cause. It also uses public recruitment rallies across Pakistan to garner support and pick up additional recruits. Many Pakistani and Kashmiri-origin immigrants in the UK and seasoned militants from Afghanistan are known to have joined the ranks of the JeM. Citizens of Arab nations are also known to have joined

the JeM.¹⁶

Until the US-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, the JeM operated many training camps in the country. It has relocated most of these to PoK and Pakistan, such as Muzaffarabad in PoK and Balakot in Punjab. Notably, following the 2019 Pulwama attack, Indian Air Force strikes targeted this JeM training camp in Balakot.¹⁷

Current Status

The JeM is one of the largest and most lethal Islamist terrorist outfits operating in South Asia. It has a widespread presence in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and India. It has suffered a setback with the Indian airstrike on its Balakot training camp in 2019, followed by tightening security measures and the lockdown imposed in J&K from August 2019 onwards. This is evidenced from the fall in cases of militancy in the now-bifurcated Union Territory of J&K. Further, if there is any *détente* between India and Pakistan on cooperation and a reduction in hostilities materialises, then the JeM may be put on a tighter leash by its Pakistani patrons.

On the flip side, the group is likely to get a boost from the unravelling situation in Afghanistan following the withdrawal of US forces. The Taliban has gained much ground in the country. Given its close strategic and ideological unity with groups like the JeM, the latter is likely to acquire much-needed strategic depth which will benefit its recruitment and the functioning of its training camps. Pakistan's lack of action against Masood Azhar is an added benefit. Pakistan's 'all-weather ally', China, has also given a fillip to the group by blocking Azhar's sanctioning by the UN Security Council. Thus, the JeM has supporters that allow it to continue to thrive in the region and carry on with its radical agenda.

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LASHKAR-E-TAIBA

Introduction

The Lashkar-e-Taiba or LeT (Soldiers of the Pure) is a Pakistan-based Islamist terrorist group with a global presence, particularly in Europe. While its focus is on targeting India with a special role in the Kashmir conflict, it also attacks Western targets. Despite being notorious for a number of high-profile attacks, the LeT continues to thrive on Pakistani patronage.

Background

While the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) was founded in 1991 in Pakistan, its origins lie in the 1980s, during the peak of the Afghan *jihad* (holy war) being waged by various *Mujahideen* (a term given to religious warriors in Islam) groups against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.

In 1986, the *Markaz-e-Dawa-wal-Irshad* (MDI) was formed by a group of teachers of the University of Engineering and Technology, Lahore, belonging to the Ahle Hadith movement, in order to participate in the Afghan war. Hafiz Muhammed Saeed, a former Professor of Islamic Studies at the same university, was selected to lead the MDI. The group was also supported

by some teachers from Saudi Arabia's Medina University. The MDI's operations in Afghanistan were coordinated by Sheikh Jameel-ur-Rahman, the commander of the Ahle Hadith in Afghanistan. The MDI was mostly concentrated around Jalalabad, Nooristan and Sarobi in Afghanistan. Over the course of its operations, over 2500 fighters participated in the Afghan jihad, of which, around 60 were killed. By 1989, the MDI had expanded its operations and entered Kashmir to contest India's sovereignty over the region and for its 'liberation' and merger with Pakistan. By 1993, it wound up its operations in Afghanistan following large-scale infighting among the various Afghan factions.¹

From 1989-91, the MDI operated in Kashmir covertly under cover of Al Barq, another Pakistan-based terrorist group operating in Kashmir. It was in 1991 that Hafiz Saeed decided to create the Lashkar-e-Taiba group with the support of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence. By 1993, LeT militants had been deployed in the Kashmir Valley to conduct operations, while militant training camps at Maskar-e-Aqsa and Maskar Abdullah bin Masood were established in Muzaffarabad in Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir (PoK). The group's operatives in Kashmir began terrorist attacks against Indian security forces which earned it notoriety at an early stage of its inception.²

Through the 1990s and 2000s, the LeT continued spreading terror in J&K while also spreading into the Indian hinterland. One of its earliest attacks was on an Indian Army base in Poonch in 1993. In the initial half of the decade, the outfit was active in targeting Indian security forces. But from 1996 onwards, it began openly targeting religious minorities in J&K, primarily Hindus and Sikhs. On January 5, 1996, the group killed 16 Hindus in Doda district. On March 20, 2000, the outfit killed 35 Sikhs in Anantnag district on the eve of US President Bill Clinton's official visit to India. This deadly attack is now known as the Chattisinghpura Massacre. Later that year, the group began to mark its presence in the Indian hinterland and carry out its larger goal of polarising religious divides in the subcontinent and converting Indian Muslims to its cause. On 22 December 2000, the group carried out

an attack on the Red Fort in New Delhi, one of India's most significant monuments and also the historical residence of India's former Mughal rulers.³

Then in December 2001, the LeT, jointly with Masood Azhar's Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) to carry out the infamous attack on the Indian Parliament in which seven people were killed. This was a watershed moment in subcontinental history and greatly escalated tensions between India and Pakistan. It was following this attack that the USA officially designated the LeT as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO), and then, in 2002, the Pakistan government under Pervez Musharraf banned the LeT. Following this, Hafiz Saeed split the LeT from the MDI in 2002. Till then, it functioned as the MDI's military wing. The LeT was subsequently renamed as the Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD) for the purpose of avoiding sanctions associated with its FTO designation.⁴

The LeT continued to remain active over the years, most significantly in the state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), targeting Indian security forces, government servants, politicians and religious minorities. On November 26, 2008, the outfit carried out a deadly *fidayeen* attack on Mumbai, where a squad of 10 Pakistani gunmen targeted various parts of the city, killing 175 people over a span of nearly 72 hours. This was one of the deadliest terrorist attacks ever carried out on Indian soil and led to a significant downgrading of Indo-Pak relations.⁵

The LeT also cultivated ties with various Pakistani, Kashmiri and Indian Islamist terrorist outfits over the years. It developed a very close relationship with the Indian Mujahideen (IM) group which was responsible for several terrorist attacks across the country. Most notably, the LeT and IM jointly conducted the 2010 bombing attack on foreigners at Pune's German Bakery, which led to 18 deaths and over 50 injuries.⁶

Ideology and Objectives

The LeT is a radical Islamist terrorist organisation, which aims to Islamise

the entire Indian subcontinent. It is characterised by strong opposition to the idea of a secular India, which it perceives as being ‘anti-Islamic’. It thus targets Indian citizens and institutions, especially non-Muslims and other foreigners in the country. It is openly pro-Pakistan in its stance and advocates separation of J&K from India and its merger with Pakistan. The group is also strongly opposed to the USA and Israel, and considers *jihad* (holy war) and *da’wah* (education) essential to the conduct of what Hafiz Saeed calls ‘Islamic Politics’.⁷ One of the fundamental components of the group’s ideological motivation lies in the concept of the Muslim *ummah* (brotherhood), and how ‘anti-Islamic’ forces are subjecting this community to tyranny worldwide. With such an ideology, coupled with the narrative of Kashmir’s so called ‘subjugation’ at Indian hands, the Kashmir jihad acquires special significance in the group’s objectives.

Modus Operandi

The outfit’s cadre are trained in the use of small arms and various explosives. The LeT specialises in *fidayeen* attacks, which are essentially suicide squads. The *fidayeen* are highly brainwashed and trained cadre who target security forces or civilian targets and wreak as much havoc as possible before being gunned down.⁸ The 26/11 attack was the most notable such attack orchestrated by the LeT and it showed the ferocious efficacy of this stratagem—a group of 10 young men laid siege to Mumbai for nearly three days, killing almost 200 people in the process.

The group also tries to build up ‘soft power’ in Pakistan by carrying out charitable activities behind the front of Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD). It has provided humanitarian assistance to victims of natural disasters such as the 2005 earthquake in Kashmir and 2010 floods in Pakistan, while also doing the same for Pakistani internally displaced persons (IDPs) who were fleeing from the erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in the wake of the army’s *Zarb-e-Azb* operation in the region.⁹ In 2018, the LeT launched *Wyeth*, an online magazine, in order to disseminate its propaganda. The

magazine included the group's claimed lists of attacks, while also propagating anti-India messaging, particularly with regard to the Kashmir conflict.¹⁰

Sources of Funding

The principal patron of the LeT is Pakistan's ISI, which uses such outfits for geopolitical purposes to harass India, particularly in J&K. The ISI is reported to be supplying fake Indian currency notes to outfits such as the LeT. The ISI is also alleged to have a role in assisting the outfit in carrying out the 26/11 Mumbai attacks. Further, in 2006, *The Herald* magazine reported that the LeT received monthly payoffs of \$50,000-60,000 from the ISI. The LeT has thus been noted as an Islamist terrorist group to receive grants from any government. Pakistan's Punjab province gave a grant of \$82 million to the Jamaat-ud-Dawa in 2010, which is essentially a front for the LeT.¹¹ The Pakistan government also funds the LeT indirectly by providing grants to schools and hospital owned by the outfit.¹²

Apart from Pakistani establishment, the LeT also receives patronage from private benefactors. Wahabi donors, in addition to Islamic charities across the world, particularly in Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Pakistan, donate funds to the LeT. This assistance is provided in the form of petro dollar donations to mosques and madrassas in Pakistani Punjab. One of the most notable Islamic charities responsible for funding the LeT is the International Islamic Relief Foundation.¹³ Members of the Kashmiri diaspora across the world are also known to provide such assistance to the outfit, often through mosques in countries such as the UK.¹⁴

The LeT also relies on donations by the Pakistani populace. Donation boxes are placed in marketplaces and regular citizens donate money to the outfit.¹⁵

Network

LeT is closely linked with the Pakistani establishment—while the government

indirectly provides financial grants to the outfit, the ISI is its most significant patron. Apart from the state and military apparatus, however, the Pakistan public also widely supports the LeT. The humanitarian and charity work undertaken by the LeT and its front, the JuD, has won the support of the populace across the country. This has won the group much political support. For instance, following the 2005 Kashmir earthquake and the group's relief activities in the region, the Prime Minister of 'Azad Kashmir' (the Pakistani terminology for PoK), Sardar Sikandar Hayat met Hafiz Sayeed and thanked him for all the work carried out by the JuD.¹⁶

LeT is well-connected with other Islamist terrorist outfits in the subcontinent as well. It is a part of the United Jihad Council (UJC), an umbrella organisation of various Pakistani and Kashmiri terrorist groups who are united in their agenda of violently wresting J&K away from India and integrating it with Pakistan. The UJC has other major groups like the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) and Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM) and LeT has operationally cooperated with these groups in the conduct of various attacks. For instance, the UJC has claimed collective responsibility for the 2016 attack on the Pathankot Airbase. Also, the LeT and JeM were jointly involved in the 2001 attack on India's Parliament.

Apart from Pakistani and Kashmiri groups, the LeT also has ties with terrorist groups in the Indian hinterland. The most notable among these is the Indian Mujahideen (IM), which is notorious for various attacks, including various serial bombings in major cities like Delhi, Mumbai, and Bangalore, among others. It is believed that LeT was involved in the creation of the IM. The two groups have coordinated and carried out terrorist attacks jointly, most notably the German Bakery blast in Pune.¹⁷

The LeT has also been involved in carrying out terrorist acts in countries beyond the subcontinent, including the UK, the US, Russia, Australia and countries in Europe, Africa, West Asia and South-East Asia. It has links with other terrorist groups across the world, including Islamic insurgents in the Caucasian region and Chechnya, the Taliban in Pakistan and Afghanistan,

Al Qaeda, the Haqqani Network and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. Notably, Shamil Basayev, the leader of the Chechen separatist movement, was trained by and stayed with the MDI, the parent organisation of LeT.¹⁸

The London-based Global Jihad Fund (GJF), established in the 1990s by a duo of Saudis, assisted in the LeT's expansion in the UK while providing it with resources to expand jihad operations in Bosnia, Kosovo, Chechnya, Afghanistan and Kashmir. The group also has networks in countries like Germany and France for coordinating terrorist activities in these countries, while also raising funds for the outfit's activities on various other fronts. The LeT has also created a vast network in Bangladesh. In the 1990s, it conducted operations and recruited cadres in the country through its local head, Abdul Karim alias Tunda. Tunda was also responsible for dispatching Sheikh Abdul Rehman to Bangladesh where he founded the Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh. LeT cadres in the country have received training from the Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami in Afghanistan before being sent to Bangladesh, where the HuJI also has its own affiliate, the HuJI-Bangladesh, active.¹⁹

Leadership

Hafiz Muhammed Saeed: He is the founder and the chief of the LeT and the JuD. He is a former professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Engineering and Technology, Lahore, and was a founder of the Markaz-e-Dawa-wal-Irshad (MDI) outfit, which operated in Afghanistan and Kashmir. He later founded the LeT as a separate terrorist group. He is an internationally recognised terrorist and the US has placed a bounty of \$10 million on his head for his involvement in the 2008 Mumbai attacks. In 2017, he was put under house arrest for collecting funds for the JuD which violated UN-imposed sanctions, but was released later the same year by the courts due to 'lack of evidence'. He was then arrested in July 2019, and in February 2020 he was sentenced to 10 years and six months in jail by an anti-terrorism court.²⁰

Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi: He is one of the co-founders of the LeT and the chief of operations of the outfit. He was instrumental in recruiting a

large number of youth from Pakistan, India and Bangladesh. He conducted operations in foreign countries like Bosnia, Chechnya and Iraq, and was also the primary handler for the fidayeen team, which attacked Mumbai on November 26, 2008.²¹

Abdul Rehman Makki: He is Hafiz Saeed's brother-in-law and also acts as the second-in-command and head of the Department of External Affairs of the outfit.²² He was closely affiliated with Mullah Omar (the late Taliban leader) and the present leader of Al Qaeda, Ayman al-Zawahiri. The USA has placed a \$2 billion bounty on his head for his involvement with terrorist activities.²³

Haji Mohammed Ashraf: He is the outfit's chief of finance and has travelled often to the Middle East to collect funds for the LeT.

Mahmoud Mohammed Ahmed Bahaziq: He is a key Saudi financier for the LeT. He coordinated with NGOs and businessmen based in Saudi Arabia to raise funds for the outfit, while also taking part in propaganda and media operations.²⁴

Yahya Mujahid: He is a close associate of Hafiz Saeed and acts as the spokesperson and general secretary for the JuD.²⁵

Amir Hamza: He acts as the head of the publication division of the LeT. He also heads the Tehrik Hurmat Rasool, which is a proxy for the LeT. He has written extensively on various themes, including jihad in Kashmir and an overview of the group's training facilities.

Azam Cheema: He is the intelligence chief of the LeT and also acts as second-in-command to Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi. He operates a weapons lab and conducts training in handling explosives at his base in Bahawalpur, Punjab (Pakistan). He was involved in mass recruitments in Mumbai following the 2002 Gujarat riots, and was also responsible for the 2006 Mumbai serial train bombings which killed more than 200 people.²⁶

Current Status

At present, the LeT is one of the largest and most dangerous terrorist groups in South Asia, and one of the largest in the world in terms of global reach—it is present in South Asia, West Asia, Central Asia, and Europe. While the Indian Government's abrogation of special status to J&K and the subsequent increase in the presence of security forces has created greater obstacles for groups like LeT in J&K, the outfit benefits from the situation in Afghanistan. With the withdrawal of American forces from that country and Taliban's territorial capture, terrorist outfits such as the LeT will no doubt enjoy the benefit of strategic depth. Given the Taliban's close ties with these groups as well as the Pakistani establishment, Afghanistan may become a useful terror launchpad for the LeT.

Despite recent setbacks such as the arrest of top leaders like Hafiz Saeed and Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi by Pakistani authorities, most observers decry these moves as being purely superficial, with these imprisoned leaders being allowed to maintain outside contact with their cadres and thus being able to coordinate operations from inside the prison. Therefore, Pakistan's unwillingness to take action against Islamist terror, despite mounting international pressure and sanctions, is a significant asset for the LeT in continuing its terrorist activities against India and the Western world.

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AL-QAEDA IN IRAQ

Introduction

Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), or Al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia is a Sunni terrorist outfit primarily centered in Iraq. It became active in Iraq after the U.S.-led invasion in 2003.¹ Its aim is to get rid of westerners in Iraq and overthrow the Shiite-dominated Iraqi government. The group often organised suicide bombings that targeted security forces, Iraqi Shiites and government institutions. Its hatred towards the Shiite has been contentious. AQI has faced numerous backlashes from Sunni tribes and even from Bin Laden himself owing to their sheer hatred towards Shiites. In 2006, it destroyed the golden dome of Al-Askariyyah Mosque in Sammara, one of the holiest mosques for Shiite Muslims. They have been responsible for some of the worst attacks in post-invasion Iraq.²

Background

The inception of Al-Qaeda in Iraq can be traced back to Bayat-al-Imam, a terrorist outfit that emerged as a consequence of the cumulative efforts of Abu-Musab-al Zarqawi and his mentor Sheikh Abu Muhammad Al Maqdisi,

a Salafi doctrinaire. Zarqawi was introduced to radical Islam while imprisoned in Jordan. After witnessing his father's death at the age of 17, Zarqawi dropped out of high school and adopted a life of drugs, alcohol, violence and sexual assault.³ Within a year of his release, under a general amnesty in 1988, he left Jordan to participate in the Soviet-Afghan conflict. His interactions with Salafi doctrinaires emboldened his radical thoughts and led to the genesis of Bayat-al-Imam – the first iteration of Zarqawi's group that broadened his terrorist contacts.

Bayat-al-Imam was created to resist the Hashemite monarchy in Jordan.⁴ A reckless vocal campaign against King Hussein resulted in fifteen years of imprisonment for Zarqawi and his mentor Maqdisi. In the al-Sawaqa prison, Maqdisi played the role of a spiritual leader. Zarqawi became his enforcer, rapidly building a following inside the prison. Bayat-al-Imam's popularity grew beyond prison walls as they started publishing religious tracts on Salafi websites. Eventually, Zarqawi managed to get Bin Laden's attention and very soon, he overshadowed his mentor. In 1999, Zarqawi went to Afghanistan to meet Bin Laden after being released on general amnesty. At first, Bin Laden was wary of Zarqawi's 'non-Muslim' way of living and his hatred towards Shiites Muslims.⁵ However, Seif al-Adel, Al-Qaeda's security chief, supported Zarqawi's movement against King Hussein and convinced Laden to support him. Zarqawi was allowed to set up his training camp in Herat, far away from Bin Laden's camp and solidify his position as a full-fledged terrorist commander of Bayat-al-Imam. By 2001, the number of fighters in the Herat camp grew from few dozen to almost three thousand.⁶

After the 2001 US airstrikes in Afghanistan, Zarqawi moved out of Afghanistan to set up his camp in Iran under the banner of Al-Tawhidwal-Jihad (Twj). Iranian authorities came to know about Zarqawi's presence, forcing him to leave and find new smuggling routes through Syria. Eventually, Seif al-Adel facilitated Zarqawi's group's shift to Iraq. In Iraq, Zarqawi started to strengthen his foothold among the Sunnis by expanding his network, recruiting fighters and establishing bases.⁷ He worked closely with Al-Qaeda,

becoming the ‘Emir’ of Islamist terrorists in Iraq. The anticipation of the US invasion proved to be the tipping point for the formation of Al-Qaeda’s Iraqi branch. In 2003, the TwJ bombed the UN headquarters in Baghdad.⁸ The TwJ has also been responsible for numerous high-profile attacks. In May 2004, Nicholas Berg, an American communications contractor in Iraq, was beheaded by probably Zarqawi himself.

The number of Iraqi insurgents increased rapidly after the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) decided to disband the Iraqi Army. This bolstered the strength of insurgents, enabling them to enforce a theocratic reign of terror. They began to issue fatwas against those it called ‘collaborators’ to instil a sense of fear and show authority. Zarqawi’s prominence among the insurgents thus grew manifold. Finally, in 2004, he pledged his allegiance to Bin Laden and changed his group’s name to Al-Qaeda in Iraq, or AQI.⁹

AQI’s attacks on Shiites and the Multi-National Force (MNF), and suicide bombing attempts increased throughout 2005. As a result of the fanatic approach adopted by Zarqawi, dissatisfaction emerged among the insurgent factions. Rationalist elements in the insurgency started to distance themselves from Zarqawi because of the sectarian violence against Shiites. In 2005, the backlash against AQI reached its peak owing to its bombing of three Amaan Hotels, killing almost 60 people. Jordanians rallied on the streets against Zarqawi. To lower their fanatic profile and maintain popular support, AQI and five other terrorist groups clubbed together under the banner of Mujahideen Shura Council.¹⁰ Zarqawi was deliberately left out of it. Afterwards, he maintained a diminished profile until his death by a US airstrike on June 7, 2006.

AQI continued to garner support even after Zarqawi’s death. He was replaced immediately by Abu Hamza al Muhajir – an Egyptian with long-standing ties to Al-Qaeda coterie. The leadership change led to a slight drop in terror attacks. Between 2006 and 2007, terror activities dropped from 6,631 to 6,210. Compared to 3,438 and 3,256 attacks in 2005 and 2008 respectively, the drop of six percent was insignificant.

The Sunni tribals, who previously supported the AQI, grew wary of AQI's violence against civilians and wanted to expel them from their territories. This led to the rise of 'awakening movements' in 2006.¹¹ They started killing the non-Iraqi insurgents, leaving signs on their victims that read 'this is what you get when you work with Al-Qaeda'. AQI began to lose its grip over Iraq as several insurgents fighting for their cause declined rapidly. That year, after the Mujahideen Shura Council failed to regain local support, AQI rebranded itself for the second time as the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI).

Ideology and Objective

AQI aims to establish an Islamic Caliphate in Iraq and rid the state of western presence. In the last decade or so, AQI has been fighting against western powers to make Iraq a 'pious Muslim state' inhabited by true Muslims. According to them, Sunnis are the only true Muslims as they accept the Caliph and follow their diktats. On the other hand, Shiites are *rafidha* (rejectionists, the ones who reject the first three caliphs of Sunni Islam) and, therefore, merit second-class status.

Modus Operandi

AQI framed the aggression in Iraq as the West's war against Islam. Radical imams issued fatwas calling on members of the Muslim community to fight against the invasion. These insurgents were a heterogeneous group that included foreign fighters, Iraqi soldiers and members of the Baathist Party. Despite several differences within, their core objective to protect Islam served as the binding thread. The US administration failed to provide alternate employment opportunities to Iraqis, and this, in turn, proved to be beneficial for AQI as the number of insurgents grew rapidly. They were equipped with arms, uniforms and other resources. AQI used the internet innovatively to lure youth by magnifying their power of violence. They flooded internet chat rooms with violent video clips, glossy computer-generated imagery and gruesome execution videos.¹²

Sources of Funding

AQI's close affiliation with Al-Qaeda central has helped them to equip themselves with both arms and ammunition. Al-Qaeda also provides financial support to its Iraqi branch.¹³ Also, an unexpected alliance occurred between Zarqawi and Iran as they viewed the fighting in Iraq as a war against America. Iran equipped AQI with weapons, uniforms and other military equipment.

Leadership and Structure:

- Abu Musab al-Zarqawi (deceased) – founder of Bayat al-Imam and former Emir of AQI
- Sheikh Abu Abdul Rehman – deputy Emir of Iraqi mujahideen
- Abu Hamza al Muhajir – Zarqawi's successor
- Abu Hamza – ISI's minister of war
- Abu Omar al-Baghdadi – ISI's Emir¹⁴

Network

The linkage between AQI and Al-Qaeda central forms the core of AQI's network. Some US commanders have stated that they were witnessing an increase in AQI's presence in Afghanistan. AQI has also maintained cordial ties with other branches of Al-Qaeda – specifically Al-Qaeda in Islamic Meghreb (AQIM), who sent its fighters to support the Iraqi insurgency. The unexpected nexus with Iran has also supported AQI's cause.

Cadre and Recruitment

AQI projected the Iraqi War as a “war against Islam” and consequently called for support from all Muslims. At this time, Iraq was in a deplorable condition, the unemployment rate was high and CPA had continually failed to provide any substantial respite. Economic instability compelled Iraqi men to join the AQI. Amidst the economic crisis, AQI was willing to pay up to 100 dollars for planting a roadside bomb or shooting an American soldier.

AQI's cadre includes foreign fighters from Libya, Syria and Saudi Arabia. According to a report released in 2007, almost 60-80 foreign fighters came from across the borders every month. A November 22, 2007, a New York Times article stated that Saudi Arabia and Libya accounted for 60 percent of the 700 foreign fighters who came into Iraq over the past year. The U.S.-led forces in Sinjar released a report in 2008, stating that out of 595 foreign fighters who gave their country of origin, about 245 were of Saudi origin, 110 were Libyans, 48 Syrians, 47 Yemenis, 45 Algerians, 40 Moroccans, 40 were Tunisians, 20 Jordanians, 8 Egyptians and 20 were the 'others'.¹⁵

Current Status

US forces have substantially reduced the threat posed by AQI. ISI emerged from the remnants of AQI and since 2006, it has been active in Iraq and neighbouring states. It has taken insurgency to another level by adopting a more institutionalised mode of operation. In 2014, the ISI officially cut ties with AQI, leading to a gradual decline of the Al-Qaeda's Iraqi branch.¹⁶

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AL-QAEDA IN ISLAMIC MAGHREB

Introduction

Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) is an Algeria-based Islamist militant outfit dominant in North Africa. It is a Salafi-Jihadist militant group.¹ It has been designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO) by the USA. It operates mainly in areas surrounding Sahara and Sahel. Since it formed an alliance with Al-Qaeda, it has tried to transcend beyond the domestic borders and establish its influence in the Middle East by channeling fighters into the Iraq War and attacking a military post in Mauritania.²

Background

AQIM was founded as the ‘Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC)’ in 1998 by Hassan Hattab. Hasan was a former member of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) – a militant outfit that fought in Algeria’s civil war in the 1990s and the parent organisation of AQIM.³ GIA and GSPC split because the latter was not in favour of killing civilians.⁴ The GSPC took over GIA networks in Sahel and Sahara and raised finances through smuggling and kidnapping. Till now, the GSPC did not get any international attention

as they hardly qualified as a global terrorist threat.⁵ But gradually, they started to gain limelight – in 2003, the GSPC took 32 Europeans hostage in Sahara.

In the latter half of that year, it underwent a leadership change. Hassan Hattab, a founder of the Algerian militia, was overthrown by more radical leaders such as Nabil Sharawi and Abdelmalek Droukdel. They steered the GSPC towards a stronger alliance with Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaeda. In 2006, they publicly announced their association with Al-Qaeda and in January 2007, the GSPC renamed itself as Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb or AQIM.⁶ AQIM is also known for its strifes with the French government. In Mali, AQIM was operating under the umbrella of Ansar al-Dine, an Islamist militia, which was running militant camps in Mali and supplying weapons and funding to Boko Haram in Nigeria. The African state of Mali became a haven for AQIM and a bone of contention between France and the Algerian militia.⁷

AQIM aims to establish Islamic (Sharia) law in countries where it operates, primarily in Algeria, Libya, Tunisia, Mali and Mauritania. In 2015, AQIM merged the Al-Mourabitoun (The Sentinels) – a terrorist organisation that seeks to establish an Islamic state in West Africa - after a joint attack in Bamako, Mali.⁸ Over the past few years, they have carried out numerous deadly terrorist attacks, including attacks in Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire in 2016. The merger of Ansar al-Dine and Al-Mourabitoun was to form the Jammāt Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM) in 2017, led by Iyad ag-Ghali. At that time, JNIM appeared to be working under AQIM and Al-Qaeda central.⁹

There have been numerous instances that show the strife between the French government and AQIM. Between June 30, 2009 and January 7, 2011, AQIM carried out six kidnappings to 'take revenge' against France after it declared that burqa was 'not welcome'.¹⁰ In 2012, AQIM was implicated in two terror attacks against French and U.S. personnel. In January 2013, the AQIM allied 'Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa' (MUJAO) seized the northern Mali town of Konna – the gateway to country's north.

French troops retaliated by mobilising to stop the rebels from advancing towards the country's center. AQIM also lauded the attackers involved in the Charlie Hebdo massacre in France. It has also been implicated in carrying out two suicide bombing attacks in the city of Gao in Tunisia and Niger, Mali, killing almost a hundred people besides two kidnappings in Libya. A 2014 report released by the UN stated that AQIM and other terrorist groups were working with the Colombian drug Cartel also.¹¹

All major foreign governments and organisations have designated AQIM or its parent organisation, the GSPC, as terrorist outfits. The UN listed GSPC and AQIM as terrorist organisations in 2001 and 2007 respectively. Australia, Canada and New Zealand listed GSPC as a terrorist outfit in 2002. Lastly, the UK listed the GSPC as a terrorist organisation in 2001.¹²

Ideology and Objective

In 2008, Abdelmalek Droukdel, the Emir of AQIM, told the New York Times that their first goal was to implement a 'Lord of the World's Law' mostly known as the Sharia Law.¹³ AQIM considers all non-Islamist governments as illegitimate and seeks to replace these with Islamic republics wherever it operates. According to Droukdel, "We seek to liberate the Islamic Maghreb from the sons of France and Spain and from all symbols of treason and employment for the outsiders, and protect it from the foreign greed and the crusader's hegemony."¹⁴

Modus Operandi

AQIM indulges in extortion, kidnapping for ransom, drug cartels, suicide bombings and terror attacks to maintain fear and authority. Its organisational structure comprises a central decision-making body (Majlis al-Ayan, also known as the Council of Notables,) a self-owned media wing (Al-Andalus Media Productions) and a Sharia Council that governs Islamic legal matters.¹⁵ AQIM's allied terrorist organisations have little autonomy. Allegedly, after the 2015 merger between AQIM and Al-Mourabitoun, Al-Qaeda ordered

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

a regional division of power amongst its commanders, leaving Droukdel in charge of Algeria, Al-Mourabitoun leader Mokhtar Belmokhtar as the head in Libya and Djame Okacha as the chief of West Africa factions. These regional divisions cooperate and compete with each other.¹⁶

Sources of Funding

Largely, the AQIM raises a significant amount of money through criminal activities. AQIM depends heavily on kidnapping and extortion for finances. It is also involved in drug cartels, money laundering, people and arms trafficking protection rackets and robbery. It has received support from foreign governments; Iran and Sudan have been accused by the Algerian government for funding the group. Its supporters residing in Western Europe provide limited financial and logistical support. Above all, Al-Qaeda provides material and financial support to the group to what has been known as 'AQ's wealthiest affiliate'.¹⁷

Leadership and Structure:

- Iyad Ag Ghali – JNIM emir (leader)
- Abdelmalek Droukdel (deceased) – former AQIM emir and in charge of Algeria
- Mokhtar Belmokhtar – co founder and emir of Al-Mourabitoun
- Yaha Abu Hammam – leader of Sahara-Sahel region
- Yahia Djouadi – former emir of southern sector
- Salah Mohamed – head of media committee
- Abdarraahmane al-Azawadi – spokesman
- Ahmed Deghdegh – finance chief
- Abu Ubayda Yousif al-Annabi – member of Shura Council and current emir of AQIM
- Mohamed Lahbous (deceased) – military commander of Al-Mourabitoun and co-founder of JNIM¹⁸

Network

Being the African branch of Al-Qaeda, it has cordial relations with the parent organisation. It has also ensured that small-scale Islamist militant organisations remain allies. AQIM also took measures to broaden its area. It trained and sent fighters to Al-Qaeda in Iraq which was led by Zarqawi. AQIM's plan to strengthen its foothold in the Middle-East helped it to recruit fighters from Iraq after Zarqawi's death. Similarly, it also sent men to train alongside Hezbollah in Lebanon. Consequently, it forged ties with Hezbollah, advancing their desire to consolidate their footing in the Middle-East. By the late 2000s, AQIM began training the Boko Haram.¹⁹

Cadre and Recruitment

AQIM was rebranded making it easier for the group to recruit informants, logisticians and militants. As per estimates of the Council of Foreign Relations, in 2015, there were 1000 AQIM members in Algeria and smaller numbers in the Sahel region, including Chad, Mali, and Mauritania. It recruited fighters from Iraq also. As AQIM moved towards the Sahara and Sahel region, it started to recruit from West African nations of Mali and Niger. This became clear in March 2016 beach resort attack in Cote d'Ivoire, where all terrorists involved were Sub-Saharan Africans.²⁰

Current Status

After Droukdel's demise, Abu Ubayda Yousif al-Annabi, a 51-year-old Algerian veteran Jihadist, was appointed as the emir of AQIM.²¹ This was a tactical mistake as it furthered the rift between AQIM and Saharan regions. It has also been facing competition from JNIM – a more well-organised terrorist outfit active in West Africa. AQIM has since been on a steady decline as its influence in Maghreb and Sahel is waning. AQIM has lost control over its original turf and its ability to recruit and plan has been vastly curtailed. This does not mean that AQIM will cease to exist. They still have opportunities to regroup and revert to the old stature.

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UNITED JIHAD COUNCIL

Introduction

The United Jihad Council (UJC), also known as the Muttahida Jihad Council, is an umbrella organisation of Pakistani and Kashmiri Islamist terrorist outfits. The UJC and its affiliates primary focus is on violent separation of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) from India and its merger with Pakistan.

Background

From 1989 onwards, many Islamist terrorist groups came up in Pakistan and J&K under the instigation of Pakistan's ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence) to wage *jihad* (holy war) against India for the so-called *azaadi* (freedom) of J&K and its merger with Pakistan. Disparate terror groups were allowed to thrive in this manner. To improve inter-group coordination and strengthen the ISI's control over their functioning, they were all consolidated under the umbrella of the UJC.¹ Besides its inclusion of radical pro-Pakistan groups, the UJC also included the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), which is markedly set apart from the other outfits given its stance for a secular, independent state of J&K, as opposed to the others' efforts towards facilitating the state's

integration with Pakistan.

Thus, in November 1994, a nexus of 13 jihadist terrorist groups was created giving rise to the Muttahida/United Jihad Council, aka the UJC.² Initially, the UJC was under the leadership of Manzur Shah of the Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen.³ In 1999, three more Pakistani outfits—the notorious Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) and Al-Badr—joined the UJC. However, in 2004, the JKLF's Yasin Malik faction (which is based in the Indian state of J&K, not to be confused with Amanullah Khan's Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK)-based faction of the JKLF, decided to exit from the UJC, accusing its chief Syed Salahuddin (who is also the leader of the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen or HM) of wanting an unconditional ceasefire with Indian forces.⁴

The first chairman of the UJC was Azam Inquilabi, a prominent Kashmiri separatist leader. However, it was believed that Inquilabi's handling of the organisation was inefficient and he was replaced by Tanvir-ul-Islam. Tanvir-ul-Islam remained the chief until 1995. In December 1995, in a UJC meeting organised by Pakistan, the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen leader Syed Salahuddin was appointed as UJC chief. However, after the HM declared a unilateral ceasefire in Kashmir in July 2000, the outfit and Syed Salahuddin were expelled from the UJC. Salahuddin's replacement was Mohammed Usman, leader of the Muslim Janbaz Force. Finally, caving in to UJC pressure, Salahuddin and the HM withdrew the ceasefire offer. At the same time, Salahuddin maintained that a respite, violence would come even if India withdrew its troops from Kashmir and strengthened its commitment to trilateral peace talks. Finally, in October 2000, the HM was inducted back into the UJC and Salahuddin was re-elected as its chief.^{5,6}

In October 2003, the UJC underwent significant restructuring to centralise the control and appear more political than militant. Member outfits of the UJC were organised into two main groups, the Kashmir Resistance Forum (KRF) and the Kashmir Freedom Forum (KFF). The HM, one of the most important entities of the UJC, was not subjected to this reorganisation.⁷

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

This restructuring was reportedly undertaken to allow Pakistan's ISI to exercise greater control over the operations of various groups under the UJC. This new structure reportedly requires all groups to seek the UJC's approval before conducting operations. This has allowed the ISI to rein in many of the smaller jihadist groups which had become difficult to manage. The composition of the KRF and KFF makes this clear:-

- **KRF (headed by Ghulam Rasool Shah of the Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen):** Muslim Janbaz Force, Al Jihad Force, Al Fateh Force, Hizbullah, Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen;
- **KFF (headed by Farooq Qureshi of Al Barq):** Al Barq, Tehreek-e-Jihad, Islamic Front, Brigade 313, Harkat-ul-Mujahideen.⁸

Rather than conducting attacks directly, the UJC works for coordination among the various groups. However, it has also been directly involved in some cases. In the 1999 India-Pakistan Kargil Conflict, UJC-affiliated forces were engaged in fighting against Indian forces. It was implicated in the 2013 Hyderabad Blasts,⁹ and had claimed responsibility for the 2016 terrorist attack on the Pathankot Airbase.

Ideology and Objectives

The UJC is an organisation to promote Islamist extremism and some of the most notorious jihadist groups of South Asia are its members. It coordinates the activities of pro-Pakistan Islamist groups operating in India and J&K to target Indian civilian and military targets. Its objective is to make J&K a part of Pakistan. The UJC has generally been opposed to peace with India, as was evident from its boycott of the HM upon the latter's declaration of a ceasefire with India.

Modus Operandi

Rather than directly conducting attacks, the UJC coordinates the planning and strategies of various Islamist groups under its umbrella-like structure.

Its creation by the ISI facilitates the centralisation of the anti-India Kashmir jihad and enables the Pakistan establishment to better control and coordinate the proxy war effort. The UJC also saw direct military application during the Kargil War when its constituents fought Indian forces.¹⁰ Under Syed Salahuddin's leadership, the UJC had also prepared plans to thwart threats on Pakistan's borders, for which 35 emergency-use hit squads were set up. For this readiness, all outfits operating in Kashmir were required to share with the UJC all intelligence, maps, etc., acquired by them.¹¹

The UJC also uses intimidation of local government employees to achieve its ends. It openly threatens local rural representatives (*sarpanches* and *punches*) with death.

Sources of Funding

The UJC pools together resources of individual groups to fund itself as a whole. Other funding sources include the ISI, which patronises the outfit to continue terrorism against India, and individual donors from Pakistan and PoK.¹²

Network

The UJC acts as a unified forum for most significant jihadist outfits of South Asia, particularly ones focusing on Pakistan and Kashmir. Its constituents include:-

- Hizbul Mujahideen
- Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (though the JKLF's Yasin Malik faction broke off in 2004)
- Harkat-ul-Ansar (which split into the Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami and the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen in 1997)
- Tehreek-e-Jihad
- Tehreek-ul-Mujahideen

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

- Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen
- Al Jihad
- Al Umar Mujahideen
- Jammu Kashmir Islamic Front
- Muslim Janbaz Force
- Hizbullah
- Al Fatah
- Hizb-ul-Momineen
- Lashkar-e-Taiba
- Jaish-e-Mohammed
- Al-Badr Mujahideen

Apart from these constituents, the UJC also has close ties with Al Qaeda's 313 Brigade, which is now part of the UJC's KFF faction. Additionally, it is reported that the UJC has established relations with the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), an Assamese separatist outfit.¹³ The ULFA is known to cooperate with Islamist terrorist groups like it has done so with the Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HuJI) in the past as well.¹⁴ It is believed that members of the Bangladesh military were involved in brokering such alliances.¹⁵ The UJC also reportedly has links with India's organised crime leaders, notably Dawood Ibrahim, a Mumbai mafia don, who has been implicated in the 1993 Mumbai serial blasts.¹⁶ The ultimate patron of the UJC remains Pakistan's ISI, which provides it and its constituent outfits with asylum, finances, training, arms, etc.

Leadership and Structure

The UJC is an umbrella-like structure, which brings together various disparate groups with a standard plan for wresting J&K from India and merging it with Pakistan. Following its 2003 organisation, the UJC's structure was further

centralised, requiring all its constituent outfits to seek its approval before undertaking actions or policy shifts. This structure enables the Pakistani establishment, which fears losing control of the movement to the many disparate and scattered groups, to maintain a tight grip over the Kashmir jihad. Pakistan's tight grip on the UJC was evident when its highest leader, Syed Salahuddin, was removed from his position due to his outfit, the HM, declaring a ceasefire with India. Only on his renunciation of the truce was he allowed to return.

As stated, the UJC has two major factions, the Kashmir Resistance Forum (KRF) and the Kashmir Freedom Forum (KFF), each of which has its own leader. Most constituent groups have been included in one of these two factions, except the HM remaining independently represented. The UJC has its headquarters located in Muzaffarabad; the capital of Pakistani administered 'Azad Kashmir' (PoK).

Leadership

Syed Mohammed Yusuf Shah alias Syed Salahuddin: Syed Salahuddin is the *Amir* (chief) of the HM, a pro-Pakistan jihadist group in J&K, and is one of the largest of such outfits operating in J&K today. Syed Salahuddin has been the longest-serving leader of the UJC, being elected and re-elected several times from 1995. He was briefly expelled following the HM declaring a ceasefire with India, but was re-elected as the UJC's chief after withdrawing from the truce offer. From 2017 onwards, Salahuddin has been designated as a terrorist by the USA and has been sanctioned accordingly. He has also been named a terrorist by India's National Investigation Agency (NIA).

Manzur Shah: He was a leader of the Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen and it was under his leadership that the UJC was first formed. He has declared that the Kashmir jihad was aimed at J&K's merger with Pakistan and blamed India for creating an environment that was 'inconducive to a peaceful political process to resolve the dispute'.¹⁷

Azam Inquilabi: Inquilabi was one of the most prominent separatist leaders in J&K in the 1980s. He was linked with several separatist organisations, including the Mahaz-i-Azadi aka the 'Independence Front' (where he acted as General Secretary), the Islamic Students League (where he served as Chief Organiser), and the Jammu and Kashmir Muslim League (of which he was a founder). Further, he was involved with the training of militants in PoK. Inquilabi was appointed as the first Chairman of the UJC, but he was soon replaced because of his inability to improve the UJC's lethality.¹⁸

Sheikh Jamil-ur Rehman: He is the *Amir* of the Tehreek-ul-Mujahideen. In 1995, he was appointed as the General Secretary of the UJC.¹⁹

Liaquat al-Azhari: He belonged to the Lashkar-e-Islam and was appointed as the UJC's deputy chairman in 1995.²⁰

Ehsan Elhai: He is a senior leader of the HM and acts as the spokesperson of the UJC.²¹

Farooq Qureshi: He is the leader of the Al Barq outfit and was appointed as the leader of the UJC's KFF faction.²²

Ghulam Rasool Shah: He is the Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen's leader and leads the UJC's KRF faction.²³

Current Status

The UJC was directly involved in the 2016 Pathankot attack, and had openly supported the 2019 Pulwama car bombing attack where over 40 Indian paramilitary personnel were killed. The UJC remains significant as it is a united front of all major terrorist outfits engaged in Kashmir jihad. While it is an ISI creation whose true purpose is to grant Pakistan greater control over the movement, the UJC has often had tensions and open disagreements with it. Hard line leaders of the UJC have always opposed Indo-Pak negotiations, particularly, when militant leaders are not invited. Thus, the UJC raises a crisis of confidence in the possibility of any future back-channel negotiations

between the representatives of both nations. The revoking of the J&K's special status and increasing security measures in the J&K region was a setback for the UJC. These moves by the Indian government have caused severe difficulties for terrorist outfits in conducting their operations in Kashmir. A further weakening of individual terrorist constituents of the UJC will no doubt negatively impact the organisation and the whole separatist movement as a whole.

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AL-QAEDA IN INDIAN SUBCONTINENT

Introduction

On September 4, 2014, Al-Qaeda Central (AQ) declared the formation of a new regional affiliate named *Qaedat-al-Jihad fshibhi-al-qarrat-al-Hindiya* or Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS). It was founded by Al-Qaeda (AQ) leader Ayman-al-Zawahiri. The group was created to operate across South Asia, with its headquarters in Pakistan. AQIS was formed after the split between Al-Qaeda Central and the Islamic State (IS, or ISIS) post the latter's declaration of a 'Caliphate' in Iraq and Syria in 2014.

Under the leadership of Zawahiri, Al-Qaeda (AQ) released a document in 2017 titled 'Code of Conduct of Mujahedeen in the Subcontinent'.¹ The document re-emphasized the goals of AQIS, considering India as an enemy and targeting Indian military personnel, leaders of Hindu organisations, police and intelligence agencies. AQIS is listed as a terrorist organisation by India, the United Nations, the United States, Canada and Pakistan.

In 1996, Osama bin Laden raked up the issue of conflict between India and Pakistan in a speech to make his Islamist presence felt in India. However,

the efforts of the Government of India amongst Muslims have thwarted AQIS and other jihadists from gaining ground or influence in India,² though it continues to operate in certain localised pockets.

The AQIS has been working in Afghanistan, India, Bangladesh and Myanmar. Since 2015, the group has killed many secular activists, bloggers, publishers and campaigners in Bangladesh.³

Background

The AQ's origin can be traced back to the 1980s when Osama bin Laden formed an organisation based in Pakistan and Afghanistan, out of jihadist contingents from Egypt, Saudi Arabia and North Africa. It was formed by a merger of several pre-existing AQ-linked regional and local groups. AQ was also responsible for various violent activities such as the 1998 bombings of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, the bombing of the USS Cole in 2000 and the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in 2001.⁴

After the fall of the twin towers in New York, US forces invaded the hideouts of core members of the AQ in Afghanistan. It was followed by a joint US forces airstrike on the hideout of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in Iraq in 2006. The killing of Zarqawi led to the fall of AQ's global brand. The group made attempts to revive its power and after the death of Osama bin Laden in 2011, Ayman al-Zawahiri, founder of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ), assumed its leadership.⁵

On September 3, 2014, al-Zawahiri announced the formation of Al-Qaeda in Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) via a video message.⁶ It was formed by recruiting jihadi fighters from various small groups which already existed in the Indian subcontinent.⁷ Some of the prominent groups that came under its umbrella were the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami (HuJI), Harkat ul Mujahideen (HuM), Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), Jundullah, Indian Mujahideen, Lashkar-e Taiba (LeT), Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP) and Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU).⁸ Asim Umar, a former commander of the TTP, was named Emir.⁹

The formal split between AQ and ISIS, followed by the latter's claims of establishing an Islamic Caliphate in Iraq and Syria in 2014, set the stage for a countervailing group in the form of AQIS. Seeing a threat to its leadership dominance in the global jihad, AQ severed its links with ISIS. Subsequently, both competed to attract the allegiance and loyalty of various jihadist groups across the world.¹⁰ While AQIS is the latest affiliate of AQ, there already existed other such affiliates like Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and Jabhat al-Nusra (JAN) in Syria. Jordan Olmstead of *The Guardian* offered the following proposition: "AQIS isn't about India; it's about preserving AQ's safe havens in Pakistan and Afghanistan."¹¹

As American troops have withdrawn from Afghanistan, it is essential to investigate the alternative perspective offered by jihadists to explain the rationale behind the founding AQIS. Predicting the imminent departure of the USA from Afghanistan, AQ realised that there would be a vacuum of power and that will create opportunities for the redeployment of AQ troops across the South Asia and to swell the number of AQ fighters to fight the incumbent regimes.¹²

AQIS launched its first attack just three days after its inception. On September 6, 2014, AQIS militants attempted to seize a Pakistan Navy frigate, PNS Zulfikar, at Karachi, Pakistan, from which they planned to launch missiles at American and Pakistani ships. On September 10, 2014, AQIS representative Usama Mahmoud asserted the responsibility for the attack on the ship in Pakistan.¹³

Counter-terrorism operations by Bangladesh, along with strikes by the USA, eventually weakened the network of AQIS.¹⁴ In the past, AQ has made several efforts to intrude into Indian Territory by networking with radicalised individuals. However, that has failed given the strict monitoring and combing operations by Indian security forces.

Objectives and Ideology

AQIS subscribes to the Salafi ideology with the core idea of waging war against the 'infidel enemy' and wrest power to impose the rule of Sharia or Islamic law. In the first video broadcast on September 3, 2014, when Zawahiri reported the formation of AQIS, he maintained that AQIS would "Raise the flag of jihad, bring back the Islamic rule and the Sharia across the Indian subcontinent."¹⁵

Since its inception in 2014, the primary objective of the AQIS has been to advance AQ's ideology in South Asia. The narrative of *Ghazwa-e-Hind*, as mentioned in the *Hadith* is one of the prime objectives of AQIS. Their goal is to revive Islamic rule, motivate Muslims for armed jihad and 'liberate' 'Muslim' lands ruled by non-Muslims. In 2016, the media wing of AQIS, *al-Sabab*, provided a link to the video that laid out the organisation's objectives, including attacks on the United States, enemies of Islam, blasphemers, atheists and non-believers.¹⁶ With this objective, AQIS has targeted several Indian states like Assam, Gujarat, Kashmir, etc. However, despite planned moves, AQIS has failed to gain ground in India.¹⁷

According to Osama bin Laden, AQ believed in fighting a 'defensive jihad' against domination by the US and its allies and to 'defend Muslim lands from the new crusade led by America against the Islamic nations'. In the first issue of AQ's English language magazine *Resurgence*, its editor, Hasaan Yusuf, wrote: "It was Jihad that took Islam to the Indian Subcontinent and it will be Jihad again that will upturn the legacy of colonialism from Pakistan to Bangladesh and beyond." After the formation of AQIS, Ayman al-Zawahiri announced that by defensive jihad, AQIS intends to "establish Sharia and to liberate the occupied land of Muslims in the Indian subcontinent."¹⁸

Modus Operandi

AQIS's approach to India is based on modes of recruitment, training and terrorism to achieve its goals. AQIS focuses on its presence on the internet

and social media. It does a maximum number of recruitments via its human network.¹⁹

AQIS uses various methods to achieve its ideological goals and create terror. Terrorists affiliated with AQIS are trained in basic physical and weapons training, bomb-making, throwing grenades and planting improvised explosive devices (IEDs). On July 4, 2016, Asim Omar released an audio message urging his followers to emulate the lone-wolf style attacks adopted in Europe. On July 12, 2016, a directive urged Kashmiri Muslims to "slit the throats of the *Kufr* (non-believers)."²⁰

Sources of Funding

To avoid detection, AQ and its affiliates use various methods to transfer funds.²¹ To move money internationally, AQIS has used both formal and informal channels. The most popular informal system of money transfer is the *Hawala*. Another funding source is the group's relations with rich Saudi business houses, whose family members become a part of AQIS by providing financial support.

It is widely held that AQIS receives funding from the apex AQ organisation, but there exists little clarity over other funding sources, or whether this funding is treated as a separate entity. Unlike other AQ affiliates which have autonomous ability to raise funds, AQIS depends on AQ, which in turn raises funds through private donors, charities and foundations, drug trafficking and state sponsors of terrorism. Some other funding sources are kidnappings, donations, charitable foundations and religious charities, including Zakat, occasional state sponsorship and proceeds from counterfeit currency.²² AQIS was purportedly involved in the kidnapping of Ali Gilani, the son of former Pakistan Prime Minister Yousaf Reza Gilani. Kidnapping for ransom remains one of the most successful funding sources for AQIS.²³ On certain occasions, funds of Lashkar-e-Taiba have reached AQIS as the latter maintains strong links with Pakistani ISI-funded groups.²⁴

Although funding sources of AQIS are not too well known and that it primarily banks on support from AQ, Pakistan has discrete cells to raise funds for AQIS. In Karachi, one AQIS cell is devoted to extorting donations from businesspersons under the guise of support for Islamic charities. The money then goes through various channels through Quetta and southern Afghanistan before reaching AQIS leadership in Waziristan.²¹ Indian authorities once detected Hawala channels to transfer funds from Dubai to New Delhi to support AQIS members in India.²⁵ One of the significant sources of revenue of AQIS is funding from individual citizens.²⁶

Leadership

AQIS hides the identity of its leaders and executive members. The group only reveals information in glorification statements when any important member, usually a part of its leadership, is killed.

Known details of some of the leaders of the AQIS as given below:-

- Ayman-al Zawahiri - Leader of Al-Qaeda and founder of AQIS in 2014
- Sheikh Asim Umar - (Indian origin) Emir of AQIS. Previously, he has been associated with some Jihadi groups, including Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami (HUJI) and Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HuM), and was once a commander in the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)
- Usama Mahmoud - Official spokesperson of AQIS, of Pakistani descent
- Ahmad Farouq - Deputy Emir of AQIS. He was previously head at Al-Qaeda's preaching and media branch in Pakistan
- Atta-ur Rahman a.k.a. Naeem Bukhari - High-ranking member, the link between AQIS and AQ
- Qari Imran - AQIS's Shura council member, before being killed by US drone strikes in 2015; headed the Khorasan Committee
- Imran Ali Siddiqi - AQIS's Shura Council member, also killed by US drone strikes in 2014.

- Mawlana Mainul Islam - Chief AQIS coordinator in Bangladesh.
- Mawlana Zafar Amin - Chief Advisor to the AQIS coordinator in Bangladesh.
- Shahid Usman - Top AQIS commander in Pakistan. Pakistani authorities arrested him in December, 2014.²⁷

Organisational Structure

The formation of AQIS took several years and it remains one of the problematic branches for AQ in extending its brand as it has struggled to find footing in the subcontinent. The AQIS has also developed ties with Lashkar-e-Taiba (Let), Afghan Taliban, tribes in North and South Waziristan etc. AQIS affiliates in South Asia are:-

- India Wing: Mohammad Asif, chief of the India wing; was arrested in 2016.
- Kashmir Wing (Ansar Ghazwat-ul Hind): Zakir Musa, chief of the Kashmir affiliate; killed in 2019.
- Bangladesh Wing (Ansar-ul Islam Bangladesh, or the Ansar-ul Bangla Team): Ex Major Zia-ul-Haque.
- Myanmar Wing (Haraka al Yakin/ Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army): Aatullah al-Junnaï, chief of the Myanmar affiliate (affiliation formally not yet acknowledged by AQIS).²⁸

In December 2014, AQIS spokesman Usama Mahmoud released a statement laying out the group's operational structure. Although AQIS was announced in 2014, it started working under one Shura Committee and one commander almost a year before.²⁹ Operational details and structural dynamics of terror groups often and expectedly remain short of complete and precise disclosure. It is to be noted that AQIS is closely associated with the Taliban and may share some organisational aspects. AQIS members fought for some time under the Taliban flag and integrated into the Taliban's chain of command. According to the *Long War Journal*, this could clearly explain AQIS's lack of military propaganda.³⁰

Recruitment

In 2014, before the formation of AQIS, AQ focused on recruiting jihadists from Indian Kashmir, a fertile ground for jihadist elements and groups. Three months before its formation, an AQ video called upon Asim Umar, the then commander of Pakistan's Al-Qaeda cell, to recruit India's Kashmiri Muslims. Umar is said to have spent years distributing employment videos to the Muslims in Kashmir. However, recruitment in India has been difficult for AQIS since socio-economic and other grievances, which paint scenarios conducive to lure Muslims, have been absent in India. As Jason Burke (South Asia expert) opines, "Though there are some signs of increasing radicalisation in India, recruitment to extremist networks there is negligible."³¹

Nevertheless, in October 2014, AQ launched a new English magazine named *Resurgence* directed at attracting fresh recruits. The first issue was devoted to AQIS, with an article by Asim Umar denouncing the Indian government's policies towards Muslims and warned of a holy war for the protection of Indian Muslims.

Online propaganda plays a significant role in attracting recruits to AQIS. Videos, magazines and documents are promoted to enable their message and subsequent induction and recruitment. According to the Soufan Center, AQIS has also used personal relationships for recruitment, training, and indoctrination.³² To reach out to various regions, AQIS launched its campaign in Tamil and Malayalam in August 2016.

Current Status

Counter-terrorism operations carried out by Pakistan and the USA have resulted in heavy losses to the leadership and organisation of AQIS. In Bangladesh, the murder of several liberal bloggers triggered an uproar and the government of that country took quick initiatives to curb its network. In May 2015, the Bangladesh government banned AQIS-affiliated Ansarullah Bangla Team. Joint operations by Afghan and US forces had also weakened

the Taliban network and disrupted AQIS' network by carrying out raids, recovering explosives and killing militants. However, as 2021 witnessed the rapid withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan, there has been a resurgence of the Taliban, which controls several districts in that country.

According to a United Nations 28th report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, AQ is present in fifteen provinces of Afghanistan²⁸. As Taliban takes over the Afghan government, a revival of AQIS is a possibility that will be closely watched. From a larger perspective, the formation and survival of AQIS shows the ability of the group and its affiliates to branch out beyond traditional conflict zones to areas like India which are relatively calm.

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BALOCH LIBERATION ARMY

Introduction

The Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) is a militant separatist group which is fighting for the independence of Balochistan from Pakistan. It is mostly composed of members of the Marri and Bugti tribes of the region. The group alleges that the Pakistani state and military is exploiting the region and conducting a genocide against the Balochi people, and strongly opposes Chinese and Pakistani infrastructure projects in the area. It has been involved several attacks on Pakistani civilians and government and military officials, besides also targeting Chinese workers and diplomats.

Background

While the BLA was officially founded in the year 2000, it is considered that the present BLA is more of a resurgence of the previous Balochistan Independence Movement (BIM) which was active in 1973-77. The roots of the BLA, and that of its alleged precursor, the BIM, lie in the decades-long Balochistan conflict. Ever since Pakistan gained independence in 1947, there have been numerous conflicts and waves of insurgencies to support the

Baloch cause for independence. The present insurgency is considered to be the fifth so far.

Balochistan is one of the most resource-rich regions of Pakistan. As of 2015, over \$1 trillion worth of natural resources have been discovered there, including several minerals, in addition to natural gas deposits. Further, Balochistan is strategically important as most of Pakistan's coastline lies in the province, including the famous Gwadar port. Gwadar port is being developed by China as part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a part of China's larger Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

At the same time, however, Balochistan also has very poor standards of economic and human development. It fares poorly in terms of employment, education, healthcare and clean drinking water facilities. This is primarily because of the extractive policies being followed by the Pakistan government, wherein resources are extracted and used for the benefit of other provinces. Balochistan itself remains underdeveloped and neglected.

These conditions have created much angst among the Balochis, giving rise to popular separatist movements over the years. An additional cause for dissatisfaction among the Balochis is the favouring of Punjabis in job allocation rather than natives of Balochistan. It is in this context that the BLA was founded in the year 2000 by prominent Baloch nationalist leader Sardar Akbar Khan Bugti along with Nawab Khair Bakhsh Marri, who had led the 1970s insurgency.

BLA's activities and attacks in the period of 2000-03 are undocumented as the group had a relatively minor presence in this period. It shot to prominence from 2003-04 onwards after launching a spate of bold attacks against the Pakistan military and police forces; it attacked markets, railways, military bases, etc. to target the security forces. It also began to attack others, primarily non-Baloch residents and Chinese workers brought in for infrastructure construction projects in the region. Rising violence perpetrated by the BLA prompted the Pakistan government into deploying 20,000 troops

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

in Balochistan to counter the rising insurgency.¹

In 2005, the group attacked Camp Kohlu where then President Pervez Musharraf was being hosted. This was seen to be an assassination attempt against Musharraf and subsequently, in 2006, the government labelled the BLA a terrorist organisation. Pakistani security forces began deliberately targeting the BLA leadership in an escalated counter-insurgency campaign. In August 2006, Sardar Akbar Khan Bugti was killed in a Pakistan Army operation. In November 2007, Mir Baloch Marri, son of Nawab Khair Bakhsh Marri and a leader of the BLA, was also killed by the security forces. These losses were significant setbacks for the group.²

In September 2008, the BLA, along with other separatist groups like the Baloch Liberation Front and the Baloch Republican Army, signed a ceasefire with the Government of Pakistan, on the condition that the latter will hold negotiations with the separatists. However, alleging that the government had made no serious move towards negotiations, the BLA pulled out of the ceasefire later.³

In 2009, Brahamdagh Khan Bugti, a BLA leader, told a Pakistan media channel that he had called on the Baloch people to kill non-native Balochis residing in the province. This incitement had visible effects, as soon after the interview was aired, Punjabi civilians were subject to targeted killings in Balochistan. The BLA's own estimates claim that around 500 Punjabis were ethnically cleansed.

In 2014, BLA leader, Nawab Khair Bakhsh Marri, died of natural causes, following which, his six sons fought for control of the organisation. At present, his son, Hyrbayair Marri, heads the group, even as he is based in the UK.⁴ Three of Khair Bakhsh Marri's sons broke off from the BLA to create the offshoot United Baloch Army (UBA). The BLA and UBA are known to have violently clashed with one another. The UBA has accused the BLA of killing one of its commanders and detaining some of its fighters.⁵

In 2017, the Pakistan government announced a programme for political reconciliation in Balochistan, wherein surrendered militants would be given education, employment, compensation and security. Following the announcement, around 500 militants of Baloch separatist groups, including the BLA, surrendered to the authorities. However, the BLA has continued with its insurgent activities in the province, finding a new target in recent years—Chinese workers and infrastructure built by them.

In 2001, China and Pakistan signed an agreement for the construction of Gwadar port, located in Balochistan, and by 2007, the construction of the port by the Chinese was completed. While infrastructure development cooperation between China and Pakistan has continued over the years, 2015 was a significant landmark, as this was the year the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was announced. It was unveiled as a multi-billion-dollar plan with multiple different infrastructure projects to create an economic corridor connecting China to Pakistan, going all the way to Gwadar port. The CPEC entailed a number of infrastructure development projects within Balochistan apart from Gwadar port itself.

Baloch separatists have vehemently opposed the CPEC and consider it to be a form of colonialism being inflicted upon Balochistan. Thus, groups like the BLA have stepped up their attacks against Chinese citizens and infrastructure. In November 2018, they targeted the Chinese consulate in Karachi, Sindh, which led to four people being killed. In May 2019, the group stormed a five-star hotel in Gwadar and killed five people. Following the attack, the BLA released a statement claiming responsibility and warned China to put an end to its “exploitative projects in Balochistan”.

Following this spate of attacks against Chinese nationals in Pakistan, the US (despite its opposition to China’s Belt and Road Initiative of which the CPEC is a part) designated the BLA as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO), and sanctioned it accordingly.⁶ Apart from its attack on the Chinese presence in Pakistan, the BLA has also attempted to target Pakistani institutions outside Balochistan. For instance, in June 2020, BLA fighters

attacked the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) located in Karachi, in which four security personnel were killed. Notably, Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan in the Pakistan's National Assembly accused India of orchestrating the attack.⁷

Ideology and Objectives

The BLA is an ethno-nationalist Baloch outfit which demands the independence of greater Balochistan, which includes regions in Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan. It is a violent militant separatist group which not only targets the Pakistani government and military, but also non-natives, especially Punjabis. It claims that the Balochis have been discriminated against in their own homeland, so that benefits are transferred to other ethnicities such as the Punjabis.

Modus Operandi

The group follows violent militancy to achieve its objectives. In its early days, it spread fear through targeted mortar shelling of Pakistani military camps. It continued to target the Pakistani government and military, as well as civilians, particularly non-native Baloch people residing in the province. It used tactics commonly employed by terrorist outfits, including car-bombings, shootings, lobbing grenades, etc. In recent years, it has used these tactics to target Chinese nationals and CPEC infrastructure projects in Balochistan. It has also attacked some targets outside Balochistan to cause further problems for Pakistan and China.

An important wing of the BLA is the Majeed Fidayeen Brigade (MFB) which was founded in 2011. The MFB acts as an elite BLA unit which executes *fidayeen* (suicide squad) attacks. These are similar to the fidayeen tactics employed by Islamist terrorist outfits like Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed, Al Qaeda etc. The MFB is named after Abdul Majeed Baloch, who was a bodyguard of former Pakistan PM Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who had tried to assassinate Bhutto, but failed and was killed in the process. This

assassination attempt was carried out after Bhutto had ordered a counter-insurgency operation in Balochistan in 1975. The MFB was headed by Aslam Baloch alias Achu until his death in December 2018, after which his son Rehan Baloch took command. Rehan Baloch was himself responsible for carrying out a *fidayeen* attack on Chinese engineers in August 2018.⁸

Sources of Funding

The BLA and the MFB depend on Baloch dissidents living outside Pakistan, particularly in Europe and North America, for financial assistance. The primary channels of such assistance are through *hawala* networks (a system of transactions carried out through middlemen).⁹ Apart from diaspora Balochis, BLA also relies on donations of finances and weaponry from the local Baloch populace owing to the popular support the separatist cause enjoys.¹⁰

Pakistan's government and intelligence agencies accuse India of sponsoring the BLA in order to destabilise and weaken Pakistan. They claim that the Indian consulates in the Afghan cities of Jalalabad and Kandahar were used to provide assistance in the form of funding, arms and training. Additionally, the BLA relies on smuggling of goods, especially opium, as a source of income, while also making use of weaponry and equipment left behind from past conflicts in Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan.¹¹

Leadership

Sardar Akbar Khan Bugti: He was a prominent Baloch nationalist and a widely respected politician in Pakistan. A former chief minister of Balochistan, he was one of the most important co-founders of the BLA and remained an important leader till his death in August 2006.

Nawab Khair Bakhsh Marri: He was an important leader of the 1973-77 Baloch Insurgency. When the separatist movement was rekindled in 2000, Khair Bakhsh Marri helped co-found the BLA and remained an important leader until 2014 when he died of natural causes.

Mir Baloch Marri: He was one of Khair Bakhsh Marri's sons and a former member of the Balochistan Parliament. He reportedly had control of the BLA leadership for some time until his death in 2007, allegedly in a Pakistani military operation.¹²

Brahamdagh Khan Bugti: He was also a leader of the BLA following Mir Baloch Marri's killing. He came into the limelight after his 2009 television interview in which he called for the killing of non-Balochis, which led to an ethnic cleansing campaign in the province, causing the deaths of around 500 Punjabis. According to claims of the Pakistani government, Brahamdagh Khan Bugti left the BLA and helped revive the Balochistan Liberation Front, another separatist outfit.¹³

Aslam Baloch alias Achu: Born as Takari Mohammad Aslam, Aslam Baloch was the head of the elite Majeed Fidayeen Brigade of the BLA. He was responsible for masterminding a fidayeen attack on the Chinese Consulate in Karachi in November 2018 which led to the deaths of two police officers. Aslam Baloch was killed in December 2018 in a suicide bombing in Kandahar, Afghanistan.¹⁴

Bijar Khan: He was a leader of the BLA who was killed by Pakistani forces in a raid in July 2015.¹⁵

Hyrbayair Marri: He is one of Khair Bakhsh Marri's sons and is the present leader of the BLA. He runs the group's functioning while being based in the UK.

Current Status

At present, the BLA appears to have been weakened by multiple losses at the leadership level, while also facing opposition from Pakistan, China and the USA. It has not only been proscribed within Pakistan, but also faces sanctions under the USA's Foreign Terrorist Organisations (FTO) listing. At the same time, it continues to conduct rampant militancy across Balochistan,

targeting Pakistani government and military institutions along with non-native residents and Chinese nationals. The group enjoys wide-ranging public support; lack of socio-economic development lends credence to its narrative of Pakistan and China's exploitative intent in the resource-rich region.

With this ideological conviction, along with funding from Balochi diaspora donors and illicit activities, the group will continue to wage war against Pakistani and Chinese interests in the region. However, it will also face a significant setback in the face of the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, as the Taliban Islamist regime will also be apprehensive of the Afghan Baloch populace becoming restive with demands of autonomy and independence. The Taliban-Pakistan alliance, with outside support from the Chinese, will present a daunting challenge to the BLA and to Balochi independence in general. Time will tell whether the BLA will be able to sustain its insurgency in the face of such odds.

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EAST TURKISTAN ISLAMIC MOVEMENT

Introduction

The East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) or East Turkistan Islamic Party (ETIP) was established in the late 1990s. The actual date of its establishment is still unclear, but its inception is believed to have commenced with its first activity in 1998. It is an Islamic ethnic and separatist group based in China's Xinjiang province. The group is run by Uighur militants from the Turkic speaking ethnic majority of the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) of China.¹

The movement aims at establishing an independent state of more than 10 million Uighur Muslims. Such efforts have been made since the late 19th century. The region was briefly independent twice, during 1931-1934 and again from 1944-1949, under the name of the East Turkistan Republic. After the Communists assumed power in China in 1949, the Mao Zedong regime claimed the region in 1955. Communist consolidation led to an exodus of the ethnic Han community into the region. Hans started forcing Uighur Muslims to follow Chinese habits and systems, besides its culture. This coercive move led to a conflict between the two ethnic communities and forced Uighurs Muslims to resort to an armed revolt.

Ideology and Objectives

The ETIM is composed mainly of Turkic Uighur Muslims who follow Sufi Islam. Uighurs spread to the territory in the 10th century and followed Buddhism and Manicheism before converting to Islam. The majority of Uighur Muslims in the ETIM are Sunni and they started following Salafi and anti-China Jihadist ideology in the late 1990s. ETIM is an armed wing of the Uighur community fighting for independence through armed insurrection. Its prime objective is to carve out an independent state of East Turkistan from the north-western XUAR..²

Modus Operandi

The ETIM is an ethnic-nationalist group that has turned extreme separatists and politico-religious by adopting Salafi practices. In 1998, the group executed its first act to mark its emergence. Most of the information about the ETIM's attacks comes from Chinese government sources and its media persons. According to available sources, the most common mode of attack by the ETIM is through bombings and lone-wolf attacks.

From 1990 and 2000, the ETIM has been involved in more than 200 attacks, wherein bombings of private and public vehicles, crowded places (markets and malls) and government buildings were common targets. It was also involved in the assassination of some prominent figures like local government officials, civilians and religious leaders. The ETIM conducted knife and truck attacks at several crowded places like railway stations and markets also. China has accused the ETIM of killing more than 165 people in the last decade. Some other high-profile attacks of the ETIM are the attack on the Chinese embassy in Turkey, the assassination of the president of Kyrgyzstan's Uighur Youth Alliance, suspected involvement in the attack on US embassy in Bishkek and threatening the Chinese government with an attack on Beijing Olympics 2008..³

Structure and leadership

The ETIM was informally organised in the late 1940s by means of lectures and preaching by some religious leaders and intellectuals who were mainly Uighur Muslims. Among its followers, Hasan Mashum, also named Abu Muhammad al-Turkestani, along with Memetuhut Memetrozi organised the ETIM formally in 1997. After one early attack on Xinjiang province, Hasan was arrested for few months. When released, he reorganised the group with due motivation and support system.

Hasan Mashum was killed in ‘Operation Clean’ conducted jointly by the US and Pakistani forces. After that, Abdul Haq took over the leadership of ETIM who, after being injured badly in US drone attacks in Afghanistan in 2010, was replaced by Abdul Shaqoor al-Turkestani (also known as Emeti Yakooof). Abdul Shakoor was killed in 2012 in a US drone attack and Abdullah Mansour took over the leadership of ETIM.⁴

Support and Funding

The major sources of funding of the ETIM is believed to be extortion, kidnapping, arms trafficking, drugs smuggling and some sympathetic groups. After a series of attacks in China in the late 1990s and the 9/11 attack on the US World Trade Centre, both nations joined in joint counter-terrorism efforts in South Asia and other parts of the world. The US took stringent actions against ETIM, which was believed to be a part of the 9/11 attacks along with Al-Qaeda. ETIM was also getting support and funding from the Taliban and Al-Qaeda which provided it with sophisticated weapons, training, and financial support to conduct international attacks.⁵

China marks the ETIM as having close ties with the Taliban who provide it safe haven in its territory. In 2010, Abdul Haq was injured in a US drone attack while moving in a Taliban vehicle. As reported by a Russian newspaper, ETIM also has close ties with the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU).⁶ The report focused on a meeting held in 1999 in Afghanistan, when Osama

bin Laden, chief of Al-Qaeda, agreed to support and fund both the ETIM and the IMU.

Current Status

ETIM is an umbrella organisation which supports splinter organisations having similar ideologies and objectives. After 2012, very little information has been released by the Chinese government on ETIM activities. During his 2014 visit to China for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) leaders' meeting, the then US president Barak Obama had condemned the ETIM's attacks in Kunming and Urumqi. Obama said, "Terrorist groups like ETIM should not be allowed to establish a safe haven in ungoverned areas along China's periphery". By 'periphery', he pointed to the border areas of China with Central Asian countries and the Afghanistan-Pakistan region, where ETIM was provided with safe havens and resources.⁷

As of now, ETIM is designated as a foreign terrorist organisation by the government of China, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan, and by the United Nations in 2002. The US Treasury also has designated ETIM as a foreign terrorist organisation in 2002 in the wake of its cooperation with China on counter-terrorism.

Recently, after the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, China has boosted its efforts to cooperate with the Taliban. In a meeting held in July with a nine-member delegation led by the Taliban's chief negotiator, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi appreciated the Taliban's 'efforts for peace and reconstruction'. But he also asked the Taliban to cut all relations with ETIM, which was involved in many terrorist attacks in China for over two decades.⁸

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HEZBOLLAH

Introduction

Hezbollah (Party of God) is a Lebanon-based Shiite Muslim militant political party led by Hassan Nasrallah since its inception.¹ Being a major political party, it focuses on social, economic and political development of that country, but does not refrain from using violent means to achieve its ends. Its extensive security apparatus, political organisation and social services network has identified it as ‘a state within a state’. In a 2018 report, the Center for Strategic and International Studies called it “the world’s most heavily armed non-state actor.”²

Hezbollah emerged as a militia during Lebanon’s civil war with the sole objective of driving the Israelis out of Lebanon. It has been implicated in numerous attacks against Jewish communities, a nearly full-fledged war with Israel and assassination of leaders whom it deems to be unsympathetic towards its cause.

Background

Shiite Muslims are traditionally the weakest religious group in Lebanon. Their

inability to sustain themselves created a leadership vacuum. In the beginning, they found their voice in the largely secular Amal Movement.³ The 1979 Islamic Revolution in the Shiite majority neighbouring state of Iran, and the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 created a space for the Hezbollah.⁴

Lebanon ceased to be a French mandate in 1943. The 'National Pact' signed by new Lebanese leaders created a government system wherein power was divided among major religious groups. In 1971, the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) relocated its headquarters from Jordan to Lebanon. Although Hezbollah was growing in the early part of the 1970s, it took on a robust form after a fifteen-year-long civil war. The Hezbollah resisted the involvement of western powers in the Middle East, and to show its power, it bombed the US embassy in Beirut in 1983, killing 63 people.⁵ A similar attack in 1983 killed dozens of people in the embassy's annexe too.⁶ Just after a year of the Beirut bombing, in 1984, the Hezbollah made its intentions clear by releasing its first manifesto. It said its sole objective was to resist western involvement in the Middle East and make Lebanon an Islamic republic.

The division of power among several religious sects of Lebanon ended the civil war in 1990. The agreement imposed on Lebanon granted its guardianship to Syria. It also ordered all militias in Lebanon to disarm except for the Hezbollah. The alliance between Syria and Hezbollah forged after the civil war has proved to be fruitful for both sides. Hezbollah, along with Russia and Iran, supported the Syrian government against Sunni rebel groups. Prior to the Syrian Civil War in 2013, the Hezbollah sent a small number of trainers to advise Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime. They also fought for the pro-Assad alliance against the rebel groups.

The alliance between Syria and the Hezbollah is not a recent phenomenon. When the Syrian government was driven out of Lebanon owing to the 2005 Cedar Revolution, the Hezbollah organised a massive rally in support of Syria.⁷ As per experts, the Syrian government facilitates the transfer of weapons from Iran to the Hezbollah in return for support provided by the

militia. The involvement of the militia in the Syrian Civil War has helped it to become a stronger military force. Syrian support did not come without any cost to the militia. Although the Hezbollah harps on Shiite Muslim support, during the initial years it ensured that Sunnis did not pick up arms against it; conditions in Lebanon were not allowed to be too harsh for the Sunnis. In recent years though, Sunni extremists have committed terrorist attacks in Lebanon, including the 2015 suicide bombing in Beirut.

Israel's invasion of Lebanon proved to be the missing piece that was preventing the Hezbollah from gaining unilateral control over Lebanon. The militia garnered support on the promise of driving Israel out of the country. It engaged in multiple confrontations with Jewish communities, including the 1994 car bombings of a Jewish center in Argentina which killed eighty-five people and the bombings of the Israeli embassy in London. Even after Israel officially evacuated from southern Lebanon in 2000, the Hezbollah continued to clash with Israeli forces. In 2006, the periodic confrontations escalated into a 34-day nearly full-fledged war between the two.⁸ The Hezbollah tried to pressurise Israel into releasing three Lebanese in Israeli prisons. They launched direct attacks against Israel forces, killing many Israeli soldiers. Although the Hezbollah suffered a reckonable share of casualties, it managed to bring the Israeli forces to a standstill. Holding up Israel was a remarkable feat - Hezbollah and Nasrallah became the heroes of the war, garnering massive support from Arabs.⁹ In its 2009 manifesto, the Lebanese militia restated its objective to annihilate Israel.

The US considers the Hezbollah a global terrorist organisation. The Obama administration aided the Lebanese military to undermine the Hezbollah's influence in the country, but eventually withdrew support fearing that the Lebanese military might have been compromised.¹⁰ Since the militia works as a proxy of Iran, Iran has faced backlashes from the Trump administration. The European Council has adopted a less aggressive approach against the Hezbollah. The European Union (EU) has designated its military arm as a terrorist group. Some European states have taken a much stronger

stance against the Hezbollah as the UK parliament and Germany labelled it a terrorist organisation in 2019 and 2020 respectively.¹¹ Arab states, which are predominantly Sunni, consider the Hezbollah a global threat as it continues to support Assad's regime and follows an anti-Sunni approach.

Ideology and Objective

The Hezbollah is a Shiite extremist militant group based in Lebanon and backed by Iran and Syria. It believes in eradicating the western presence from the Middle East. It aims to annihilate Israel and Jewish communities. When the Hezbollah released its first manifesto, it aimed to establish an Islamic Republic of Lebanon, but in its updated manifesto of 2009, it dropped that call. In recent years, it has moved towards establishing a government that represents national unity rather than sectarian interests.

Modus Operandi

The Hezbollah is stated to be a 'militant political party' and this is something that makes it distinct. Indeed, it has never shed its violent outlook, but parallelly it has solidified its position in Lebanon by engaging in political, social and economic activities. Rather than standing on the fringes, it contests elections and has been able to maintain considerable influence in Lebanese politics. In 2006, the Hezbollah used its rising influence and prestige to topple the Lebanese government. The National Assembly failed to select a successor who could gain the confidence of a two-thirds quorum. In 2009, a consensus was reached when the Hezbollah agreed to form a unity government under then Prime Minister Saad-al-Hariri.¹² Eventually, the unity government failed because the Hezbollah withdrew its two ministers and nine allied ministers from the cabinet owing to indictments issued by United Nations Special Tribunal for Lebanon.

In 2009, Nijab Mikati, a Sunni billionaire became prime minister after receiving the militia's backing. In consequent arrangements made in 2016, Hezbollah's ally, Michael Aoun, was elected as president. The Lebanese militia

managed to win a majority of seats in the 2018 legislative elections, becoming the politically dominant party for the first time.¹³ Whenever Hezbollah failed to get what it desired politically, it resorted to terrorist attacks, or to assassinating important ministers of the opposition. Currently, the Hezbollah enjoys outright domination as the unity government has been replaced by a technocratic cabinet appointed with its and allies sole support.

Sources of Funding

Iran continues to support the Hezbollah in its terror activities by supplying weaponry and financial support. According to an estimate, Iran gives more than 700 million dollars to the Hezbollah per year.¹⁴ According to a 2019 report, the Hezbollah receives hundreds of millions of dollars from international criminal enterprises, Lebanese diaspora and legal businesses. It is also involved in oil smuggling which helps raise funds for its foreign proxies.¹⁵

Structure and Leadership

The organisation of the Hezbollah is hierarchical, comprising of a Shura Council at the top with five subordinate specialised councils -- The Executive, Judicial, Parliamentary, Political and Jihad Councils. The subordinate councils have further been divided into lower councils.¹⁶ The structure is as follows:-

- **Shura Council:** It is the central decision-making body of the Hezbollah at the national level.
- **Executive Council:** It is one of the Shiite group's more powerful bodies that manages the Hezbollah's daily operations, and oversees all cultural, educational, social and political affairs.
- **Jihad Council:** According to Nasim Qassem – a leader of the Hezbollah, the Jihad Council is made up of “those in charge of resistance activity, be that in terms of oversight, recruitment, training, equipment, security, or any other resistance-related endeavours.”
- **Judicial Council:** It consists of judges and judicial officials who engage in conflict resolution within the Shiite community.

- **Parliamentary Council:** It aims to maintain party discipline and strengthen the effectiveness of the Hezbollah's elected representatives in the Lebanese Parliament.
- **Political Council:** It manages the party's day-to-day political activities, puts together its political programs and electoral platforms, organises political campaigns, committees and establishes and maintains its political alliances.

The leadership consists of the following:-

- **Hassan Nasrallah** – Secretary General, head of the Shura Council & Chairman of the Jihad Council
- **Hashem Saffiedine** – Chairman of the Executive Council
- **Sultan As'ad** – Assistant to the Chairman;
- **Nabil Qaouq** – Deputy Chairman
- **Sheikh Mohammed Yazbek** – head of the Judicial Council
- **Hajj Mohammad Raad** – head of the Parliamentary Council
- **Ibrahim Amine al-Sayyed** – Chairman of the Political Council

Network

The Hezbollah has been indulging in terrorist activities since its inception. Anti-Americanism has been the core ideology of the 'Party of God'. Despite being considered a terrorist organisation, the Hezbollah manages a vast network of social services that have proved instrumental in garnering support from Lebanese citizens. According to a report released by *Pew Research Center* in 2014, 31 percent of Christians and nine percent of Sunni Muslims held positive views about the group.¹⁷ Hezbollah maintains cordial ties with Syria and Iran. It fought in the Syrian Civil War and, in turn, the Syrian government facilitates the transfer of weapons from Iran to the militia. With the support of Iran, the Hezbollah has become a major 'militant-socio-political' organisation in Lebanon.

Cadre and Recruitment

According to an estimate by the US State Department, the Hezbollah has tens and thousands of members and supporters worldwide. In 2017, the *Institute for Strategic Studies* estimated that the Hezbollah had up to ten thousand fighters, about twenty thousand reserves with an arsenal of arms, tanks, drones and various long-range rockets.¹⁸ The Jihad Council of the Hezbollah recruits members based on their allegiance towards the militia's ideology.¹⁹

Current Status

The Hezbollah's vast network and socio-economic engagements have overshadowed its militant character. Although various foreign organisations consider the Hezbollah a terrorist outfit, its popularity has soared among the people of Lebanon. The Hezbollah has been expanding its international network, but it is not keen on waging a full-fledged war with the USA or Israel. It relies more on covert militant operations than open confrontation. Barring a few instances, in the past few years, it has turned a blind eye towards foreign intervention, pointing to its negligible response to the 2019 Beirut attack.²⁰

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JEMMAH ISLAMIYAH

Introduction

Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) means ‘Islamic Group’ in Arabic. It is an extremist organisation in Indonesia with links to Al Qaeda and seeks to establish an Islamic state, *Daulah Islamiyah Nusantara*, comprising Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Southern Thailand and the Southern Philippines. It has roots in Darul Islam, (House of Islam) a radical movement which fought a violent insurgency in the 1950’s and 1960’s. In this fierce campaign, insurgents of West Javanese descent made an attempt to set up an Islamic state in Indonesia.¹

JI was founded in 1993 by Yemeni-born Indonesian clerics Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakr Ba’asyir, who had slipped into Malaysia in the late 1980’s to evade prison sentences for their links with Darul Islam. Once in Malaysia, they started radicalising, funding and sending Muslims from Southeast Asia to join the jihad against the Soviet Army. In Afghanistan, its members were trained by Al-Qaeda leadership to pursue its terrorist agenda across the region. The JI also set up training camps in the Philippines in the 1990s, which gave an opportunity to establish a close relationship with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MIRF). Following crises with the

ouster of President Suharto, these two leaders returned to Indonesia where the JI actively joined the fighting between Christians and Muslims during Indonesia transition to democracy. Then with the sudden death of Sungkar, Ba'asyir took over. The JI was engaged in violent attacks against Christians and western interests in the 1990s and early 2000s.

In December, 2001, Singapore security forces foiled a JI plot to attack US, Israeli, British and Australian diplomatic buildings. Then, there were attacks on two nightclubs in Bali on October 12, 2002, which killed 202 people, including 88 Australians, and the bombings of the JW Marriot Hotel in 2003 and Australian Embassy in Jakarta in 2004. This was not the end, as another spree of violent terrorist attacks took place again at Bali (2005) and simultaneous bombings of the JW Marriot Hotel and the Ritz Carlton in 2009. Following these terror incidents, Indonesian and neighbouring security forces swung into action, killing 150 and detaining 1500 JI members between 2002 and 2009 in Indonesia alone.² However, more than a dozen hardcore leaders such as Zulkarnain and Dalmatin escaped. The group has been designated as a terrorist group by the UN, Australia, Canada, China, Japan, the United Kingdom and the US. It was banned by Indonesian government in 2008.

Objective and Agenda

The JI is a Salafi jihadist outfit that wants to achieve its political objectives through violence and, thus, has a common ideology as Al Qaeda. It has roots in Darul Islam (House of Islam) a radical movement that called for the application of Islamic law in Indonesia. The JI seeks to create an Islamic government under a pan-Islamic Caliphate, incorporating Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Southern Thailand and Southern Philippines, and ultimately, a global theocratic Islamic state across Southeast Asia. While in its formative years, the JI focused on *Dawah* (call of Islam), t in the mid-1990s, the outfit was engaged in a violent campaign that attempted to establish an Islamic state of Indonesia. The relations between the two outfits were established following

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

meetings between Sungkar and Osama bin Laden in 1993 in Afghanistan where they were fighting jihad against the Soviet forces. But it was Riduan Ismuddin who brought both the outfits closer to each other. According to one report, it was Al Qaeda which ensured that the objective to declare an Islamic state could only be achieved through a 'holy war'.³

In its efforts to set up an Islamic state, the JI has adopted ten major statements of its ideological principles in which all of its activities are reported to be based:

- Our aim is to seek Allah's pleasures in the ways prescribed by Him and His messenger,
- Our (belief) is based on the *Aqidah* of the Sunnis subscribed by the *Salafus Solih* (pious predecessors),
- Our understanding of Islam is comprehensive based on the understanding of *Salafus Solih*,
- Our objective is to make man submit only to Allah by resorting to *Khalifah* (Caliphate) on earth,
- Our is Imam (faith), *Hijrah* (migration) and *Jihad Fie Sabillah* (Jihad in the cause of Allah),
- Our resources are: knowledge and *taqwa* (piety), confidence and *tawakkal* (resign to the will of Allah), thankfulness and perseverance, leading *zuhud* (renunciation of worldly life and pleasures and giving priority to the 'hereafter'), and *Jihad Fie Sabilillah* and martyrdom,
- Our love is for Allah, the messenger and the faithful,
- Our enemies are Satan and evil men,
- Our *Jama'ah* is bound by the unanimity of objective, *Aqiah* and understanding of Islam, and,
- Our practice of Islam is pure and total, starting from the *Jama'ah* followed by *Daulah* and *Khalifah*.⁴

Organisational Structure and Leadership

The JI has a charter and an operating manual called 'Pedoman Umum Perjuangan al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyyat' (PUPJI) (JI's Constitution), which outlines religious principles and administrative aspects that specify the JI's primary objectives. The structure of the JI is based on a *Shura* (governing) Council, which meets secretly to take important decisions. Heading the Shura Council is an *Amir* who stands at the apex of the JI's hierarchy, appoints and presides over governing, religious, fatwa and disciplinary councils.⁵ He is guided by members of the Regional Shura or the Regional Shura Council. Next in the line is the *Amir Bitona*, or the Emergency Amir. According to noted Southeast Asian expert on terrorism, Bilveer Singh, this post was created as the JI is banned by Indonesia and anyone associated with it can be arrested and funds of the outfit are frozen.⁶

For the functioning of the JI, the region has been divided into four territorial divisions. Known as *mantiqis* (zones) that cover Peninsular Malaysia, Singapore, Java; Mindanao, Sabah, Sulawesi, Australia and Papua. Later, it was scaled down to three *mantiqis*, wherein the responsibility for training was assigned to the Philippines, funds to Malaysia and Singapore and operations to Indonesia.⁷ However, an earlier report said that *mantiqi* structure of the JI was abolished as a result of various counter-terrorism operations against this group.⁸

Tasked by the JI's Central Executive Council to wage an armed Jihad against the 'infidels' to achieve the JI's objectives, each *mantiqi* is divided into different districts. It has its own consultative council called the Majlis Shura. The PUPJI outlines the three phases of Jihad: *iman* (path of individuals), *hijrah* (building a base of operation) and Jihad *qital* (fighting the enemies of Jihad). According to Zachary Abuza's study on terrorism, "this organisational structure was adopted from a Hezbollah model of social organisation in which most of the group's activities are overt charitable work and even while provision of social services is a component of the organisation, it pursues

terrorism clandestinely.”⁹

Available reports indicate that the JI has adopted a centralised structure that covers the following functional groups:-

- Dakwah (Islamic proselytization and outreach)
- Education
- Logistics or Economics
- Information or Media
- Military Affairs

The current Amir of the JI is Abu Rusydan, who took over in October 2002 following Abu Bakar's Ba'asyir arrest, while Para Wijanto is Amir Bitona or the Emergency Amir. He is closely associated with senior JI leaders. He hails from Kudus and got training in Mindanao, South Philippines. Wijanto was sentenced by a Jakarta court to seven years in jail in July 2020 for his role in recruiting, training and raising funds for Indonesian militants going to Syria. He is by profession a civil engineer. He joined the JI and headed the intelligence of the outfit. He received military training at a jihadi camp in the southern Philippines in 2000, was also involved in the sectarian conflict in Poso, which is known as a hotbed of Islamic militancy in Indonesia's Sulawesi Island. He also served as the Amir of the JI because of 'his capability and a dedicated Islamic fighter'.

Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, one of the founders of JI, later renounced violence. He was sentenced to 15 years in jail in June 2011 but that was reduced to nine years. Ba'asyir previously served two prison sentences from September 2003 to April 2004 and March 2005 to June 2006 for conspiracy in the 2002 Bali bombings. Muhammad Khoirul Aman, or Ustad Batar is the head of JI military wing. He was arrested in 2017. Sofyan Tsaur was instrumental in setting up a military training camp for recruits in Aceh in 2010 and arranging for arms for the trainees.

Chief of Operations, Riduan Isamuddin, also known as Hambali, was

arrested in Thailand in 2003, and was put in US custody in Guantanamo. A member of Al Qaeda who brought both the JI and Al Qaeda closer to each other, Hambali was instrumental in arranging for JI members to receive training in Al Qaeda camps in Afghanistan and was responsible for establishing a network of militant cells across Southeast Asia in the 1990's. He was a close associate of Ramzi Yousef in his involvement in the attack on the World Trade Center on February 26, 1993 and planning a coordinated bombing campaign against 12 American commercial flights from Asia to the West Coast of the United States in January 1995.

Azhar Husin was a bomb maker for the group who was suspected of planning several attacks in the early 2000's. He was killed during a police raid in 2005. Mohammed Noordin Top-Top allegedly led a faction of the JI that was responsible for several attacks in the early 2000's. He was killed in a police raid in September 2009. Abu Jibril, aka Mohammad Iqbal Abdurrahman, was the JI's second in-command and its primary recruiter. He was arrested in Malaysia in June 2001. Taufik Bulga, alias Upik Lawanga, was key plotter in the Bali bombings, was arrested by the police in November 2020. Zarkash Zarkash was an Amir of the JI until his arrest by Indonesian police in 2007. In April 2008, he was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment. Aris Sumarsono, also known as Zulkarnaen, was involved in bombings as well as the suicide bomb attack on Jakarta's Marriott Hotel that killed 12 people in 2003. He was also arrested in December 2020. Fathur Rohman Al-Ghozi is an explosives expert who received military training at an al-Qaeda camp on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.¹⁰

Cadre and Training

According to the Indonesian police, the approximate strength of the JI is 6,000, besides supporters and sympathisers. It continues to recruit covertly from its network of 50 Islamic boarding schools set up especially for this purpose. The recruitment is also done through study groups, target recruitments in university campuses and through personal contacts. The outfit has also

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

targeted some jails where detained JI members have been able to proselytise fellow prisoners to join the group.

With his organisational skills, the co-founder of the JI, Al Nakhlah, was also able to establish a good rapport with Mujahideen leaders in Afghanistan. According to him, Sungkar had started sending recruits long before the birth of the JI to a camp run by Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, a Mujahideen leader. Due to restrictions caused by Covid 19, much of the recruitment is being done on social media. Most of the camps are located in secret sites in Central Java, where terrorists are trained to handle weapons and how to assemble bombs. In its efforts to capture the terrorists who had killed four members of a Christian family in a remote village in Central Sulawesi in November 2020, the counter-terrorism squad 'Densus 88' of Indonesian Police raided many sites in Central Java and discovered 12 training camps.

Interestingly, one of the camps located at a two-story house in Gintungan village in Semarang Regency in Central Java had been in existence since 2011, where 96 young recruits underwent six months of arms training. Out of 96 recruits, 66 were sent to Syria to fight alongside the Jabhat al-Nusra, an Al Qaeda offshoot, while the rest 30 were captured by the Indonesian police. Investigations made by the Indonesian police reveal that the recruits were sent to Syria to get trained to deploy firearms - rifles and guns - and to assemble bombs. This training cost the JI 65 million Rupiah (S\$6,090) a month for accommodation, trainers' fees and medication. To send a batch of 10 to 12 trainees to Syria, the cost of around 300 million Rupiah was sourced from charity funds, or collected from the network's 6,000 active JI members.¹¹

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JAMAAT-UL-MUJAHIDEEN BANGLADESH

Introduction

Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) means 'Assembly of Holy Warriors'. It is a terrorist organisation active in Bangladesh and poses a continuous threat to the state. Although the exact date of the establishment of the JMB is still not specific, it was reported to have been formed in 1998 in the Jamalpur district.¹ The JMB's first militant existence came to light on May 20, 2002, with the arrest of eight JMB members in possession of 25 petrol bombs at Parbatipur in Dinajpur district.²

The JMB was banned on February 23, 2005, by the Bangladesh government of Prime Minister Khalida Zia of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) under pressure from the then opposition Awami League (AL) and other secularists in Bangladesh.³ Although the government claims that the group has become weak after it was proscribed in February 2005, the JMB has been attempting to expand and reorganise in the hinterlands of Bangladesh.

Background

It is argued that Bangladesh could not save itself from the collateral damage of the Afghan War in the 1990s that was a milestone in emergence of numerous radical groups. A common slogan doing the rounds on the streets of Bangladesh was "*Amrasobai hobo Taliban, Bangla Hobe Afghanistan*", meaning that 'We will all become Taliban and turn Bangladesh into Afghanistan'.⁴ Such slogans came with the radicals who had gone from Bangladesh to Afghanistan to wage a jihad. These individuals formed groups, which became breeding grounds for terror outfits in the 1990s. Poet Humayun Azad was the first victim of the JMB in 2004. The main objective of the militant group is to establish a separate Islamic state and implement Sharia law in the country. As per the University of Maryland's Global Terrorism Database (GTD), between March 1986 and December 2014, 1,049 terrorist attacks took place in Bangladesh.⁵

Influenced by the ideas and practices of the Salafist movement in Bangladesh, known as the Ahle Hadith Andolan Bangladesh (AHAB), the JMB was deeply involved in terrorism.⁶ Influenced by Salafist ideology, the AHAB provides academic support to the JMB.

After fading from the government's radar in 2005, the JMB was alleged to have formed a nexus with fundamentalists in the government and an Islamic cleric of the Deobandi School, Abdur Rehman. Rehman had devised a two-point plan to fulfil his goals. One was to send JMB cadres to various parts of the country for *Da'wah* (or religious preaching, similar to Tabliq e-Jamaat). This was followed by the second, when he tried to garner support from influential personalities of the country who subscribed to his readings of Islam and Jihad. The present Bangladesh establishment cracks down on JMB associates and its kingpins, but its efforts are not enough.⁷ There is a need to build a comprehensive mechanism to track financial transactions made by various JMB sympathisers and those involved in monetary transactions with the JMB.

Objectives and Ideology

The JMB calls for the establishment of Sharia law (Islamic tradition) in the country. As per one of the leaflets confiscated by the police in 2005, it explains: 'We're the soldiers of Allah. We've taken up arms to implement Allah's law the way Prophet, *Sahabis* (companions of the Prophet) and heroic *Mujahideen* (holy fighters) have done for centuries. We want to earn the Almighty's satisfaction by establishing *Khalis Tauhid* (pure monotheism) by putting an end to *bida't* (activities not allowed as per Quran or Hadith) and making the people happy in the world here and hereafter. If the government does not enforce Islamic laws in the country after this (third) warning, arrests any Muslim on the charge of seeking Allah's laws, or resorts to repression on Alem-Ulema, [religious scholars], the JMB would go for counter-action.'⁸

The leaflet also asked security forces to obey Sharia law instead of the national laws under the constitution. It also demanded the establishment of Islamic Sharia law to earn the blessings of Allah.⁹

Modus Operandi

According to the JMB, the main enemies of Islam in Bangladesh are democratic institutions, secular values, independent judiciary, the intellectuals, peace rallies and cultural organisations. For the JMB, democratic and secular organisations, such as leftist ones, promote non-Islamic values.

Although his ideology did not lead him to trigger a global jihad, Rahman shared the same approach with other radical Islamist groups, that of establishing Quranic law against man-made law.¹⁰

The JMB bought weapons and explosives from terrorist groups in Pakistan, Myanmar, Thailand and China, which were infiltrated into the country by land and sea.¹¹ Analysts from Bangladesh categorise the JMB into neo-JMB and old JMB based on their modus operandi. While the old JMB relies heavily on bombs and detonators, the neo-JMB cadres have been

found using all sorts of weapons, from knives and small arms to sophisticated weapons like improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Neo-JMB has also been using cyber terrorism over the past few years.

Structure and Leadership

The JMB has a three-tier organisation. The first tier comprises active members called Ehsar; the second tier is the Gayeri Ehsar, which has part-time activists numbering more than one lakh. Finally, the third tier consists of divisional leaders spread across nine divisions.¹²

Though between Ansar Ali Hriday and Maulana Saidur Rahman, there is some ambiguity about the actual leader of the JMB, after the death of the outfit's six senior terrorist leaders in March 2007, Maulana Saidur Rahman is considered to be its main controller. The Majlis-e-Shura is the decision-making body of the JMB. The JMB also has a suicide squad and is reportedly building a women's wing to work as intelligence agents.¹³

Networks and Alliances

JMB has a large and influential network base of similar objectives and ideologies. Most important of these are the Jammāt e-Islami (JeI), Harkat-ul Jihad al-Islam-Bangladesh (HuJI-B), Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) and Ahle Hadith Andolan Bangladesh (AHAB). The strong bond between the JeI and JMB has played a crucial role in protecting the JMB movement between 2001 and 2007. It is also true that both the prominent leaders of the JMB, Abdur Rahman and the Bangla Bhai (both executed in 2007 by court order), were active members of the JeI.¹⁴

The JeI provided cover to the JMB and provided them with recruits. The JMB used JeI to train its cadre as part of their agreement. A vital fact which strengthened the JMB's position with the BNP-led government in the early 2000s was the common goal of suppressing the Communist movement in Bangladesh. On the international arena, the JMB shares links with Al Qaeda as

many leaders from both hierarchies have fought alongside in the Afghan War. Other international associates include the Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO) and Al Harmain (front organisation of Al Qaeda, banned in many countries).¹⁵

The JMB resurrected in the form of three separate factions after years of dormancy. The first was the old JMB, which was managed by Saidur Rahman, while he was still in prison through his son, Abu Talha, who was also arrested in July 2015. The second faction was run by Salahuddin and Zahidul Islam, which operated out of India. However, they were ousted through a counter-terrorism operation in 2014. Later, both factions fused and ran under the leadership of Saidur Rahman. However, the Islamic State encouraged the third faction, one which carried out the Holey Artisan Bakery attack in Dhaka in 2016, which posed a direct threat to India and the region.

Funding and Recruitment

As per one media report, JMB chief Rahman shared that the group needs around 10,000 USD per month to maintain regular communication with full time and part-time members.¹⁶ The group leader also mentioned that approximately 121,951 to 609,756 USD is required to procure and maintain explosives and weapons apart from 560 USD, which it uses to keep its regional networks active.¹⁷

Initially, the JMB relied on donations from its supporters like Shuras, Gayeri Ehsars. It later began to raise funds in the form of '*zakat*'. It is believed that a large sum of the JMB's funds come from donations made by some top traders.¹⁸ The JMB also raises its funds through investments by running small businesses like shrimp farms and cold storage houses in southwestern Bangladesh. It also reportedly receives funds from Kuwait, UAE, Pakistan, Libya, and Saudi Arabia through the hawala channel.

JMB chief Abdur Rahman's international connections are spread over

a few Islamic countries, and, therefore, Non-Government Organisations (NGO), like Revival of Islamic Heritage and Doulatul Kuwait, Al Fuzaira and Khairul Ansar al Khairia, which are UAE based, along with the Saudi Arabia-based Al Haramaine Islamic Institute, have been providing financial support to the JMB leadership.

Another source of funding for the group are madrassa students, who collect tolls regularly for running the outfit.¹⁹

The JMB also receives enormous money from its supporters in the US, Canada, Australia, and England. In addition, a system of '*Hundi*' (informal banking system, functions illegally) exists in Bangladesh. Money is sent to family members of people working in Middle Eastern countries through human couriers, which goes to the JMB. Bangladesh security analysts believe that the JMB supports the Pakistani terrorist organisation Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT). It is suspected that many donors from the Middle East and Persian Gulf countries are also providing financial assistance.²⁰ In addition to such sources, the JMB has also been caught printing Fake Indian Currency Notes (FICN). Many analysts believe that Pakistan's spy agency, the ISI, provides FICN to fan the armed conflicts in India and Bangladesh.²¹

For recruitment, the JMB relies on three sources: Ehsars, which targets a Madrasa run by Ahle Hadith. But over time, they have set up their own JMB Madrasas in four parts of Bangladesh. In addition to the madrassas, the JMB also approaches other radical Islamic organisations like the JeI and the Islamic Chhatra Shibir (ICS). The JMB also uses family ties for recruitment, including members of leaders, who join the JMB. However, JMB members prefer to marry within a group and consider marriage within a family that hires them. It has been said that the JMB also has a women wing whose mission is to teach and preach from the Quran and to encourage their male family members to join the JMB. There have been some significant changes to the recruitment system since the crackdown. There is now less emphasis on open da'wah sessions for fear of infiltration and more attention is being paid to four JMB training madrassas in Khulna, Jamalpur, Naogaon and Dhaka.²²

A few experts highlight the JMB's present spotlight on elite schools and universities as proof of changes in the recruitment structure. Indeed, the JMB has been focusing on such schools for as long as a decade and a considerable lot of its senior chiefs have been going to universities since moving on from the madrassa.²³

Current Status

Early in 2021, the Special Task Force (STF) arrested top JMB leader Ansar Ali Hriday for terror financing and sending funds to sleeper cells in India. The STF arrested three JMB members, Naziur Rahman Pavel, Mekail Khan and Rabiul Islam, who were illegally residing on the outskirts of Kolkata.²⁴

Islamic terror groups in Bangladesh are spilling over into the neighbouring region and challenging the security apparatus there. The JMB's new faction, Neo-JMB, is on the rise, especially along the India-Bangladesh border. It is assessed that the Neo-JMB has gained the support of the Islamic State (IS). The new members in the group are educated and come from affluent families. It also has several women in the group. In another report by the Government of India, attempts are being made by Neo-JMB to create a women brigade in Assam on the lines of one in Bangladesh. Asmani Khatun is supposedly commander-in-chief of the women's wing.²⁵ However, early in 2020, Counterterrorism officials arrested Asmani Khatun in Dhaka, Bangladesh.²⁶

During the COVID lockdown in 2020, security agencies witnessed efforts being made by Neo-JMB to stretch its tentacles in the region, and trying to become a part of the Tablighi Jamaat.²⁷ The Neo-JMB utilises its networks in Assam and north Bengal created years ago. According to Union Minister G. Krishna Reddy, around 59 members of JMB were arrested in Assam between 2014 and 2019.²⁸

On March 26 2019, the ATS of the Bihar Police detained two men, allegedly associated with the JMB and IS Bangladesh (ISBD). They had Islamic State posters and documentation in their possession, relating to the deputation of central forces in Jammu and Kashmir.²⁹

There has been a spurt of events post the US withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021, when few JMB members crossed over to India and joined the Taliban in the hope to bring the movement to Bangladesh.³⁰

There is a trend in militant recruitment due to the perception of surrendered individuals experiencing marginalisation from the political mainstream, which has pushed members towards militant groups. This has already been reflected in the reportedly growing numbers of activists from the Islamic Chhatra Shibir (ICS), the JeI's student wing, joining groups like the Neo-JMB. A focus on petrol bombs and cold weapon attacks, which student groups are known to engage in, may take precedence over more sophisticated suicide bombing plots in the future as a result.³¹

However, there have been multiple arrests in 2021; on July 11, 2021, a CTTC unit arrested 'Major' Osama, aka Nayeem, a member of the Neo-JMB' military wing,' from a house in the Madanpur area of Narayanganj District. On August 1, 2021, a Special Action Group (SAG) team arrested two Neo-JMB cadres, identified as Shafiqur Rahman Ridoy aka Baitullah Mehsud aka Captain Khattab and Khalid Hossain Bhuiyan, aka Afnan, from the Jatrabari area of Dhaka city. On August 10, 2021, the Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit arrested three Neo-JMB cadres from the Kafrul area of Dhaka. On September 4, 2021, the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) arrested four Neo-Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (Neo-JMB) cadres following an exchange of fire in Mymensingh District. RAB recovered arms and ammunition from their possession during the operation.³² There have been many more such arrests in the year 2021, which indicates that the new faction of JMB is making all attempts at re-establishing its control, but is constantly being challenged by the Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC). However, Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Commissioner Shafiqul Islam stated that the Taliban capture of Afghanistan had revived the emotions of the militants to wage a jihad, indicating that the group remains a crucial threat to Bangladesh and the region well.³³

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

Therefore, along with the military operations, there is a need to strengthen radical counter-narratives to terminate ideological influences.

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JUNDULLAH

Introduction

The *Jundullah* (Army of God) was formed in March 2003 by Sheikh Atta-ur-Rehman, a member of the *Islami Jamiat-e-Taliba*, which is the student-wing of the Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan. The group was formed as an Al Qaeda affiliate to carry out violent terror attacks in pursuit of both groups' Islamist agendas.

Background

The Jundullah of Karachi was created primarily as an affiliate of Al Qaeda (AQ) and the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) by Sheikh Atta-ur-Rehman, following the arrests of several prominent AQ leaders, notably that of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the mastermind behind 9/11, in March 2003. Rehman, a prominent member of the student wing of Pakistan's Islamist political party, the Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan, created this outfit in order to carry out further terrorist attacks, primarily targeting westerners in Pakistan, besides the Pakistan military and government, who were seen as sympathisers of the West in the War on Terror. Since its establishment, this outfit has remained concentrated around Karachi.

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

In its initial days, the Jundullah was a tightly-knit group with a force of around 20 cadres.¹ It shot to prominence in June 2004, when it ambushed the convoy of Lt. Gen. Ahsan Saleem Hayat, a top army commander in Karachi, in a bid to assassinate him. While their primary target, Lt. Gen. Hayat, survived, the attack claimed 11 deaths, including a colonel and some personnel of the army and police forces. The group carried out various other attacks after this as well, notably a number of bomb blasts at targets such as the US Consulate in Karachi, the Pakistan-American Cultural Centre, at a concert hall where Indian singer Sonu Nigam was performing, and at a Bible Society, among several others.²

Following these terror attacks, Pakistan law-enforcement agencies decided to crack down on the Jundullah, and managed to drive it out of Karachi towards Waziristan. However, in 2007-08, the group returned to Karachi and resumed its operations.³ One of its notable attacks was on a Muharram procession in Karachi, which killed over 45 people.⁴ Further, in 2015, the group was implicated in the deadly bomb blast at Shikarpur Imambargah, a prominent Shi'ite Mosque in Sind province, which killed over 60 people. Notably, in 2014, Jundullah, which was initially an affiliate of Al Qaeda and TTP, pledged allegiance to the terrorist group *Da'esh*, also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). This stance was taken following a meeting between Jundullah members and a delegation of *Da'esh* who had travelled to Pakistan from Syria.⁵

The founder and *Amir* (chief) of Jundullah, Atta-ur-Rahman, was arrested in June 2004. He was awarded the death sentence by the Anti-Terrorism Court in Karachi, and remains imprisoned till date. He has appealed against his death sentence.

Objectives and Ideology

The Jundullah is an Islamist jihadist outfit, which has been affiliated to Sunni Wahhabi terrorist outfits like Al Qaeda and *Da'esh* (Islamic State, IS). It is opposed to the western world and its presence in Pakistan and while it aims at

western targets, it also goes after the Pakistani Army and government, which it deems to be colluding with the West. In line with its extremist Sunni Wahhabi ideology, the Jundullah also targets non-Muslims, notably Christians, as well as Shia Muslims in Pakistan. It aims to wage *jihad* (holy war) against non-Muslims and ‘apostate’ Muslims and to promulgate the strict imposition of the *Sharia* law (Islamic religious law).⁶

The Jundullah can be seen as an affiliate, front or operator for groups such as the TTP, Al Qaeda and Da’esh in Pakistan. It thus plays the role of a ‘smoke-screen to take the heat away from parent organisations’ and to allow proscribed groups to evade authorities while being able to carry out their terrorist operations.⁷

Modus Operandi

The Jundullah uses violent means to carry out its terrorist agenda, attacking western, Shia, Christian and government targets in Pakistan. It carries out bold attacks, usually in the form of bombings in public places to inflict mass casualties. It targets important leaders, places of worship (including Christian congregations and Shia mosques), diplomatic sites (like the US Consulate) and other such targets, which allows the group to steal the limelight and spread terror. It acts as a contractor of sorts for groups like Al Qaeda, carrying out attacks on their behalf.⁸

Leadership

Atta-ur-Rehman alias Umer alias Ebrahim alias Zubair: He was a member of the Islami Jamiat-e-Taliba, which is the student wing of the Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan. He has a Masters in Statistics from Karachi University. He has also received militant training in Afghanistan in 1991⁹ in camps run by the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen¹⁰, which laid the roots for his career in terrorism. Following the post-9/11 crackdown on Al Qaeda leaders in Pakistan, Rehman founded the Jundullah as an AQ affiliate. He was arrested in June 2004 for his involvement in the attack on Lt. Gen. Hayat’s convoy and a Karachi Anti-Terrorism Court sentenced him to death.

Shahzad Bajwa alias Abdullah: He was Atta-ur-Rehman's deputy; he was injured in 2004 while attacking a Pakistan Rangers van.¹¹

Mohammed Qasim Toori alias Hamza: Toori is a former policeman of Karachi, who was dismissed from service following his involvement in the sexual abuse of a minor boy. Following his dismissal, he took up arms and joined the Jundullah.¹² He took over the leadership of the outfit as Rehman's successor after the latter's arrest. Toori was arrested by the Pakistani authorities in January 2008 for his involvement in the 2004 attack on Lt. Gen. Hayat's convoy, and was also awarded the death sentence by the Anti-Terrorism Court.¹³

Hamza Joofi alias Haji Mumtaz: Joofi, a member of Al Qaeda, took over the leadership of the Jundullah from Toori following the latter's arrest in 2008. He was killed in August 2011 by a US drone strike.¹⁴

Arif alias Raza alias Hyder: Arif led Jundullah alongside Hamza Joofi, as Amir. He was also killed along with Joofi in 2011.¹⁵

Fasihur Rahman: As per Karachi Police, Fasihur Rahman is the mastermind behind Jundullah's operations and has pioneered the technique of filling explosives into cement blocks, which are then remotely detonated. He has been implicated in various terrorist attacks in Karachi.¹⁶

Akmal Waheed and Arshad Waheed: The Waheed brothers (Akmal Waheed is a cardiologist and Arshad Waheed is an orthopaedic surgeon) were both members of Jamaat-e-Islami and its medical wing, the Pakistan Islamic Medical Association. They were both close collaborators with the Jundullah and Al Qaeda. They have been accused of providing shelter and medical assistance to Al Qaeda members who were injured in the 2004 attack on Lt. Gen. Hayat's convoy, as well as to Shahzad Bajwa. They were also suspected of treating Osama bin Laden for a kidney ailment.¹⁷ They were apprehended by the authorities after their close links to Atta-ur-Rehman were discovered during an investigation. While they were sentenced to seven years'

imprisonment, they were later acquitted by an appellate court. Following their release, Arshad Waheed went to South Waziristan and continued his medical practice there until he was killed in 2008 by a US drone strike. Al Sahab Media Foundation, which is Al Qaeda's media wing, went on to release a video wherein Mustafa Abu Yazid, then-chief operational commander of Al Qaeda, commemorated Arshad Waheed as a martyr.^{18 19}

Cadre Strength

Jundullah initially started off as a tightly-knit group with a strength of around 20, most of whom were veterans of the anti-Soviet Afghan Jihad. It is estimated that presently it does not have more than 100 cadres. Most of the cadres are fighters hailing from various areas of Karachi who were inspired to take up arms by Al Qaeda. The outfit also consists of women who assist in operations and in the collection of funds.²⁰

Network

Since its inception, the group has been closely affiliated to Al Qaeda and the TTP. However, the TTP denies any links with Jundullah. In 2014, after a delegation from Syria representing Da'esh met with members of Jundullah in Balochistan Province (Pakistan), the latter declared its allegiance to Da'esh.²¹ It is now believed that Jundullah acts as a front or a contractor for Al Qaeda and Da'esh.

Sources of Funding

In its initial days, Jundullah relied on criminal and proxy activities to raise funds such as bank robberies and kidnappings. A portion of the amount looted by the group would be sent to Hamza Joofi of Al Qaeda, who would procure smuggled arms for the outfit through South Waziristan.

Current Status

Jundullah of Karachi is in a state of decline at present. After multiple security crackdowns by Pakistan authorities, the group's cadre and leadership have been targeted with arrests and encounters. While its prominent leaders such as Atta-ur-Rehman and Mohammed Qasim Toori have been imprisoned, others like Hamza Joofi and Arshad Waheed have been killed. The constant surveillance by Pakistani authorities has posed a hindrance to the outfit's fundraising by robberies²². While it has not carried out many high-profile attacks in recent years, it remains to be seen whether it will resurface, and whether its alliance with Da'esh will reap any advantages.

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TEHREEK-E-LABBAIK PAKISTAN

Introduction

The Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) is an Islamist extremist political party of Pakistan belonging to the Barelvi Sunni School of Thought. The TLP has become notorious over the years through its nationwide protests and riots that have brought the Pakistani government to its knees on multiple occasions. The group is a strong proponent of Pakistan's blasphemy laws, while also demanding the imposition of *Sharia* law (Islamic religious law) across the country.

Background

The roots of the TLP lie in an infamous blasphemy case in Pakistan, known as the Asia Bibi Case. In 2009, Asia Bibi, a Christian woman belonging to Sheikhupura, Punjab Province, allegedly consumed water from a well which was used by Muslims, which caused outrage among some Muslim locals, following which Asia Bibi also made statements which were deemed to be derogatory and blasphemous. She was subsequently arrested, and in 2010, the Pakistan Supreme Court found her guilty of blasphemy and sentenced her to

death. However, several prominent figures in Pakistan publicly defended Asia Bibi and opposed the blasphemy law. Among these was Salmaan Taseer, the then Governor of Punjab Province. For his vocal opposition to the blasphemy laws, Taseer was assassinated in January 2011 by Malik Mumtaz Hussein Qadri, who was otherwise a member of the former's security team. Qadri was arrested and tried for Taseer's murder, and on being found guilty, was finally hanged in February 2016.

While Qadri was still alive and imprisoned, Khadim Rizvi, a government-appointed cleric at a Lahore mosque, began the Tehreek-e-Rihai Ghazi Mumtaz Qadri (Movement to Free Mumtaz Qadri)¹ to protest Qadri's imprisonment and support Pakistan's blasphemy law. This movement was joined by a number of Barelvi groups as well. Following Qadri's execution in 2016, many of these groups decided to exit the movement. However, many radical Barelvi clerics remained and under the leadership of Khadim Rizvi, they morphed the movement into the *Tehreek Labbaik Ya Rasool Allah* (TLY), which increasingly took to violent militant activity and large-scale rallies. The TLY was found to engage in violent attacks against non-Muslim communities and the rival Deobandi community, which finally prompted Pakistan's intelligence agencies to begin actively monitoring the activities of the TLY. The group also engaged in disruptive and aggressive activism in favour of the blasphemy laws.²

One of the initial actions which shot the TLY to prominence was right after Mumtaz Qadri's execution, when the TLY organised a sit-in demonstration in Islamabad, which was attended by around 2,000 protestors. The demands of the protestors were that Qadri be recognised as a 'martyr' by the government and that non-Muslims and Ahmediyyas should be expelled from important government posts. The government came to a compromise deal by promising there would be no amendments to the blasphemy law and by withdrawing cases against the protestors.³

The next major action of the TLY was in 2017, when it paralysed Rawalpindi after an electoral law was changed, turning a religious oath into a

mere declaration. The government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, without the support of the Pakistan Army, was unable to disperse the protest, and was forced to compromise again. This time, the government had to once again withdraw cases against the protestors, pay for the property damage caused, and made the Law Minister of the country resign.⁴

With the hugely successful actions of the TLY, the organisation decided to enter into mainstream politics, which led to the creation of the *Tehreek-e-Labbaik* (TLP), as the political wing of the organisation.

An interesting feature of the TLP is the support it enjoys across the sectarian spectrum. Despite its Barelvi Sunni identity, the group has received support from various Shia and Sunni groups (both Barelvi and Deobandi alike) for its radical Islamist stance on blasphemy. In fact, when the TLP founder, Khadim Rizvi, unexpectedly died in November 2020, the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), a major Deobandi terrorist group, offered a public condolence message in which it hailed Rizvi's efforts in upholding the blasphemy laws.⁵ This is significant because the sectarian rivalry between Deobandis and Barelvis usually precludes such gestures of support, as is evident from the large-scale violence between groups such as Sunni Tehreek (a Barelvi group) and Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (a Deobandi group). At the same time, several prominent Barelvi parties like the Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan (JUP) and Dawat-e-Islami have looked unfavourably upon the hard-line ideology and aggressive politics of the TLY and TLP.⁶

In 2018, the TLP contested the Pakistani general elections, fielding nearly 750 candidates, and even won two seats in Sindh Province, while emerging as the fifth-largest party. This was significant given that the group had newly entered into the realm of electoral politics. At the same time, the group openly continued to defy the state authority. In 2018, the Pakistan Supreme Court acquitted Asia Bibi in the blasphemy case, following which TLP co-founder Muhammed Afzal Qadri proclaimed that the Supreme Court judges responsible for the judgement deserved death, and even called for the overthrow of Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed

Bajwa, which was a rare expression of dissent against the Pakistan Army.

2020-21 was a watershed year for the TLP. In October 2020, the French satirical magazine, *Charlie Hebdo*, decided to republish the cartoons featuring Prophet Muhammed, which had led to the 2015 terrorist attack in their office in Paris. The TLP decried these cartoons as blasphemous and, following French President Emmanuel Macron's public support for the Charlie Hebdo decision, demanded a severance of Pakistan's diplomatic ties with France. From November 2020 onwards, the TLP had conducted mass protests demanding the expulsion of the French Ambassador to Pakistan and the complete boycott of French goods in the country. Khadim Rizvi led a rally of around 5,000 protestors chanting anti-France slogans. Finally, the government was brought to its knees once again, and the Pakistan government made an announcement that it was willing to consider and deliberate upon the demands of the TLP. In response, the TLP called off its protests. Meanwhile, in November 2020, Khadim Rizvi's son, Saad Rizvi, took over the leadership of the party.⁷

In April 2021, Saad Rizvi broadcast a video message, asking TLP workers to be ready for a protest march if the government did not meet the TLP-imposed deadline of 20 April to meet its demands. In response, Rizvi was arrested on 12 April. This led to the TLP calling for nation-wide protests, with large sit-in demonstrations in important cities, blocking highways and railways, and engaging in violent clashes with the police.⁸ There was significant unrest across Pakistan for three days, with public property being vandalised and two people (including one policeman) being killed in the violence.⁹ As the government was being held hostage by the TLP, Interior Affairs Minister, Sheikh Rashid Ahmed announced that the TLP was being banned under Pakistan's Anti-Terrorism Act, 1997.¹⁰ However, despite being banned as a terrorist group, the TLP was permitted to contest a by-election in Karachi on 29 April, in which it outshone the ruling party, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf, and came in third place overall.¹¹

Ideology and Objectives

The TLP is a Bareilvi Sunni Islamist outfit with a radical ideology. More than its Bareilvi identity, the group has recently emphasised on its Islamist identity, particularly with regard to the issue of blasphemy. It has carried out multiple protests, rallies and riots in cases of blasphemy, where it has aggressively opposed changes and criticisms of Pakistan's blasphemy law, and has even tried to get the Pakistan government to cut off diplomatic ties with France after the French President made statements deemed blasphemous by the TLP. The group advocates for the imposition of Sharia law in Pakistan and is strongly opposed to the representation of the non-Muslim and Ahmediyya communities in government posts.

Modus Operandi

While the TLP's parent organisation, the TLY, was known to indulge in some attacks against rival Deobandi groups, neither the TLP nor TLY have been known to actively take up arms yet. Thus, while the TLP has been proscribed as a terrorist organisation, it is not truly militant at present.

However, the TLP actively uses disruptive tactics pioneered by the TLY to get the government to meet its demands. Large-scale protests which paralyse normal life in large cities, coupled with blockades of important transportation routes and violent rioting, all lead to large-scale instability, which has caused the government to capitulate on numerous occasions. The group has also tried to mobilise political power to meet its objectives, both by acting as a pressure group—by getting the executive and legislature to concede to its demands—and by itself entering mainstream electoral politics in the country. Despite being very new to electoral politics, the TLP has done very well for itself, winning two seats in the Sindh Provincial Assembly and also performing very well in the Karachi by-elections in April 2021.

Areas of Operation

The TLP's headquarters are located in Lahore, Punjab. It has been electorally active in Sindh and Punjab, where it has achieved much success recently. Most of the group's disruptive actions take place in major cities, primarily in Islamabad, the capital of the country, and in Rawalpindi, where the Pakistan military's General Headquarters (GHQ) are located.

Leadership

The present *Amir* (chief) of the TLP is Saad Rizvi, son of Khadim Hussain Rizvi, the founder and first amir of the group.

Khadim Rizvi was a Barelvi cleric at a Lahore Mosque and founded the Tehreek-e-Rihai Ghazi Mumtaz Qadri, which eventually evolved into the TLY, whose political wing is the TLP. Along with Khadim Rizvi, the other co-founders of TLY are Dr. Asif Ashraf Jalali, Pir Afzal Qadri, and Pir Irfan Shah Mash'hadi, all of whom are Punjab-based clerics.¹²

Current Status

At present, the TLP is the dominant political face of radical extremist Islamism in Pakistan. While it has not yet resorted to taking up arms like most other extremist groups in the country, it has instead mastered the art of disruptive demonstrations, and has rapidly consolidated electoral power in the country. Despite being very new to the political sphere, it has already emerged as a serious competitor to mainstream Pakistani parties such as Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (the ruling party of PM Imran Khan), the Pakistan People's Party (from which former prime ministers Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Benazir Bhutto hailed), and the Pakistan Muslim League (N) (the party of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif).

Like most other radical Islamists, the TLP faces no serious opposition from the Pakistani government or army. While the government has caved in to

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

most of the group's demands, the army has, on multiple occasions, refused to intervene on behalf of the government to reign in the TLP's demonstrations. Even after being banned as a terrorist outfit, the TLP has been permitted to run for elections, which speaks volumes of how serious the government is about acting against it. In an increasingly polarised Pakistan, where sectarian violence, radical Islam and violent militancy continue to rise, a radical group like the TLP will find the ideal conditions to rise further. In the absence of the Pakistani establishment's political will to act against extremism, the TLP will find few obstacles that will seriously hinder its ascendancy.

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SIPAH-E-MOHAMMED PAKISTAN

Introduction

The *Sipah-e-Mohammed Pakistan* (SMP) is a Shi'ite Islamist terrorist outfit. It was formed in 1994, primarily to counter Sunni extremism against Shia Muslims, propagated mostly by Wahhabi groups like the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and the Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan.

Background

The Sipah-e-Mohammed (Soldiers of the Prophet) was formed as an offshoot of the Tehreek-e-Jafariya Pakistan (TJP). The Tehreek-e-Jafariya (formerly Tehreek Nifaz-e-Fiqah-e-Jafariya) is a Shia religious outfit that came into being in 1979 (the same year as the Islamic Revolution in Shi'ite Iran). The TJP aimed at spreading Shia religious ideals in Pakistan, while protecting the rights of the Shia minority and countering Sunni extremist organisations. It propagated the teachings of Ayatollah Khomeini, the leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution.¹

The SMP broke off from the TJP in 1993 because the latter was unwilling to allow Shia youth to take up arms against Sunni extremists such

as the Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) and the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ). Under Maulana Mureed Abbas Yazdani's leadership, the SMP came into being as a counterweight to Sunni and Wahabi extremist outfits. It is said that then Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari was coerced by Shia militants to lend his support to the SMP's formation.²

Following the SMP's inception, the 1990s saw much inter-sectarian violence in Pakistan. In 1990, Maulana Haq Nawaz Jhangvi, the founder of the SSP, was assassinated by the SMP, and in 1997, Zia-ur-Rehman Farooqi, the then-chief of SSP, was also assassinated in a bomb blast, in addition to 29 others. The SMP's spate of violence against prominent Sunnis and SSP leaders prompted the SSP to retaliate, targeting the SMP, Shia Muslims and Iranian diplomats and military personnel present in Pakistan.³

In 1996, the SMP faced internal rivalry, with one faction accusing Maulana Yazdani of being conciliatory to Sunni extremist outfits. The internal struggle came to a head when Maulana Yazdani was assassinated in September 1996 on the orders of rival faction commander, Ghulam Raza Naqvi. Naqvi succeeded Yazdani as SMP chief following this.⁴

Naqvi fortified the SMP headquarters at Thokar Niaz Beg, which is a village in Lahore. The village was firmly put in the SMP's control and entrance by security forces was very difficult. The SMP also expanded its violent activities, targeting bureaucrats and police officials. However, even as Naqvi was consolidating power and expanding the activities of the SMP, internal factionalism continued, which eventually forced him to flee the outfit's headquarters, leading to his arrest by Pakistani authorities in December 1996. It is believed that the SMP was radically weakened following Naqvi's capture and substantially reduced its footprint.⁵

In August 2001, the SMP was further weakened following the Pakistani government's ban on the outfit, which was accompanied by a swift security crackdown on the SMP (along with other sectarian groups like SSP and LeJ as well). SMP cadres were arrested on terrorism charges from various

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

strongholds of the outfit. Further, the outfit suffered from a lack of finances and training, which contributed to its declining power.⁶

Earlier that year, at a meeting of the Milli Yekjehti Council (MYC), the SMP had also declared a truce jointly with the SSP. The MYC had been formed by various religious groups in 1995 to resolve inter-sectarian differences. However, this truce did not last long, and in 2003, an SMP cadre assassinated SSP *Amir* (chief) Maulana Azam Tariq in Karachi.⁷

The SMP was implicated in around 250 cases of terrorism from 1993-2001⁸. However, following its internal rivalries, crises of leadership and the government crackdown, the SMP was severely weakened, and its activity has significantly reduced in the past two decades.

Ideology and Objectives

The SMP is a religious extremist outfit, which is ideologically aligned with the Shia sect of Islam and the teachings of Ayatollah Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The primary objective of the SMP is to protect the interests of Shia Muslims in Pakistan and to counter Sunni Wahhabi organisations like the SSP and LeJ through the use of force.

Modus Operandi

The SMP was created in order to mount armed opposition to Sunni extremist groups and it uses violence and terrorist actions to achieve its objectives. The outfit uses assassinations as an important tool in its fight against the SSP and LeJ, wherein the rival outfits' leaders are often targeted. Its cadres are trained in the use of assault rifles and explosives as well. Further, the group uses influential individuals such as university teachers to further spread sectarianism, while it uses extortion as a tool to obtain greater resources.

Sources of Funding

While extortion is one major source of funds for the SMP, it also relies on

influential individuals, businessmen etc. belonging to the Shia community in Pakistan. It is also alleged that the Iranian Shia regime provides support for the SMP's activities. It is reported that SMP cadres are imparted training within Iran's territory.

Leadership

Maulana Mureed Abbas Yazdani: He founded the SMP in 1993 by breaking away from the Tehreek-e-Jafariya, with the objective of taking up arms against Sunni Wahhabi extremists like the Sipah-e-Sahaba and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi. In 1996, internal rivalries and disagreements over Yazdani's policies towards the Sunni extremists led to his assassination at the hands of the faction of Ghulam Raza Naqvi.

Maulana Ghulam Raza Naqvi: Following Yazdani's assassination, Naqvi became the second chief of the SMP. His major contribution was in turning the SMP headquarters in Thokar Niaz Beg into a veritable fortress, which was nearly impossible for Pakistani authorities to infiltrate. He was implicated in over 30 criminal cases pertaining to murder and looting, and was subsequently arrested in 1996 by Pakistani authorities and tried for the same. At the time, there was a reward of Rs. 2 million on his head.⁹ He was imprisoned, and faced a death sentence which was later reduced to a life sentence. He was finally released by the Lahore High Court in October 2014, and he was arrested again a month later. In 2015, he was once again released on bail.¹⁰

Munawar Abbas Alvi: He is one of the highest leaders of the SMP, but at present is behind bars.¹¹

Dr Qaiser Abbas: He is an explosives expert who works for the SMP.

Muhammad Ali: He was a close lieutenant of Maulana Naqvi and was arrested at the same time as Naqvi. While Ali managed to escape prison, he was recaptured soon after.¹²

Cadre and Recruitment

It is believed that at some point the SMP had a cadre strength of around 30,000, which also included cadres from the Tehreek-e-Jafariya. Most cadres were sourced from the Pakistani provinces of Punjab and Sindh, particularly from important hubs such as Karachi and Lahore. A significant number of SMP cadres are believed to have criminal backgrounds, being involved in robberies, killings etc.

Current Status

At present, the SMP has been significantly weakened. While it was a significant terrorist grouping from 1993-2001 having conducted around 250 attacks in that time period, it suffered several setbacks at the turn of the millennium. Its internal rivalries led to its leadership being killed or being forced to flee, which rendered the group operationally inept to a great extent. Further, with the advent of Pervez Musharraf to power, terrorist organisations and sectarian violence were frowned upon by the Pakistani government for some time, and the SMP bore the brunt of multiple arrests and crackdowns against its cadre and leadership. Therefore, at present the SMP's capabilities have been significantly reduced, which is also evident from the lack of any high-profile attacks to its name in the past two decades.

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SIPAH-E-SAHABA PAKISTAN

Introduction

The Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (Corps of the Prophet's Companions), or SSP, is a Sunni Deobandi terrorist organisation. It was established in 1985 by a group of hard-line anti-Shia clerics in order to counter the rise of Shia outfits. Originally, it was called Anjuman Sipah-e-Sahaba and in 2002 it was renamed as Millat-e-Islamia Pakistan. The SSP is a radical sectarian group which acts violently against Shia and Bareilvi Muslims in the country.

Background

The Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) was initially known as Anjuman-e-Sipah-Sahaba and was formed in Jhang in Punjab province (Pakistan) in September 1985 by four radical anti-Shia clerics, *viz.* Maulana Haq Nawaz Jhangvi, Maulana Zia-ur-Rehman Farooqi, Maulana Esar-ul-Haq Qasmi, and Maulana Azim Tariq. The group was formed in order to counter the dominance of Shia Muslims in Punjab.

In the 1980s, the province had a feudal setup, with political and economic power being concentrated in the hands of the minority Shia sect.¹ Another

catalyst for the SSP's formation was the creation of the Tehriq-e-Nifaz-Fiqah-Jafaria (TNFJ), which is translated as 'movement for the implementation of Fiqah-e-Jafaria' (a Shi'ite school of Islamic jurisprudence). The TNFJ was created for the purpose of protecting the rights of the Shia minority and for spreading the ideas of Ayatollah Khomeini, the leader of Shi'ite Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution, and the country's first supreme leader. While Sunni extremists felt threatened by the creation of the TNFJ, they also found its name offensive, as it called for the imposition of *Fiqah*, a Shi'ite ideology, in Pakistan which is a majority Sunni nation.² The TNFJ was further empowered by assistance from Iran following the Islamic Revolution and the creation of a Shi'ite regime in the country. Further, demonstrations by the TNFJ led to the Pakistani government allowing for exemptions for Shias in paying *Zakat* (a form of Islamic religious tax that Muslim citizens are required to pay, revenues from which are used for welfare purposes and poverty alleviation).³

The cumulation of all of the above factors led to rising angst amongst the Sunni *Ulama* (religious scholars), which led to the creation of the anti-Shia Anjuman-e-Sipah-Sahaba by the Sunni clergy, which was later renamed as the Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP). Reportedly, the SSP also had the support of the Zia-ul-Haq military regime, which aimed to mitigate the rising influence of the Iran-sponsored Shi'ite TNFJ. The establishment of the Shia TNFJ and the subsequent creation of the Sunni SSP laid the groundwork for the rise of sectarian terrorism in Punjab, which would later spread across Pakistan. Almost immediately after the SSP's formation, sectarian violence dramatically increased in the period of 1986-89, when over 300 people of both sects were killed in inter-sectarian clashes.⁴

SSP was reportedly involved in a significant escalation of violent activity in 1986, when Shia-Sunni riots broke out in the town of Parachinar, near Pakistan's border with Afghanistan. These riots led to over 200 deaths. In 1988, the outfit was responsible for the assassination of Arif Hussain, the leader of TNFJ. In the Shia retaliation, the SSP's Maulana Haq Nawaz Jhangvi was assassinated in 1990. The remaining three clerics, who co-founded the SSP,

were also killed. Maulana Esar-ul-Haq Qasmi was killed in 1991, Maulana Zia-ur-Rehman was killed in 1997 and Maulana Azam Tariq was killed in 2003.⁵ The counter-retaliation of the SSP led to further sectarian violence and the killings of scholars and religious leaders on the Shia side.⁶ Notably, in December 1990, Sadeq Ganji, the Counsel General of Iran in Lahore, was killed by the SSP. The year 1994 was one of the worst years of violence witnessed in Punjab, wherein 73 people were killed and over 300 were injured in inter-sectarian violence, in which groups such as the SSP on the Sunni and Shia sides actively participated.⁷

At the same time, the SSP also moved towards increased politicisation. After the death of Haq Nawaz Jhangvi, the first leader of the outfit, Esar-ul-Haq Qasmi succeeded him and took over the reins of the outfit. Qasmi stood for elections from Punjab and won a seat in both the national and provincial assemblies, thus becoming the first SSP member to become a Member of Parliament. Following Qasmi's assassination by Shia extremists in 1991, Zia-ur-Rehman Farooqi took over as the group's leader and was instrumental in expanding the SSP into a nation-wide organisation. This was achieved by allying the outfit with the Pakistan People's Party, the ruling political party (which was then under the leadership of Benazir Bhutto). Following Farooqi's assassination, Azam Tariq took over as leader. Tariq was already well-placed in politics prior to becoming the SSP's leader—he had contested elections in 1991 from Qasmi's seat following the latter's assassination and won, becoming an MP. He used his position as MP to place SSP cadres in national and provincial government positions. Further, Tariq introduced several anti-Shia legislations on the floor of Parliament, including amendments to the pre-existing Blasphemy Law which sought to limit Shia commemorations.⁸

While the SSP was now enmeshed in the political system and involved in democratic parliamentary politics, it simultaneously continued indulging in violence and cementing ties with terrorist outfits. For instance, with the killing of Farooqi by Shia extremists in 1997, the SSP reacted violently—it incited rioting in Punjab, Iranian cultural centres in Multan and Lahore were

set on fire and 75 prominent Shia individuals were assassinated within five months in 1997. Tariq Azmi was himself implicated in several cases of murders of Shia officials and civilians in the 1990s and ended up being imprisoned for two years. He also built several ties with terrorist groups in Pakistan and abroad. He was known to visit Taliban-ruled Afghanistan frequently and it was under his leadership that the SSP cemented ties with terrorist groups like the Taliban, Al Qaeda, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Harkat-ul-Mujahideen and the Jaish-e-Mohammed.⁹

This same period also saw a third phenomenon in the SSP: internal rivalry and factionalism. It was under Farooqi's leadership that infighting among three factions began to rise. These three factions were divided based on their beliefs on the use of violence: one faction declared that Maulana Haq Nawaz Jhangvi's anti-Shia mission should be carried out using all means possible, including violent terrorism; the second faction agreed on the use of militant force, but wanted the group to shift to politic and the smallest faction was entirely opposed to sectarian violence. While the final faction was eventually marginalised, it was the first two factions which were primarily battling for influence within the SSP. This led to the creation of several minor and temporary splinter groups and infighting among "personal militias" to settle individual disputes within the group. However, a major phenomenon that emerged from this infighting was the creation of the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ). The LeJ was created as a hard-line anti-Shia terrorist outfit, whose leadership declared that the SSP was deviating from Maulana Jhangvi's teachings.¹⁰

In 2001, however, there was a significant decrease in sectarian violence. In January, the SSP and the Tehreek-e-Jaferia Pakistan (TJP, an offshoot of the original TNFJ) jointly pledged to the Government of Punjab that they would cooperate to eliminate terrorism. In February, the SSP and the SMP both declared they would make peace and withdraw all cases filed against each other.

Despite these developments, violent terror continued to run rampant. In 2001, the SSP was implicated in a number of targeted killings, including

a bomb blast in Karachi (16 killed), an attack by gunmen on a church in Bahawalpur (18 killed) and in the assassination of Maulana Saleem Qadri (leader of the Bareilvi outfit Sunni Tehreek) and five others. Thus, in 2002, with a view to clamp down on escalating violence within the country, the Pervez Musharraf government banned the SSP. The group renamed itself as the Millat-e-Islamia Pakistan after the ban, but the new name was also included in the list of banned groups by the government in 2003. In April 2005, the US State Department designated the SSP as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO). The SSP has tried to evade this ban by adopting the name *Ahle-Sunnat-Wal-Jamaat* (ASWJ).¹¹ The Pakistan government later lifted the ban on the SSP, only to ban it again in 2012 and finally lifted the ban in 2018, when it also removed the name of its leader, Maulana Ahmed Ludhianvi, from the terrorist watchlist.

Ideology and Objectives

The SSP is a Sunni extremist terrorist outfit and it adheres to the Deobandi School of thought. Its radical Sunni Deobandi ideas not only puts it in conflict with Shia groups, but also with Sunni Bareilvi groups, notably those like Sunni Tehreek and Ahmediyyas, who it regards as heretics. The SSP's main objective is for the transformation of Pakistan into a Sunni Islamic state, where the Shia would be declared infidels. The SSP has also pushed for further changes to the law, particularly the Blasphemy Law, to restrict the speech of Shia scholars and to ban all literature that is deemed offensive to the Prophet and his companions. Through its militant and political activity, the SSP has aimed to counter the influence and presence of Shi'ite individuals and institutions in the Pakistan polity, society and economy.¹²

Modus Operandi

The SSP is first and foremost a Sunni militant group. It aims to achieve its objective of a Sunni state by using violent means to spread terror and reduce the influence of Shia organisations and individuals. It also targets members

of other communities, including Sunnis, who belong to the Bareilvi School of thought, as well as non-Muslims and Westerners in Pakistan. The SSP has also carried out several assassinations of government officials and Shia leaders. Other prominent targets include places of worship, including mosques operated by rival sects and Christian churches. Additionally, the SSP is also opposed to Iranians, as it considers Iran to be the primary supporter of Shia outfits in Pakistan, and it often attacks Iranian cultural centres, diplomats and citizens present in Pakistan. The group makes use of explosives and suicide bombers to cause large-scale deaths, particularly in public places and community gatherings. It has also made use of small arms and rocket launchers to cause violence and carry out targeted killings.

Apart from its militant activities, the SSP has entered into the political space to influence legislation and policymaking in favour of the Deobandi Sunni ideology. SSP leaders have contested elections and pushed for anti-Shia legislation in parliament, while also trying to consolidate political power by trying to fill government positions with SSP members and sympathisers.

Sources of Funding

The SSP reportedly received funding from Saudi Arabia during its initial days and it continues to receive support from it and the UAE. It has also been reported that the SSP received funding from former Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi. The Pakistani diaspora in Arab countries has also been an important source of funding for the outfit¹³. These various sponsors have been motivated by the rise of revolutionary Shi'ite Iran and its rising influence across the Islamic world and perceive the SSP to be a valuable proxy to be used in this Sunni-Shia rivalry.¹⁴

Financing from Pakistan has also been invaluable for the SSP. State funding allowed for the proliferation of *Madrassas* (religious schools) belonging to the Deobandi community across the country. Particularly in the Punjab province, the number of madrassas has increased exponentially, and these continue to serve the purpose of spreading religious indoctrination and

churning out new recruits for the SSP. Further, it is believed that elements of the Pakistan military and intelligence have facilitated the funding of the SSP, even after the government proscribed the group in 2002. This is because of the Pakistan establishment's covert policy of supporting Deobandi terrorism, primarily for the purposes of the Afghan and Kashmir *jihads* and also because it fears a violent domestic backlash from these groups in the event of a crackdown against them.¹⁵

Finally, the SSP also relies on criminal activities, especially the illegal narcotics trade, to procure additional funds for its operation.¹⁶

Cadre and Recruitment

It is estimated that the SSP presently has 3000-6000 trained militants, a majority of whom hail from the Punjab province. The SSP relies on Deobandi madrassas to proliferate religious indoctrination among the youth and directly recruits young fighters from these institutions. Deobandi madrassas in Karachi (in Sindh Province), Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (formerly the North West Frontier Province) are used by the SSP for this purpose, with the most significant ones being those located in Punjab.¹⁷

Network

The SSP is reported to have good relations with the Afghan Taliban, which also subscribes to Sunni Deobandi ideology. SSP militants are sent to Afghanistan to fight alongside the Taliban and receive training from them. The SSP is also known to consult with the Taliban leadership, including with its former chief, Mullah Omar.¹⁸ The SSP had strongly condemned the US invasion of Afghanistan and declared its support for the Afghan jihad against the US. The SSP was not alone in making such statements, it was joined by prominent Pakistani Islamist political parties such as the Jamaat-e-Islami, Jamaat-e-Ulema-e-Pakistan, Jamaat-e-Ulema-e-Islam, Jamaat-e-Ahl-e-Hadith, and the Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam (Fazl-ur-Rehman faction). All these parties and the SSP created the Afghan Jihad Council to condemn the US invasion and

decried it as being anti-Islam.¹⁹

While the SSP is not actively involved in the Kashmir jihad, it maintains close relations with the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), the notorious Pakistan-based group which actively operates in Kashmir. In October 2000, Masood Azhar, the chief of JeM declared that “we go hand-in hand and Sipah-e-Sahaba stands shoulder to shoulder with Jaish-e-Muhammed in Jihad.”²⁰

The SSP also has close ties with Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, an offshoot of the SSP. While the dominant narrative is that a split happened due to internal rivalries and disagreements, some observers doubt whether a split actually occurred. At present, both groups enjoy close relations with one another, given that they subscribe to the same ideology and have similar objectives. Both revere Maulana Haq Nawaz Jhangvi and generally have aligned interests.²¹

Leadership

Maulana Muhammad Ahmed Ludhianvi: He is the present chief of the SSP and also an important leader of the *Difa-i-Pakistan* (Defence of Pakistan Council), which is a coalition of nearly 40 groups, which share ultra-nationalist ideologies and oppose Western presence in the country.

Maulana Zia-ul-Qasmi: He is the head of the Supreme Council which manages the affairs of the SSP.

Allama Ali Sher Ghazni: He is the chief patron of the SSP.

Other important leaders: Qazi Mohammad Ahmed Rashid, Mohammad Yusuf Mujahid, Tariq Madni, Mohammad Tayyab Qasmi, Maulana Abdul Ghofoor Nadeem, Maulana Muhammad Balakoti

Current Status

The SSP continues to thrive in the country and consequently violence against Shias, Ahmeddiyas and non-Muslims is also rampant in Pakistan at present.

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

The Pakistani state has displayed a clear unwillingness to take any concrete action against sectarian terrorist groups like the SSP, or even those like Lashkar-e-Taiba or the Jaish-e-Mohammed. Despite numerous proscriptions and blatant acts of terror that violate the rule of law in Pakistan, the SSP continues to operate freely, and in 2018 the government went so far as to lift the ban on the outfit.

As the Taliban returns to power in Afghanistan with Pakistani support, the SSP will also benefit from the resurgence of its age-old ally—it will be able to coordinate operations with the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban, receive funds and weaponry, and continue to send its militants across the border to Afghanistan to receive training in Taliban-run camps, only for them to return to Pakistan and spread further sectarian turmoil. Thus, with the tacit blessings of the Pakistani establishment and the resurgence of its radical allies, the SSP has and will continue to foment sectarianism and instability in Pakistan.

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SUNNI TEHREEK

Introduction

The Sunni Tehreek (ST) is a sectarian Bareilvi militant organisation. It primarily carries out aggressive sectarian violence against the Deobandi and Wahhabi sects, targeting groups like the *Sipah-e-Sahaba* Pakistan (SSP) and the *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi* (LeJ). It also targets Ahle Hadith and Deobandi mosques.¹

Background

The ST was created by Muhammed Saleem Qadri in Karachi in 1990, with the objective of promoting the interests of Bareilvi Muslims in the context of its historic rivalry with the Deobandi Sect.

With the Islamisation of Pakistan under General Zia-ul-Haq's regime, Deobandi terrorist organisations like the Lashkar-e-Taiba, the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan and the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, among others, were given active state support by both the military and intelligence services. These groups were armed and deployed initially against the Soviet Union in the Afghan *jihad* (holy war) and later against the Indian presence in the Kashmir *jihad*.² As a response to the rising importance of Deobandi forces in Pakistan's government

and mosques, Saleem Qadri founded the Sunni Tehreek in Karachi in 1990, as an offshoot of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan (JUP), a Barelvi Islamic political party of the country. The issue of control over mosques particularly stood out in the Deobandi-Barelvi rivalry, with Sarwat Aijaz Qadri, the chief of the ST, stating that “thousands of [Barelvi] mosques across Pakistan had been taken over by the Deobandis during the Zia years”. The ST claims that the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and the Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) were primarily responsible for the Deobandi takeover of Pakistan’s Barelvi mosques.³

From 1990 till 2001, the ST focused specifically on the recapture of mosques in Sindh and Punjab provinces. In 1992, ST members tried to take over the Noor Masjid in Karachi, which led to their first clash with the Deobandis. While the ST initially began with a large rally to protest against the Deobandi control of the mosque, the rally soon turned violent with arson and killings taking place. The next notable incident took place a few months after the Noor Masjid clash, where the ST tried to take over Karachi’s Ibrahim Raza Mosque, which led to further violence. It is estimated that ST took charge of over 62 mosques from Deobandis in the decade 1992-2002.⁴

Deobandi groups hit back strongly at the Barelvi outfit. In May 2001, Muhammed Saleem Qadri and five others were killed by gunmen in Karachi. The SSP was blamed for this attack, and in 2003, a cadre of the outfit was sentenced to death by an Anti-Terrorism Court for the killings.⁵ The killing of Qadri led to violent rioting between the Barelvis and Deobandis on Karachi streets and Muhammad Abbas Qadri, Saleem Qadri’s successor, blamed the Pervez Musharraf government for patronising Deobandi terrorists.⁶ The group faced a further setback in January 2002 when Musharraf announced proscriptions against various terrorist outfits. While the ST’s rival Deobandi outfits like the LeT and the SSP were banned, the ST itself was put on a terror watch list.⁷

A few months following the killing of Saleem Qadri, the ST underwent a significant transformation—from a Barelvi Sunni militia to a proper political party contesting elections. With this transformation, the ST suffered political

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

and religious targeted killings by the Deobandis and the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), another Barelvi-dominated party, and a political rival to the ST. The ST claims that 75 of its members were killed between 2004 and 2006. One of the most significant mass targeted-killings in this escalating conflict was the 2006 Nishtark Park blast, where a Barelvi congregation was targeted by a suicide bomber of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), a Deobandi terrorist outfit. The perpetrator was identified as Muhammad Siddiqui, who had C-4 explosives strapped to his chest. His blast killed nearly 60 people, including most of the ST's top leadership. The included Muhammed Abbas Qadri (the chief), Iftikhar Ahmad Bhatti (a co-founder of the outfit), Ikram Qadri (another co-founder), Dr Abdul Qadir Abbasi (member of ST's legal aid committee) and many others. Additionally, many other prominent Barelvi leaders were killed in this attack.⁸

Soon after, the ST decided to combat Deobandi outfits by stating its opposition to 'terrorism', as it had come to be perceived in its Deobandi form and was embodied by groups like the LeT, SSP, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and LeJ. The ST joined seven other Barelvi groups to create the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) on May 12, 2009, which was envisioned to be an anti-Taliban grouping.⁹ The SIC sought to pressurise the Pakistani military and government, and the country as a whole, to act against the Taliban and remove it from the North-West Frontier Province (now called Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) and the erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Notably, just a few days prior to the establishment of the SIC, Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Shah Mahmood Qureshi, who subscribed to the Barelvi school of thought, announced publicly that "[t]he Sunni Tehreek has decided to activate itself against Talibanisation in the country. A national consensus against terrorism is emerging across the country."¹⁰

In the same year, ST chief Muhammad Sarwat Ejaz Qadri created the Pakistan Inquilab Tehreek, which was to be the political wing. In 2012, the group's transformation into a political entity was complete with its conversion into the Pakistan Sunni Tehreek (PST) political party.¹¹

Ideology and Objectives

The Sunni Tehreek claims to represent the interests of Barelvi Islam, which is a sub-sect of Sunni Islam. The Barelvi school of thought first originated in Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh. The Barelvi movement founder was Ahmed Raza Khan, a religious scholar. The movement, which was institutionalised by the formation of the *Ahle Sunnat*, acted as a counter-reformation movement challenging the Deobandi School of thought. The Barelvi movement, since its inception, has always been closely affiliated to the Sufi sect of Islam.

The ST aims to protect the interests of Barelvi Sunnis and to counter the rising domination of Deobandis in various spheres of life in Pakistan. From 2009 onwards, pursuant to this goal, it co-founded the Sunni Ittehad Council to counter the issue of the rising ‘Talibanisation’ of the country. As part of its mission to assert the Barelvi movement’s dominance, the ST undertook various acts of violence against Deobandi institutions and individuals, especially through violent takeovers of mosques dominated by Deobandis, and by conducting targeted killings of prominent Deobandi (and sometimes Shia) leaders. The Barelvis of Pakistan are also very strong supporters of Pakistan’s blasphemy laws.

Modus Operandi

The ST has tried to push back against Deobandi dominance in various spheres in Pakistan. It initially began with a drive of taking over mosques that were previously under the control of Deobandi groups and clerics. Between 1992 and 2002, the ST took control of over 60 mosques that were previously under Deobandi control. Following a violent backlash by Deobandi groups like the LeT and the SSP, the ST resorted to the targeted killings of Deobandis. It also targeted Shias, as part of the traditional Sunni-Shia rivalry.

From 2001 onwards, the group began to enter the political sphere by reorganising itself into a political party. In 2009, the group’s political wing, the Pakistan Inquilab Tehreek, was created, and in 2012, the ST was

rechristened as Pakistan Sunni Tehreek, a full-fledged political party which would contest elections as a Barelvi party. The ST's involvement in the Sunni Ittehad Council also signifies its political role, as it acts as a pressure group in pushing the government to take further action against the Taliban and Deobandi terrorist groups. The ST also enjoys the support of some sections of the government—for instance, Shah Mahmood Qureshi, a long-time foreign minister of Pakistan and a prominent figure of the Barelvi community, has openly declared his support for ST's anti-Talibanisation agenda.

Sources of Funding

The most significant source of the ST's funding is the Barkati Foundation, which was set up specifically for funding the outfit. ST members give monthly donations, while money is also collected through funds such as the Milad Fund, Jahez Fund and Tahafuz Ahl-e-Sunnat Fund.¹² It has been reported that the US has also contributed some funds to counter the Taliban in Pakistan.¹³

Structure and Leadership

The ST has a centralised command structure. It has conveners at a divisional level who are directly accountable to the central leadership, which has the *Amir* (chief) at the head. It consists of 14 divisions.

The founding Amir of ST was Muhammad Saleem Qadri and following his assassination in 2001, he was succeeded by Muhammad Abbas Qadri. Abbas Qadri was himself killed in the 2006 Nishtark Park blast. The present leader of the newly christened Pakistan Sunni Tehreek is Sarwat Ejaz Qadri. Ahmed Bilal Qadri, the son of Saleem Qadri, is the leader of a dissident faction, which has retained the old name of Sunni Tehreek.

Network

The ST is affiliated with other Barelvi political groupings in the country as well. Its parent organisation is the Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan (JUP),

a prominent Bareilvi Islamic party. While it initially had friction with the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), another major Bareilvi political party, it now enjoys close relations with it, and many MQM activists are known to join the ST. In 2012, the Amir of ST declared they were considering joining the Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaaf (PTI), which is the party of present Prime Minister Imran Khan. Later, it was reported that the ST was moving closer to the All-Pakistan Muslim League (APML) led by Pervez Musharraf.¹⁴

The ST is also part of the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) which consists of several Bareilvi groups in an anti-Taliban alliance.

Current Status

From 2012 onwards, the ST has converted itself into the *Pakistan Sunni Tehreek* (PST), thus becoming a full-fledged political party. The group has continued its involvement in sectarian violence. In February 2012, it engaged in violent sectarian clashes in Karachi. Its involvement in active politics will only cause further inter-sectarian polarisation in the country, and cause further instability and violence in the country.

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TABLIGHI JAMAAT MOVEMENT

Introduction

The Tablighi Jamaat is a neo-fundamentalist transnational Islamic missionary movement drawing millions of followers and having an extremist edge in its ideology and activities. The seeds were laid in 1920 in the Mewat region of India by Muhammad Ilyas al-Kandhalvi, whose forefathers belong to the family of Abu Bakr, the first Caliph.¹

Although it has consistently exhibited itself as an organisation simply exhorting Muslims to live an austere and puritan life, in its apolitical façade, the Tablighi Jamaat has links with some terrorist groups and has the potential to fan global terrorism.

Background

Muhammad Ilyas al-Kandhalvi established the Tablighi Jamaat in response to the perceived deterioration of moral values amongst Muslims of India. Tablighi Jamaat is inspired by the Shah Waliullah (1703-1762) tradition (Islamic revivalism) and philosophies like Deoband, Bareilvi and Ahl-e-Hadith. These schools drew upon the Waliullah tradition, internalised its features according

to its needs and demonstrated a leaning to swing between one extreme and another.² Although Tablighi Jamaat claims to be non-political and non-sectarian, most of its adherents are from the Hanafi Deobandi persuasion. Consequently, the Jamaat's objectives and activities receive support from most Deobandi political and sectarian organisations.

The Deobandi reform movement intensified and worked towards the revival of Islam and going back to the Quran, Sunnat and Hadith. When the reform movement was strengthened with constant work, a group emerged called Tablighi Jamaat. The Tablighi Jamaat shares some of the features of the Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat-e-Islami like strict monotheism, divine attributes, purifying Islam from accretions, anti-Sufi and developing the moral integrity of the individual.³ Reetz and Mumtaz describe Tablighi Jamaat's belief as "Tablighi Jamaat rejects popular expressions of religion as the reverence of saints, visiting shrines, and observing the syncretic rituals associated with popular Sufism. Instead, Jamaat workers are firm in Islamic orthodoxy."

Muhammad Iliyas started the organisation to produce preachers equipped with in-depth knowledge about Islam and not merely religious functionaries. He worked on Tariqa-e-Tabligh (method of preaching) and gave the slogan "O Muslims, become a True Muslim!", which became the core of the Tablighi Jamaat. Its primary objective was to uplift Muslims socially and inspire them to follow the practices of Prophet Muhammad. It encouraged people to follow everything about the Prophet, including dressing, eating, praying. It even goes into minuscule details about which leg and hand to use first and the right way of eating meals. There were three texts for the followers of Tablighi Jamaat - the first, *Musalmano ki Pasti ka Wahid Ilaj* (The sole remedy for the plight of the Muslims), and the other two were titled the *Fazail-i-Tabligh* and the *Fazail-i-Namaz*.^{4,7}

The partition of British India in 1947 gave rise to three central chapters of the Tablighi Jamaat. One in Raiwind, Lahore and another in Bangladesh after the liberation war of 1971. Soon they had several international chapters,

with Hejaz, Saudi Arabia, being the first. As of now, the Tablighi Jamaat is the fastest-growing Muslim movement in the world.⁵

Some scholars believe that the conservative inclination has served as a fortification against radical Islam, at least in India, even though the case is different in Pakistan, Afghanistan and elsewhere.⁶ However, there have been some elements that work as allies of jihadi and sectarian organisations. Once they join militant organisations, they cut off their connections with the Tablighi. For example, many of the members of Tablighi Jamaat joined Jaish-e-Mohammad in Kashmir and were subsequently involved in the Pulwama attack and many more such terror acts.

Ideology and Objectives

The Tablighi Jamaat has a six-point program that is compulsory for all members to follow and ensure that the rest follow them. These six principles are:-⁷

1. Kalma (profession of faith)
2. Namaz/Salah (Prayer)
3. Ilm-o-Zikr (knowledge)
4. Ikram-e- Walidain (services to parents)
5. Ikram Muslimeen (Services to Muslims)
6. Dawat O Tabligh (Invitation to religion and preaching).

The Tablighi Jamaat is essentially a reform movement that invites people to become true Muslims and follow religious tenets in their pristine form. It also arranges for discourses and meets at local levels in mosques. There are four books as a part of the Tablighi Nisaab (Tablighi Curriculum), which the members of Tablighi Jamaat usually refer to as *Hayatus Sahabah*, *Fazil-e-Amaal*, *Fazail-e-Sadqaat* and *Muntakhab Ahadith*.⁸ The leaders of Tablighi Jamaat are against participation in politics. They prefer Tablighi *jihad*, a kind

of self-purification, instead of military *jihad*.⁹ Some of the other practices that the Tablighi Jamaat are averse to are marriages performed on a grand scale, or any show of grandeur which reflects wealth and status. It is similar to how the Deoband as well as Salafi thoughts follow. The Jamaat organises journeys and camps in groups of 10 to 20 people who go on tours and travel across the villages and cities on the orders of their Amir.

Modus Operandi

The methodology adopted by Tablighi Jamaat is more of a facilitative function than a direct participatory role in terrorism. However, the Tablighi Jamaat remained out of the limelight due to its unorganised structure and missionary nature. Although it is involved in self-purification and reformation, it has secretly worked to help many terror outfits. U.S. investigation reports in 2011 suggest that the Tablighi Jamaat had aided Al Qaeda members to get visas and funds to travel from Pakistan. Moreover, several other cases from Kenya, Somalia and Pakistan make it amply clear that Tablighi Jamaat is used as an acceptable conduit by Islamic terrorist organisations to facilitate travels of their members.¹⁰

The Tablighi Jamaat has become a jihadist spotter by training or preaching for Muslims devoted to religion. This steadfast devotion to Islam makes it easy for terror groups to brainwash and spur them to do jihad in the name of Allah. One of the 2017 London Bridge Attack accused, Youssef Zaghba, was linked to the Tablighi Jamaat. Mohammed Siddique Khan, the leader of the 7th July London Bombings in 2005, was also a member of the Tablighi Jamaat.¹¹

Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HuM), the terror outfit infamous for the hijacking of Indian Airlines Flight 814 in 1999, were members of Tablighi Jamaat, according to Pakistani security analysts and Indian investigators. The HuM members eventually joined the Jaish-e-Mohammad terror outfit founded by Masood Azhar, India, released in exchange for IC-814 passengers. Tablighi Jamaat has been a supporter and sympathiser of jihadi organisations such

as the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, the Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami, the Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Jaish-e-Mohammad. These organisations are members of the 'International Islamic Front for Jihad Against the Crusaders and the Jewish People' formed by the late Osama bin Laden in 1998.¹²

Funding

Being a mammoth organisation, the Tablighi Jamaat, at least officially, has maintained that it is not funded by anyone and does not draw donations. Moreover, since it has several chapters in different countries, there is no overall formal registration process and the induction of new members takes place in a decentralised fashion. The numerous headquarters located in multiple countries each organise self-funding members in groups (called *jamaats*) voluntarily. They average ten to twelve people in strength and are primarily tasked with reminding Muslims to remain steadfast on the path of Allah. The jamaats and preaching missions receive donations from respective members themselves.¹³

However, concealed funding sources came under the scanner after the Jamaat held a congregation in Nizamuddin, Delhi in March 2020, when the country was collectively bracing for a lockdown to break the infection chain. In no time, it turned into a Covid hotspot, and the police turned their attention, among others, to the Tablighi Jamaat's bank accounts and income tax returns. The ensuing investigation by the Crime Branch of the Delhi Police unearthed crores of rupees, which were transferred from Gulf countries to the bank accounts of people associated with the Nizamuddin Markaz and money that was sent back and forth between these Middle East nations and account holders. The agency also suspected Jamaat chief Maulana Saad of collecting assets and properties worth Rs 2 crore through international funding.¹⁴

Leadership

Within the hierarchy of Tablighi Jamaat, the *Amir* is the supervisor and his requisite attribute is the quality and depth of faith instead of any worldly

status.¹⁵ The Amir of Tablighi Jamaat is appointed for life by a central consultative council (*Shura*) and elders of the Tablighi Jamaat. The first Amir was Maulana Muhammad Ilyas Kandhalawi, the founder of the movement. His son Maulana Muhammad Yusuf Kandhalawi, was followed by Maulana (cleric) Inaam ul Hasan. In 1992, Maulana Inaamul Hasan set in place a system to elect subsequent Amirs. He established a ten-member Shura (committee) in pursuance of the same that comprised Maulana Saeed Ahmed Khan Sb, Mufti Zainul Abideen, Maulana Umar Sb Palanpuri, Maulana Izhar ul Hasan, Maulana Zubair ul Hasan, Miyaji Mehraab Sb, Haji Abdul Wahab Sb, Haji Engineer Abdul Muqet Sb, Haji Afzal Sb and Muhammad Saad Kandhalawi.¹⁶ When the Tablighi Jamaat received widespread criticism for flouting Covid-norms in March 2020, cleric Maulana Saad Kandhalwi headed the Nizamuddin Markaz, or the India chapter. He is the great-grandson of Muhammad Ilyas Kandhalawi.

Organisational Structure

The Tablighi Jamaat has a loose, dispersed and informal organisational structure spread across several countries with 'official chapters'. Tablighi Jamaat's activities are spearheaded through centers and headquarters called *Markaz*. Its international headquarters is the Nizamuddin Markaz in the Nizamuddin West district of South Delhi, India, where it originated. It also has country headquarters in over two hundred countries. The Jamaat has often been described as "a free-floating religious movement with minimal dependence on hierarchy, leadership positions and decision-making procedures."¹⁷ It maintains a conspicuous distance from mass media and does not usually mention specific activities and membership in the public domain.

The movement does not support interviews with its elders and has never officially released texts in the same vein. However, publications associated with the campaign are usually referred to as *Tablighi Nisaab* (Tablighi Curriculum).¹⁸

Recruitment

The members of Tablighi are encouraged to enroll themselves in the Deobandi Madrassa to learn the holy text. Ilyas was said to be influenced by the Meo's (Muslim Rajput community from Mewat region), who would go in small groups to villages and enroll children to madrasas and at the same time invite people to join for prayers in mosques. Later, Maulana Ilyas adopted the idea and added few changes to it. He appointed an Amir to lead the group and a *Mutakallim* or a speaker to go on tours to invite people to learn the true art of living as followers of Islam. It is how Tariqa-e-Tabligh evolved in the Tablighi Jamaat.¹⁹

The U.S. Government, which has kept a keen watch on the Tablighi Jamaat since September 11, 2001, has uncovered that though there are no direct links between the organisation and Islamic terrorism, Islamic terrorist organisations have recruited from the Jamaat.²⁰ Tablighi Jamaat leaders have expectedly refuted any links with terrorism.

Current Status

The fiasco surrounding Delhi's Nizamuddin Markaz in March 2020 put an intense public glare on the organisation, international branches and internal dynamics of the Tablighi Jamaat. Interestingly, post the demise of Maulana Inamul Hasan Kandhlawi, who was the third Amir (1965-95), the post of Amir was abolished, and an Alami Shura (international advisory council) was installed. Factionalism has crept in after the death of Maulana Kandhlawi's son, Zubair ul Hasan Kandhlawi, in 2015.²¹ As a manifestation of this factionalism, camps have cropped up in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. The Nizamuddin camp is, as mentioned earlier, is headed by Maulana Saad Kandhalwi, great-grandson of Maulana Muhammad Ilyas, while a rival faction is based out of Raiwind, Pakistan. Bangladesh constitutes another faction and hosts the most prominent annual Alami Ijtama at Tongi, with around two million people thronging the congregation. During the Ijtama of 2020, the first phase was held on January 12 with the Tongi faction and the

second phase on January 17 with the Nizamuddin faction, again underscoring underlying factionalism.²²

In response to the Nizamuddin congregation in March 2020, Delhi Police's Crime Branch on March 31 lodged an FIR against seven people, including Maulana Saad, under sections of the Epidemic Diseases Act, Disaster Management Act (2005), Foreigners Act and other relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code. Saad Kandhalvi was even booked for culpable homicide not amounting to murder after some of those who had attended the congregation perished due to Covid 19.

Court cases are going on and statements from his sons and office-bearers of the Nizamuddin Markaz have been recorded in connection with this much-known case. Meanwhile, many of the members have been acquitted due to insufficient evidence.²³ In December 2021, the mainstay of the Tablighi movement, Saudi Arabia, proscribed it terming it a fountainhead of radical Islamism.

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THE TALIBAN

Introduction

The Taliban is a Sunni militant political and religious movement that emerged in the mid-1990s. The movement proliferated from the Pashtun areas of southern and eastern Afghanistan.¹ In Pashto, (the language spoken by Pashtuns) the word ‘Taliban’ means ‘students’. The movement was composed of peasant farmers and men who studied Islam in Pakistani madrasas. Being a fundamentalist religious movement, it aims to establish an Islamic emirate in Afghanistan. Taliban ousted the Communist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) and upheld its promise of transforming Afghanistan into an Islamic emirate. For almost half-a-decade, from 1996 to 2001, the Taliban unleashed a reign of bigotry and terror in the landlocked South Asian country.

Background

The genesis of the Taliban can be traced back to the Mujahideen – a group of radical Muslims whose primary goal was to drive out the Russians from Afghanistan. The USSR feared that the Government of Afghanistan might get

overthrown by a Muslim revolution, similar to the 1979 Iranian revolution. The New Cold War emerged as a consequence of Soviet Russia's move to support the left-wing government of Afghanistan.² The USA considered this a part of the already brewing Cold War and to force the Russians out of Afghanistan, it sent extensive aid to the Mujahideen. By 1986, the Mujahideen were receiving vast amounts of weaponry from America, especially the ground to air missiles, which had a devastating impact on USSR and Afghan air forces. Eventually, Mikhail Gorbachev, USSR's last leader, realised that the Afghanistan war could not be won.³ Thus, USSR withdrew its troops from Afghanistan by February 1989. The PDPA, left to fend for itself, remained in power until 1992, when it was finally overthrown.⁴ During this period, Afghanistan was in a state of anarchy and chaos.

After 1992, a transitional government proclaimed the Islamic Republic. It was being sponsored and supported by several rebel factions of Mujahideen. Eventually, the government failed when President Burhanuddin Rabbani, leader of Islamic society (Jam'iyat-e Eslāmī, a major Mujahideen faction), refuted the power-sharing arrangement made by the transitional government.⁵ The rival factions became wary of Rabbani's response and started attacking Kabul and neighbouring cities, leading to an almost four-year civil war. Taliban, a former rebel faction of Mujahideen, became the sole victor in the war. Being led by Mohammad Omar, it managed to capture Herat and Kabul by 1995 and 1996 respectively.⁶ Very soon, they controlled most areas in Afghanistan except for the northwest, where the Northern Alliance opposed them. By 1998, the Taliban was controlling almost 90 percent of Afghanistan.⁷

Although the Taliban's extreme policies aroused international disapproval, it managed to gain early popularity as it succeeded in curbing lawlessness, dismantling the network of warlords and stamping out corruption. But the Taliban also implemented their version of Sharia law and as it happened, they started to disseminate summary 'justice'. The measures adopted by the Taliban, to say the least, were grotesque and inhumane. Those who were found guilty of theft were amputated. Convicted murderers and adulterers

were publicly executed. Women were forcibly excluded from public life. They were allowed to step out of the house only if their husband or male family member was accompanying them. Head-to-toe burqas for women became the new normal. The Taliban also banned music, dance, television, radio, and cinema. Men were forced to grow beards and girls were not allowed to attend school after the age of 10.⁸

The alliance between the Taliban and Al-Qaeda was growing stronger with each passing day. It was accused of providing sanctuary to the mastermind of the 9\11 attacks and Al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden. Bin Laden offered technical capacities and resources to the Taliban.⁹ He also won over Mullah Omar by claiming to be a righteous Mujahid and a pious Muslim. Al-Qaeda assassinated Ahmed Shah Masood, the head of the Northern Alliance, which augmented the Taliban's position as the unilateral power in Afghanistan.¹⁰ Many political analysts suspect that Masood's assassination was part of the 9\11 plan of attack. On September 11, 2001, Al-Qaeda coordinated a series of airplane hijacks and suicide bombings which killed almost 2750 people in the World Trade Center, New York, 184 at the Pentagon and 40 in Pennsylvania.¹¹ The attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, is considered one of the most significant terrorist attacks on American soil.

The USA issued a request to the Taliban to hand over Osama Bin Laden – the mastermind behind the 9\11 attacks. Still, as expected, the Taliban refused to do so and faced the wrath of America. The US and allied forces, alongside Afghan Pashtun forces and the Northern Alliance invaded Afghanistan and toppled Mullah Omar's regime. That proved fatal for the Taliban as almost thirty thousand Talibanis were killed, wounded, or seized in late 2001 and early 2002.¹² The remainder fled to Pakistan and other neighbouring countries. The U.N. sponsored the Bonn Conference, which deliberately excluded the Taliban, worked upon the nitty-gritties of Afghanistan's post-Taliban government. From 2002 to 2008, the US-led alliance focused on defeating Taliban militancy and rebuilding core democratic institutions. After

2008, the US-alliance tried to re-integrate insurgents into Afghan society and gradually hand over to the Afghan administration. U.S and NATO combat missions formally ended in 2014, marking the end of the 13-year long war between America and Afghanistan.

Although 2014 marked the official end, this in no way restored balance in Afghanistan. The Taliban were able to regroup and capture Afghan cities and strategic posts. In 2021, the number of Taliban is at an all-time high of 85,000, controlling almost 85 percent of Afghan territories.¹³ Allied forces finally withdrew from Afghanistan in August 2021.

Ideology and Objectives

The Taliban aimed to establish an Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan under the rule of radicalised Sharia law. After the Afghan Civil War, they launched an Islamist government but that lasted for only for five to six years before the US-alliance forces ousted the Taliban from power in November 2001. The Taliban's religious teachings are based on Sharia and their interpretation of Islamic law is patriarchal and stringent, although, in recent times, it has shown some signs of relaxation in their interpretation of Sharia law. For instance, music, female education, TV and female employment could be permitted and fighters may expedite polio vaccinations.¹⁴ It has also released a code of conduct for its cadres. It has started to cooperate with the U.N.'s biannual reporting on civilian casualties.¹⁵ These steps can be seen as steps in the right direction, but one can't deny that the Taliban's history shows that it still has a long way to go just to become humane.

Modus Operandi

Taliban rallies against foreign control and the preceding Afghan government, whom they considered as a puppet of the West. It disseminates its message through poetry, music and videos. Ironically, the Taliban has been using the same media tools they banned during their earlier regime.¹⁶ They do not back down from carrying out high-profile attacks and assassinations. Their indirect

alliance with Al-Qaeda has given them safety from significant attacks by the latter. They are entrenched in cities like Lashkar Gah, Kandahar in the south, Kunduz and Sar-I-Pul in the north and Herat in the west. By August 2021, the Taliban captured most Afghani cities and finally Kabul to take over the government.¹⁷

Sources of Funding

Private donors from Gulf and Afghan emigres financed the Taliban's resurgence. It also runs a sophisticated network of taxation to raise funds for its insurgent operations.¹⁸ Since 2011, the Taliban's annual income has steadily increased and according to an estimate, it was between \$400m and \$1.5bn. As per few estimates, the Taliban's annual share in the drug economy ranges from 100 million to 400 million dollars. It also raises revenue from telecommunication networks. According to the Taliban, it receives more than \$50m annually in revenue from 25-30 illegal mining operations all over the country. According to a 2018 report by the CIA, the Taliban had received \$106m from foreign sources, particularly from the Gulf states.¹⁹

Leadership and Structure

The Taliban has a hierarchical organisational structure led by the *Emir* or leader, followed by three deputies and a leadership council aka the Quetta Shura. The leadership council is a group of top leaders who form the Taliban's central cabinet, make policy decisions and oversee more than a dozen commissions, including the military, political and administrative commissions. They supervise and monitor the governors and battlefield commanders. The military commission makes the appointment to both these posts.²⁰ Its main leaders (presently in transition) are:-

- Mawlawi Haibatullah Akhundzada – current Emir of Taliban
- Deputy Mullah Muhammad Yaqoub – manages ideological and religious affairs

- Deputy Sirajuddin Haqqani – oversees the insurgency and is the head of the Haqqani Network
- Co-Founder of Taliban, Deputy Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar – leads the Taliban delegation in peace talks and is also the head of the political office in Doha
- Senior Judge Mullah Abdul Hakeem oversees the Taliban judicial structure.²¹

Network

The Taliban manages a vast network throughout Asia. Pakistan has been its ally since the late 1990s, barring few strife's between them. Saudi Arabia and UAE were the only countries apart from Pakistan which had recognised the first Taliban government's legitimacy in late 1990s.²² They also maintain a group of terrorist organisations, including Tehrik-i-Taliban and the Haqqani Network, which can be considered their offshoots. But after the Taliban assumed power in August 2021, no formal recognition has come from any nation, though some form of political support has come from Pakistan, China and Russia.

Cadre and Recruitment

According to recent NATO estimates, there are around 85000 full-time fighters in the Taliban.²³ Presently, it is numerically more robust than at any point since 2001. The current members and the ones aspiring to be a part of the Taliban believe that their jihad is God's wish. They don't fear dying while fulfilling 'Allah's wish'. The Taliban has maintained this perception as it helps them to multiply their numerical strength rapidly.

Current Status

Taliban militants now have established an interim government in Afghanistan. They have accepted to share power with the Haqqani Network. While its

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

foremost leaders had taken refuge in Pakistan during the civil war, having assumed power, the members of the interim government are trying to restore the broken-down administration, but with limited results. The appointed acting cabinet ministers reflect the Taliban's approach in the upcoming years. After the fanatic enforcer of Taliban strictures and in-charge of prisons Nooruddin Turabi's statements, it has become evident that harsh and inhuman punishments will return as these "work as a deterrent." The international community has been watching the Taliban closely, and they hope that the Afghan militia might denounce their barbaric concepts of justice. But the Taliban have unequivocally stated that 'no one can tell them how their laws should be' as these are supposedly based on the Quran. The UNHCR says that a new wave of internal displacement has started from areas where Taliban fanatics are in action.

Presently, led by Mullah Baradar, the Taliban leadership seems to be a loose association of political moderates and fanatics. The Taliban cabinet has given representation to Tajiks, Uzbeks and Turkmen, but it has yet to include the Shia, Hazara, or other minority communities' representation. Even after Zabihullah Mujahid, the Deputy Minister of Information & Culture, assured Afghans that the Taliban would not indulge in violence or raid their homes or confiscate their property, such hopes are belied so far as the Taliban's militant wing does not adhere to such instructions. They have also begun collecting customs duty on goods entering the country via crossings that they are controlling. Although the exact amount of revenue gained is not precise, but the Islam Qala check post on the border with Iran, is, for example, capable of generating more than \$20m per month. In brief, Taliban-controlled Afghanistan is in a state of chaos and the administration remains broken down.

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HAQQANI NETWORK

Introduction

The Haqqani Network (HN) is a Sunni Islamist militant organisation founded by Jalaluddin Haqqani in 1970. The Network is based in North Waziristan and conducts cross-border operations into Afghanistan's eastern and south eastern region and Pakistan's northwestern Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). The group chiefly comprises members of the Zadran tribe. The Haqqani's are considered the most violent insurgent group.

In 2012, the US Government proscribed the HN as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO) for its role in the Afghan insurgency, attacks on US military and civilian personnel and Western interests in Afghanistan relations with the Taliban and Al-Qaeda.

Background

Jalaluddin Haqqani was an Afghan warlord and an insurgent commander during the anti-Soviet war. He was earlier a member of the Hezb-e Islami faction led by renowned mujahedin commander Younis Khalis.¹ Haqqani played a vital role in the political order of Afghanistan's south-eastern

provinces of Khost, Paktya, and Paktika referred to as Loya Paktya.²

In 1973, the Haqqani Network declared jihad for the first time after Mohammad Daud Kahan's coup dethroned King Zahir Shah. HN's first attack was in 1975 when Jalaluddin and his fighters launched an attack against pro-Daud politicians in Ziruk district in Afghanistan's Paktika province. After the attack in Ziruk, the HN emerged as a prominent group in the region. It further rose to prominence during the anti-Soviet war of the 1980s as part of the Mujahideen. It thus grew from a relatively small, tribal-based jihadist network into one of South Asia's most influential terrorist organisations.

In the 1980s, the HN was one of a few notorious guerrilla forces linked to Pakistan with sufficient military support, political ties and resources to campaign effectively against the Soviet-backed Afghan regime. It joined the Taliban movement in 1995 and Jalaluddin became the Minister for Borders and Tribal Affairs, while maintaining his power base and distinctly separate command and control structures.³ The HN was an actor in empowering the Taliban's Quetta Shura, its acts of violence in the northern region of Afghanistan and capture of Kabul in 1996. The American CIA regarded Haqqani as an asset in the battle against the Soviets and he received ample funds and military assistance from the USA.⁴ However, this strategic proximity and cooperation turned into distrust after the Taliban came to power and then degenerated into fierce antagonism post the 9/11 attacks.

Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) also cultivated deep links with the Haqqani Network and aided its fight during the Afghan war. Ties between the ISI and the HN continued even after the US-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. Pakistan viewed the Network as a proxy to protect its interests in the unfolding impasse in Afghanistan, a tool to strike at Indian assets and influence, channelising weapons and to create a safe harbour in Miran Shah. After the gruesome killing of 134 Army School children in Peshawar, Pakistan, and a nudge from the then US Secretary of State John Kerry, Pakistan officially banned the Haqqani Network in January 2015.⁵

After the ouster of the Taliban in 2001, Jalaluddin's son, Sirajuddin Haqqani, assumed operational control of the network and has since then spearheaded the group's activities as an insurgent force against the forces of the US, NATO and the Afghan civilian government.⁶ Though the Taliban has increasingly subsumed the Haqqani Network within its ambit, the latter has maintained its separate cadre and structure. Moreover, while Al-Qaeda has a global approach transcending regional areas, the HN has always been singularly focused on Afghanistan and Miriam Shah in Pakistan. The aim of the Network is to eradicate Western involvement and influence followed by Islamist governance through strict enforcement of the Sharia⁷

Ideology and Objectives

The Haqqani Network follows Sunni Islamic Deobandi interpretation. It believes that *Jihad* is the ultimate solution to remove Western influence over Islamic principles. HN founder Jalaluddin Haqqani, obtained Islamic education from the Pakistani Deoband Madrassa Darul Uloom Haqqania. It is from here that the group got its name, the Haqqani Network. It draws its ideology from Hizb-e-Islami and the Taliban in order to oust western pro-democratic notions from the soil of Afghanistan and to replace it with the 'Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan'. The HN aligns its ideology to Al-Qaeda. However, unlike Al-Qaeda, the HN does not have any goal of global jihad. It is most violent and extremist in enforcing obedience and fear amongst the population. For this purpose, the HN doesn't rely solely on fundamentalist ideologies or nationalistic goals, it has also used its power to influence politics. To remain relevant to the shifting trends of the Islamic world, it has also subscribed to the notion of a global caliphate.

Modus Operandi

The HN is the first terrorist organisation to repeatedly use suicide bombings inside Afghanistan and is accountable for many of the most violent attacks the country has experienced.⁸ The group routinely carries out IED attacks, a

tactic which Al-Qaeda often uses.⁹

The HN is highly lethal in its modus operandi of conducting high profile suicide bombings¹⁰ by mobilising its fighters from Saudi Arabia, Uzbekistan and Chechnya.¹¹ It has in the past conducted sophisticated suicide bombings, vehicle detonations and kidnappings of Western and Afghan hostages. It has focussed on kidnapping American hostages with the aim of squeezing significant ransoms, generate propaganda and demanding the release of its imprisoned cadres.¹² Under Sirajuddin Haqqani's leadership, the HN has increased its kidnap-for-ransom campaign against the wealthy and influential Afghans to financially support the Network.¹³ The HN also has an extensive media presence to instigate like-minded recruits and donors and to intimidate western audiences.¹⁴

The HN is technologically advanced in bomb-making and remote detonation devices.¹⁵ The governor of Paktika province and close associate of Afghan President Hamid Karzai, Abdul Hakim Taniwal, was killed in a Haqqani-led suicide attack in 2006.¹⁶ Similarly, it also deployed a suicide bomber aboard a bus carrying Afghan army recruits, subsequently killing thirty-one. Government offices, universities and hotels in Afghanistan were also attacked by the HN. In July 2008, a car bomb exploded at the Indian embassy in Kabul, killing 54, and the Network claimed responsibility. In July 2014, the Haqqani Network used a truck to explode a bomb in a crowded marketplace in eastern Afghanistan, killing seventy-two people. In August 2016, Haqqani shooters disguised as Afghan military officials, kidnapped two professors - Kevin King (American) and Timothy Weeks (Australian) - from the Kabul campus of the American University of Afghanistan.¹⁷

Organisational Structure

The HN has a lineage and clan-based hierarchical structure. Its senior leadership depends on a traditionally hierarchical militant set-up to centrally control its operations.¹⁸ The Network locates its core leadership in Pakistani safe havens to minimise their exposure to Western counter-terrorism measures.¹⁹

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

Presently in Afghanistan, the HN increasingly employs decentralised models in which separate militant and political structures operate side-by-side.²⁰

The HN's leadership structure is similar to the Taliban's former 10-member leadership council (Supreme Shura), earlier located at Kandahar. Jalaluddin Haqqani served as 'Minister of Frontier Affairs' in the Taliban's Supreme Shura until the US-led intervention overthrew the regime in 2001. Later, in late 2002, when Mullah Omar fled across the border, the Taliban operated from Pakistan under its modified Quetta Shura, which was a combination of leadership and consultative councils.²¹ The Quetta Shura established a governing structure in Afghanistan by dispatching 'shadow' governors to many of its provinces.²² In 2009, it established a committee to address the grievances stemming from the local populace. The Quetta Shura's Shari'a Courts delivered and enforced justice in the contested and controlled areas of Afghanistan. It levied taxes and conscripted fighters, as it claimed, "to provide security against a corrupt government, Afghan forces and local power brokers, and to protect Afghan and Muslim identity against foreign encroachment."²³

The HN's operations have conventionally been conducted by small, semi-autonomous units organised through tribal and sub-tribal affiliations, under the leadership and logistics of Haqqani commanders. The Network has four broad groups: the first group of Jalaluddin Haqqani of the anti-Soviet jihad days; the second, a lately joined group hailing from North Waziristan; a third group from Loya Paktiya who have joined after 2001; and the fourth group of foreign militants primarily of Arabs, Chechens and Uzbeks. Though the fighters operating on the ground belong to numerous tribes, most of the network's leaders are from the Zadran tribe, especially the Haqqani's Mezi clan.²⁴

It is challenging to determine the exact number of members in the HN, but experts believe there are roughly 10,000, constituting approximately 20 per cent of the Taliban's fighting forces.²⁵ Many in the HN are recruited from northern Pakistan and south-eastern Afghanistan. The senior leadership has

extended the recruitment outreach beyond the immediate region and the HN has attracted foreign fighters from Uzbekistan, Chechnya and Turkey.²⁶

Leadership

Jalaluddin Haqqani – Founder, Haqqani Network

Sirajuddin Haqqani - Successor of Jalaluddin Haqqani in leading daily operations. Reportedly the Deputy Emir and Head of the Quetta Shura.

Badrudin Haqqani – Son of Jalaluddin Haqqani and Sirajuddin's brother, Badrudin was an operational commander of the network. He was killed in a US drone strike in August 2012.

Abdul Aziz Ahbasin - Haqqani Governor of Paktika province in Afghanistan.

Khalil al-Rahman Haqqani - Gulf-based fund raiser and facilitator.

Recruitment and Funding

The Haqqani Network is one of the most well-funded and strongly connected groups within Afghanistan and Pakistan. It received financial support from wealthy individuals and close associates of Jalaluddin Haqqani. The HN has further benefitted from help from the Gulf region, where Jalaluddin's sons have reportedly travelled to raise funds from wealthy followers abroad.²⁷ It is also believed that Pakistan's ISI has supported the HN financially.

With the ascent of Sirajuddin as the head of HN, the group has begun to indulge in extreme crimes to support its activities. It has raised a substantial income from criminal activities like illicit trade of chromite and the trafficking of timber, precious jewels and metals. It has further committed crimes of kidnapping and extortion.²⁸ Other means of generating revenue include car dealerships, construction companies and real estate. These companies are the front desk for the group while at the backend it indulges in illicit activities,

including bomb-making.²⁹

Pakistan's North Waziristan, region being the headquarters of HN, has had a well-structured recruitment system. Firstly, the HN uses the Darul Uloom Haqqani and several other madrassas to instil radical ideologies amongst young students who eventually join the network. In addition to its close connection with the Taliban, the Haqqani Network also uses its extensive network of Saudi-funded Wahhabi madrassas to swell its ranks. Owing to the Taliban's control in Afghanistan and the Haqqani's entrenched position in Pakistan's North Waziristan, such religious schools with radical undertones are found on both sides of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.³⁰

Maulana Sami ul Haq, considered the father of the Taliban, ran a seminary in Pakistan where prominent leaders of both the HN and the Taliban, including Sirajuddin Haqqani, studied.³¹ Within Pakistan, the Network's central command centre is at Miriam Shah, North Waziristan. From there, the Haqqani's run recruitment centres as part of their parallel administrative structure which operate alongside the official government set up.³²

The Haqqani Network released a field manual in 2011 enumerating their tactics, including ambush methods, explosive usage and instructions for suicide missions, as well as its recruitment methods.³³ The manual was published under the name of 'Khalifa Sirajuddin Haqqani', operational commander of the HN.³⁴

Current Status

The HN has deep ties with other non-state actors. They all share a strategic alliance that allows it to operate within Afghanistan and Pakistan. Coalition with groups like the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the Taliban has allowed the Network to operate under their cover and gain more considerable strategic advantage. In particular, the HN's deep relations with Pakistan is a crucial factor for security in the region. Both aim at countering the influence of India's goodwill with

Afghanistan. Pakistan ISI has provided the HN with weapons, money, men and safe havens near the border region. The ISI admits that it maintains regular contact with the Haqqanis', but denies providing operational support.³⁵ Few experts argue that Pakistan considers the Afghan Taliban and the HN as 'armed allies' and they have been provided with shelter to operate freely, while at other times aids them during the conflict.³⁶

In 2020, the US State Department's annual terrorism report suggested that Pakistan was not doing enough to counter terrorism.³⁷ It refers to Pakistan's ongoing support to the HN as its proxy. Though Pakistan repudiates providing operational backing to the Haqqanis', but its relations with the HN is alleged to have assisted its peace deal with the Taliban.³⁸

The HN has also benefitted from its relations with Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State of Khorasan Province (IS-K). In February 2020, in Doha, Qatar, Aiman Muhammed Rabi al-Zawahiri, Al-Qaeda's leader, met with Yahya and Hafiz Azizuddin Haqqani, who assured Al-Zawahiri of the group's loyalty and discussed the formation of a new joint unit.³⁹ This unit was to comprise of 2,000 fighters from both the HN and Al-Qaeda and embedded among the Taliban's forces. The new force would be financed by Al-Qaeda and split into two different operational zones. Hafiz Azizuddin Haqqani would lead the unit and its forces would be located in the Loya-Paktiya area - this area includes Khost, Logar, Paktika and Paktiya. The head of the Haqqani's intelligence, Shir Khan Manga, would command the remaining forces in the Kunar and Nuristan regions.⁴⁰ Further, the UN Report of May 2020 suggests that the HN aided the IS-K by offering 'tactical accommodations'.⁴¹

After the US withdrawal in August 2021, the Taliban announced the formation of an interim government in Afghanistan, declaring it as an Islamic Emirate. The cabinet and all its key appointments are dominated by old fanatics and HN members. The crucial interior ministry is headed by Sirajuddin Haqqani.⁴²

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

Although the HN is usually considered an independent but inseparable part of the Taliban leadership structure, it has managed to keep its command and control in its own hands. Given the influence that Pakistan's ISI has over the group, the involvement of the HN in the Taliban government is a concern for the region's security. With the Taliban in power, it has become an easy ground for operating and challenging India's security. With the situation in Afghanistan evolving rapidly, a close watch is imperative at this juncture.

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ISLAMIC STATE OF KHORASAN PROVINCE

Introduction

The Islamic State of Khorasan Province (IS-K or ISKP) is a Salafist organisation with its primary objective of making Khorasan Province the centre of the so called 'Caliphate'. Hafiz Khan Saeed was appointed as the first IS-K Emir in 2015. After its inception on January 10, 2015, the IS-K expanded its activities into Afghanistan. In 2020, Shahab al-Muhajir, who was earlier a member of the Haqqani Network, was installed as the Emir of IS-K. After its failed attempts to spread throughout Afghanistan, the IS-K withdrew to Nangarhar and Kunar.

The IS-K was formed after the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS or IS) accepted a pledge of allegiance from the its four founding groups, namely, the Al-Tawhid Brigade, Ansar-ul-Khilafat Wal-Jihad, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan and its splinter group, Jundullah. With that began the Islamic State's incursion into Central Asia with reports of the militants recruiting, settling and carrying out attacks under the banner of ISIS. So far, the IS-K has successfully hidden its activities and has escaped counter-action from NATO, the Afghan Government and the Taliban.

Post US and NATO withdrawal, the IS-K has stepped up its violent activities and fight against the Taliban government in Afghanistan.

Background

The IS-K has spread across Iran, Central Asia, Afghanistan and Pakistan. In 2014, Hafiz Saeed Khan, a senior commander of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), its spokesperson, Sheikh Maqbool, and several other area chiefs, were included in the first Khorasan Shura.¹

The first batch of the IS-K included militants from Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) region. Most of these militants were defected TTP and Lashkar-e-Islam members. Hafiz Saeed Khan and former Taliban commander Abdul Rauf Khadim became its Emir and Deputy Emir. These two prominent members created a strong network in Afghanistan and Pakistan which helped them in the group's recruitment. As a result, numerous members from Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jamaat-ud-Dawa, the Haqqani Network and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) joined the IS-K.²

Since the ISIS lost its territory in Iraq and Syria, it has shifted its focus to Afghanistan and invested financial resources to strengthen its networks and organisation in Khorasan. Afghanistan is a preferred destination for foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) where the IS-K enables their recruitment. Although the IS-K has pledged allegiance to the ISIS, the relationship between the two is weak. It, however, continues to receive support from the core leadership. Given that the IS-K is comprised of former members of other groups, there is an element of factionalism within and some communication gap exists between the IS-K and the ISIS. As a result, there is a loose working relationship between the two despite their allegiance to the core group.

There is also external support that IS-K has managed in Afghanistan apart from that from the ISIS core group. The Haqqani Network supports the IS-K and facilitates its operations. The UNSC report of 2020 reveals that "recently the Kabul airport attack is a joint operation by the IS-K in collaboration with

the Haqqani Network".³ Many of the arrested cadres of the IS-K escaped after jails were thrown open by the Taliban post its coming to power. There is a dilemma among these IS-K fighters -- whether to join the Taliban to save themselves, or to be hunted down.⁴ The IS-K in Nangarhar, Kunar, Paktia, Nuristan and Badakhshan is primarily self-funded, but perhaps receives limited support from Pakistan. The Northern wing comprises of Jawzjan and Faryab, which have benefitted from recruitments from Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Iran supports the IS-K in western Afghanistan, Herat and Farah.

Ideology and Objectives

The IS-K, which claims to be ideologically affiliated to the ISIS core, follows an orthodox version of Salafism and claims to have an element of Deobandism. They believe in living according to Islam as practised during the time of Prophet Mohammad.⁵ However, the fact remains that these violent groups have misinterpreted the religion for their nefarious objectives. It is stated that the IS-K broadly adheres to the IS' ideology, which seeks to create a global 'Caliphate' administered by Islamic jurisprudence. The IS' motto, "*baqiya wa tatamaddad*" (remaining and expanding) calls on other Muslims to join the movement. The Caliphate, however, must be a 'pure Islamic State' in which members must strictly observe *Sunna* (the Prophet's traditions). In 2016, the IS issued a list titled '*Aqidah wa Manhaj al-Dawlah al-Islamiah fi al-Takfir*' (Islamic State Creed and Methodology of Takfir), which stated that anyone who rejects Sharia law will be labelled as *kafir* (an apostate) and can be executed as a result.⁶ The IS-K ideology allows slavery, rape, extortion and imposes the death penalty on those who smoke or drink, and Zakat, which has helped them carry out their operations.⁷

The primary objective of the IS is to rule over Muslim lands in a Caliphate after defeating the West. It propagates this objective by violent expansion outside Iraq and Syria to claim legitimacy as a trans-regional organisation and by challenging the leadership of Al Qaeda and the Taliban in the global jihadist movement. This indicates that the objective of the IS-K is to form

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

Khorasan into a *Wilayat* (province) of the international IS Caliphate.⁸ It is aimed at isolating Jalalabad, seizing control of it as its regional logistic node and stretching its control over West Nangarhar.

The IS-K's members' background and their action as a group raise a question about its ideology. Its ideology appeals to non-Afghan terrorist groups perusing regional and global agendas. It follows Salafi-Jihadi ideology based on skewed interpretation of Islamic theology across all geographical boundaries. It rejects the western concept of democracy and sanctions unrestricted violence to resurrect the 'Islamic Caliphate'. Several experts believe that the IS-K is different from the ISIS.⁹ The ranks of the IS-K are filled with members from disenfranchised groups who have been affiliated with other prominent groups and are less ideologically motivated. This trans-border, trans-racial, pan-Islamist ideology appeals to regional terrorist groups.¹⁰ That includes the Kazakhs, Uzbeks and Chechen Russians who have stronger ideological leanings with the Afghans and Pakistanis. Few members have joined merely for economic reasons and only a few handful think of 'Wilayat'.¹¹

The IS-K is animous against Shia, non-Sunni Muslims, the West and those who reject the Sharia. Ninety percent of its attacks against specific religious sects were aimed at the Shia community and other minorities like the Hazara Tribe.¹² For example, On June 8, 2021, IS-K shooters opened fire on Hazara labours working in a mine in Baghlan Province, killing around ten and injuring 16.¹³ The IS-K has also criticised the Taliban and on many occasions considered them to be infidels because of their participation in peace negotiations¹⁴ with the United States.¹⁵ In 2021, the IS-K called for retaliation against the Taliban and refused to recognise it as a genuine Islamic leader, terming it a "filthy nationalist".¹⁶ The IS-K has overtly threatened groups that have limited goals and nationalistic approaches like the Afghan Taliban and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT). It condemns many terrorist groups who have sold out to foreign nations -- the Taliban, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jamaat-ud-Dawa, the Haqqani Network, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and the Tehrik e Taliban Pakistan.¹⁷

Modus Operandi

Direct attacks and purification operations against Takfiris (including the Taliban) is the IS-K's primary method of operation. Between 2016 and 2018, the IS-K raised its suicide attacks in Afghanistan from 25 to 56 percent.¹⁸ December 2017 stands out as the IS-K's most active month, when it carried out 15 attacks. Most of these attacks took place in Kabul and Nangarhar. During 2015 and 2016, there were at least 10-12 attacks a month.¹⁹ Since 2018, the IS-K's strength has declined. However, it adopts insurgent tactics to covertly operate across Afghanistan. There have been instances of its fighters in civil clothes mingling with the population and changing into combat fatigues when launching attacks. It has claimed responsibility for the May 14, 2021 explosion at a mosque on the outskirts of Kabul during Eid al-Fitr that killed 12 civilians and wounded at least 20.²⁰

The IS-K's violence chiefly remains localised. Its focus during the 2018 parliamentary elections and residential elections in 2019 was on Kabul and key provincial capitals. Its sleeper cells are active in Kabul, Herat and Jalalabad.²¹ Mostly, its effort are to delegitimise the existing system, challenge democratisation and exploit societal-sectarian differences. The IS-K's tussle with the Taliban and the Afghan National Army (ANA) was over the smuggling routes in Nangarhar, Kunar and Badakhshan. Its success results from various groups collaborating with it and not just because of its armed capability. As one of the embassies noted, "their ability to take ground has been through flag switches; the reason for their expansion in the north wasn't because they possessed any kind of military superiority or operational professionalism, it was because leadership of many other factions took up the IS-K banner and then took it down."²²

The IS-K's operations are primarily for economic gain, and therefore, it has attempted to capture places like Pachirogham, Khogaini and Shirzad, a district famous for its valuable gemstones. Similarly, actions on the corridor between Pakistan and the rest of Central Asia, in Tajikistan, brought it

additional economic benefits as well as advantages against the Taliban.²³ In Pakistan, it has depended upon Sunni supremacist groups like the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi.

The IS-K media has been very effective with its public outreach. It cunningly exploits the media to rationalise its actions. It uses popular media to promote a distinct narrative of Salafi-jihadism as tailored to local preferences and focused on specific themes. **The** IS-K's *Khilafat Ghag* (Voice of the Caliphate) is a well known radio channel throughout Nangarhar and Kunar. It has created several short films, brochures and e-books, publicising these via Facebook, Twitter and Telegram to allure potential recruits. The IS-K has been more agile and foresighted in their radio broadcasts, keeping it diversified as compared to the Taliban.

The IS-K's propaganda revolves around four main themes:-

- a. Inviting people to jihad - Radio channel *Khilafat Ghag* emphasises the importance of the Caliphate as an alternative form of world order and as to how it is a religious obligation for each Muslim to establish it by armed struggle. An essential sub-theme in IS-K's recruitment appeal is its emphasis on the special status of Khorasan as portrayed in apocalyptic jihadi literature.²⁴
- b. Project itself as the only genuine jihadi force in the region – The IS-K frequently highlights aspects of its organisation and ideology that, in its view, make it unique and "the true proprietor of jihad." This includes an emphasis on Salafi-jihadism and showing off its multinational elements. It takes pains to project itself as a follower of the IS's global *manhaj* (authentic understanding of Sharia). It has translated and published the main Salafi-jihadism works into Pashto, Dari and Urdu, particularly the works by early medieval Muslim theologian Ibn Taymiyyah and 18th century Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab on jihad, global relations and the Salafi creed.
- c. Representing a borderless struggle – the IS-K takes pride in its

fighters coming from all regions around Afghanistan. This proves the point that boundaries do not bind it. The IS-K's predominant tactic comprises both local and global objectives. In a video series, the IS-K declared that "There is no doubt that Allah the Almighty blessed us with jihad in the land of Khorasan since a long time ago, and it is from the grace of Allah that we fought any disbeliever who entered the land of Khorasan. All of this is for the sake of establishing the Shariah." It went on to declare, "Know that the Islamic Caliphate is not limited to a particular country. These young men will fight against every disbeliever, whether in the West, East, South, or North."²⁵ On the *Khilafat Ghag*, the IS-K members have talked of fighting Russia and China and liberating East Turkistan before joining other IS armies to topple the western super-powers. They have also mentioned the Central Asian Republics, such as Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, as their target. They show that they are open to accepting fighters from all across the globe and that they respect martyrs and comrades who fight for them. On social media, IS-K activists have published pictures and names of "comrades and martyrs" from Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Myanmar and Gilgit-Baltistan (PoK).²⁶

- d. The rhetorical war against rival jihadi and religious groups – the IS-K's primary method of operating is by criticising and discrediting rival jihadi organisations and questioning their relevance. It has challenged the chair warrior religious groups, particularly the ulemas, Pakistani parties like Jamiat-e-Ulema, Jamaat-e-Islami, Jamaat-ud-Dawah and certain Afghan Islamists like Abdul Rab Rasul Sayyaf who they feel have "sold out their jihad".

On its social media platforms, the IS-K has frequently lambasted the Taliban for their actions and ideologies and addressed them as un-Islamic. It also criticised the Taliban for shaking hands with western apostates,²⁷ casting them as impure, idolatrous and defiant Ahl-e-Sunnat-wal-Jamaat.²⁸

The US and the Taliban peace agreement reached in February 2020,

the IS-K considered it the only offensive jihadist group to attack others.²⁹ Further, in response to the March 25, 2020 attack in Kabul, the United Nations Security Council stated in June that "the IS-K remains one of the threat perceptions to Afghanistan and the wider region."³⁰

Organisational Structure

In 2016, the IS-K's founding member, Hafiz Saeed Khan, was killed by a US drone strike in Nangarhar province. Three successive emirs were also eliminated in 2017 & 2018.

The IS-K maintains a hierarchical leadership structure, led by an Emir - presently, Shahab al-Muhajir. The senior leadership comprises of a four-tier council with a spokesperson, provincial level commanders, deputy chiefs of military, intelligence and logistics, and a Shura Council. In addition, there are commanders at the district level and leaders responsible for various functional elements.³¹ While the early leaders of the IS-K were primarily associated with the core group of TTP commanders who founded the group,³² this has since diversified. Shahab al-Muhajir is of Arab descent and was with Al Qaeda in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region. For the first time, the IS-K has a leader from outside South Asia.³³

Recent inputs reveal that the group's leadership have members who were formerly associated with the Lashkar-e-Taiba and Al Qaeda. These fighters have significant local knowledge and expertise in insurgent warfare, raising the IS-K's tactical efficacy.³⁴ It has successfully recruited fighters by exploiting rifts between rival groups and by offering cash incentives.³⁵

Leadership

Since the IS-K has a strong connection with the IS, the latter controls the IS-K whenever required.³⁶ The IS' senior leadership has been appointing IS-K leaders since the terror outfit was formed in 2015.

The IS-K has suffered military defeats and regional losses. In 2019,

Abdullah, also known as Mawlawi Aslam Farooqi, became the leader of the IS-K. But on April 5, 2020, he was arrested by Afghan security forces. In June 2020, Shahab al-Muhajir was appointed as the *wali* (or governor) for the region after three of his predecessors were killed in US-led counter-terrorist operations. Al-Muhajir is an effective operator. As a team of experts working for the UN Security Council reported, Al-Muhajir "served as (the IS') chief planner for high-profile attacks in Kabul and other urban areas."³⁷

It is assessed that there are some 1500 to 2000 members of the IS-K in East Afghanistan. But there are also assumptions that several hundred are located around on Afghanistan's borders and in Pakistan.³⁸

According to the Centre for International Security and Cooperation, the main IS-K leaders are:

- Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (2010-2019) was a global leader of the IS to whom every IS *wilayat* had pledged allegiance.
- Muslim Dost (2014-2015) was the first high-profile jihadist leader from outside Iraq and Syria to publicly declare allegiance to the IS. During his years as a member of the IS-K, Dost served as a significant commander and recruiter, using pamphlets and graffiti to spread pro-IS messages in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region.
- Hafiz Saeed Khan (2015-July 2016) defected from the TTP and pledged allegiance to IS. On January 26, 2015, senior IS leader and spokesperson Abu Mohammed al-Adani backed him, naming him as Emir of the IS-K. Abdulrazaq Mehdi (- November 30, 2017) was the deputy chief of the IS-K.
- Leadership succession has been dictated by elimination by Afghan and US forces. The present leader, since April 2020, is Shahab al-Mujahir.³⁹

Recruitment and Funding

The IS-K operates through various social media platforms such as the 'Telegram' to hire new members and raise funds. It recruits through an Instagram channel called 'Chronicle Foundation'. The track has more than 5,000 members. In April 2019, encouraged by Pakistan-based recruiters, some members tried to join the IS-K in Afghanistan via Iran. The National Investigation Agency (NIA) of India has also identified IS-K operatives and its Indian modules in communications with members for recruitment from Syria, Iraq, Africa and other places. More than two dozen Indians joined the outfit in the year 2015. Due to territorial losses, the IS-K has reportedly shifted its recruitment to focus on disaffected urban areas and non-Pashtun youth.

The IS-K receives money from *hawala* networks of criminal enterprise from foreign sympathisers and direct subsidies from the IS. According to the US Treasury Department statement, "The IS-K raises funds through a combination of local donations, extortion and financial support from core Islamic State leadership."⁴⁰ On November 22, 2021, the US Department of the Treasury Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) designated Ismatullah Khalozai as the financial facilitator for the IS-K. Khalozai was found to be supporting international financial transactions that fund human trafficking networks and facilitating movement of foreign fighters who seek to escalate the situation in Afghanistan as well as the entire region.⁴¹

So far, the group has received funding over \$100 million from the IS group's core organisational body in Iraq and Syria.⁴²

Current Status

Previously, it was observed that due to heavy counterterrorism operations, the IS-K had withdrawn itself to a limited area, leading to a reduction in the number of its attacks. But since the US and its NATO allies have withdrawn from Afghanistan, there is a kind of power vacuum despite the Taliban coming

into power. This situation has plausibly encouraged groups such as the IS-K to challenge the Taliban for power and territorial control and possibly push the country deeper into civil war.

In the immediate term, the IS-K poses a threat to Afghan civilians and the fledgling Taliban government in Afghanistan. The IS-K is likely to be encouraged by its August 26 attack at the Kabul airport and will attempt to take advantage of the political instability. It is likely to continue to plan and conduct attacks and aggressively work towards recruitment. However, its success will be subject to several factors, including how fast the Taliban succeeds in establishing a stable government, its counter-terrorism efforts and the IS-K's ability to capture the hearts and minds of the local populace.

Should the Taliban successfully consolidate its control over the nation and manage to establish a regular central government, then the IS-K's expansion could be limited, though violence is likely to continue. But since no such counter-terrorism operations are being conducted, there is a possibility that the IS-K will be able to get some breathing time and up its ante against the Taliban and other forces working to normalise the situation in Afghanistan. Although the United States conducted a drone strike against an unnamed IS-K leader on August 27, 2021⁴³, the US government doesn't have any plans to continue with any counter-terrorism efforts in Afghanistan.⁴⁴

The extent to which the IS-K manages to regroup will also be decided by how well the Taliban and other regional governments, including Pakistan and China, devise their counter-terrorism actions. The congressionally mandated Afghanistan Study Group, in its final report, has opined that the Taliban "would be challenged to contain IS-K without additional support."⁴⁵

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CONCLUSION

After years of concerted global, regional and national campaigns against terror, there is a realisation that the threat has not gone away. While greater cooperation and coordinated action by states has certainly stemmed potential terror activities worldwide, terror groups have changed their operational tactic, expanded their networks and adapted to the changing security ecosystem to continue to pose a critical challenge to security managers at the global level, making it necessary for government and intelligence agencies to engage in a sustained conversation over the magnitude of the threat posed by terrorist organisations at the local, national and global levels.

The capture of Kabul by the Taliban in August 2021 has, indeed, woken us up to the unpleasant reality of an outfit previously regarded as a terror organisation, being accepted and accommodated as a legitimate claimant to power in Afghanistan. Only months before, in June 2021, the Pentagon had argued that groups like al-Qa'ida could revive and threaten the world and “can grow much faster than expected”¹, perhaps, in anticipation of the Taliban takeover. The opening part of Biden's interim national security management framework also notes that power configuration at the international level has changed and the world is “in crisis.”... [therefore], “[w]e must align our

approach with the fight against terrorism, including aligning our resources with evolving threats."²

The trends in terrorism and counter-terrorism at the regional and global levels are discussed in the following paragraphs, with a focus on the past, present, and future trajectories of terrorism.

Past

It is challenging to assess the progress made in the fight against terrorism in the last two decades, especially in the aftermath of the Taliban recapture of Afghanistan. This is despite the fact that the world has made significant strides in the fight against Salafi jihadis, their organisations and networks. Counter-terrorism has been a rather risky endeavour because of a variety of reasons. The jihadis appear prepared to play a long drawn-out battle of patience with the West, measured in terms of generations and not years. Moreover, some states use terrorism as an instrument of their policy vis-à-vis their rivals. Many jihadi groups are involved in domestic and regional conflicts and civil wars.

Nevertheless, much has been achieved in the last two decades of the war on terror. Counter-terrorism operations have resulted in the successful elimination of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, Osama bin Laden, Anwar al-Awlaki, Abu Yahya al-Libi, Ahmed Abdi Godane, Abu Khayr al-Masri, Hamza bin Ladin, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, Qasim al-Raymi, and Abu Muhammad al-Masri.³ On October 22, 2021, the Pentagon said that another senior al-Qa'ida leader Abdul Hamid al-Matar was killed in a US drone strike in north-west Syria.

Today al-Qa'ida and the Islamic State do not seem close to their goal of establishing a caliphate. For al-Qa'ida it has been a long-term project. The Islamic State did bring large tracts of territory straddling Iraq and Syria under its control and appeared close to its dream of establishing a caliphate and its Shura even had announced a Caliph, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, to head it. The violence unleashed by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) left the world

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

shocked and outraged. With the death of al-Baghdadi and decimation of the ISIS, its caliphate is in shambles.

However, the return of the Taliban in Afghanistan has reversed the trend of jihadi terrorist groups suffering set-backs worldwide and boosted their ambition to establish an Afghanistan-like Islamic Emirate in different parts of the world. Moreover, the Taliban example has proved the limits of the use of overwhelming power to root out terrorism in countries steeped in regressive social ethos. The claim of the Taliban or Afghan Mujahideen that they have defeated yet another super-power (the first being the Soviets in the 1980s) is likely to encourage similar jihadi organisations to continue with their struggle to bring Islamic rule in areas of their operation. The franchisees of al-Qaeda and ISIS are on an assertive mode in different parts of the world starting from countries in Africa to the Philippines.

Present

There is also rivalry, competition and collaboration between jihadi groups across the world and they adopt different violent strategies to achieve their goals. Whatever is happening in the Horn of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula may be opposite of what is happening in the Levant, or in southern Philippines. However, what is certain is that the world's jihadi movement will continue to adapt, transform, and evolve with some groups splitting up and others coming together.

By one estimate, there are four times more jihadis today than there were on September 11, 2001, a dramatic increase at any rate. The al-Qaeda's global network alone, to say the least about the Islamic State, operates in more countries now than ever before on 11 September and could have about 20,000 troops.⁴ According to a UN report released in July 2021, "the withdrawal of American troops and the small defeat of the African Union Mission in Somalia left Somali Special Forces fighting to capture al-Shabaab without strategic assistance," while in the Sahel, the Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimeen (JNIM) has expanded its constituency as France cuts its military to fight the jihadis.⁵

As has been discussed earlier, twenty years of war against terrorism efforts have had a profound impact on both al-Qa'ida and the Islamic State. If current trends continue, it is to be expected that the core establishments of these terror groups will further disintegrate and lose their strength. However, with the Taliban taking control of Afghanistan after the withdrawal of US troops, it is possible that Afghanistan could once again become a significant base for foreign fighters and jihadis from around the world. Unfortunately, this could lead to international threats from the Afghanistan-Pakistan region.

This section examines the trajectory of jihadi terrorism in different regions of the world.

Sub-Saharan Africa

According to the United Nations report, "the most notable development" in the first half of 2021, "was the emergence of Africa as a region most affected by terrorism, in which a large number of casualties were brought [by jihadi terrorist groups]."⁶ From Mali to Mozambique, radical jihadis like as al-Qa'ida and its allies in the Islamic State, sought to take advantage of sub-Saharan Africa borders, weak security forces and ethnic tensions and nationalities. The Islamic State, in particular, has made the expansion in sub-Saharan Africa a priority, providing more direction and material assistance to a region previously ignored by IS.⁷ Al-Shabaab remains a threat to Somalia and its surroundings. Al-Shabaab could also increase its focus beyond East Africa. And, while Somalia was under the al-Shabaab rule, the Islamic State managed to keep its territory in the country, especially in Puntland and ISCAP in Mozambique.⁸

The threat is high on the other side of Africa. Towards the end of May 2021, Mali was attacked for the second time in less than a year, making it difficult to fight terrorism in the region.⁹ Of the top 10 countries affected by the Islamic State and al-Qaeda attacks in 2021 (since July), seven are found to have taken place in sub-Saharan Africa: Somalia (95 attacks), Nigeria (65), Cameroon (30), Mozambique (29), Niger (22), Mali (19) and Kenya (19).¹⁰

South Asia

The Taliban takeover of Afghanistan by the end of July 2021 could breathe new life into the group as it aims to tighten its grip over the war-ravaged state. Further, the Islamic State Khorasan (IS-K) has announced its presence in Afghanistan in recent years. It had launched a series of major terrorist attacks, including an attack on the maternity ward and a girls' school, and it targeted Shi'a Hazaras two years ago.¹¹ Without the presence of the US, and international troops, the IS-K is likely to be well-positioned. In May 2021, the IS-K reported fifteen times more attacks as it occurred during the same period in 2020, coinciding with the first phase of the COVID-19 epidemic.¹²

The annual report by the UN Taliban Sanctions Monitoring Team in 2021 observed that the IS-K "by aligning itself as the rejectionist group in Afghanistan," could benefit by recruiting unauthorised Taliban members and other soldiers to join its organisation.¹³ The revived IS-K in Afghanistan is likely to threaten Iran, which may re-direct some of the Liwa Fatemiyoun (Shi'a troops), who fought hard from Syria, to Afghanistan with a specific order to help the Afghan Shi'as fight the Sunni jihadis.¹⁴

Other parts of South Asia can also see the expansion of jihadi groups, especially in Bangladesh, the Maldives, Sri Lanka and the Kashmir region. Additionally, it may carry out attacks in various parts of India and use sectarianism and communalism to divide Muslims and non-Muslims throughout the region.

Middle East

One of the essential factors in countering terrorist groups has been a move by them to establish their emirates in a particular locale. The worst example has been by al-Qa'ida wherein its franchisees have penetrated regional civil society organisations. Al-Qa'ida has done this successfully in Yemen and North Africa with AQAP and AQIM, respectively.¹⁵ Another example could be the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) led by Muhammad al-Julani; The HTS

branched out of Jabhat al-Nusra, and later rebranded itself as Jabhat Fateh al-Sham (JFS).¹⁶

Violent fighting between the Hamas and the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) in May 2021 has thrown the spotlight again on the Arab-Israeli conflict. Several countries like Bahrain, Morocco, Sudan and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) entered into "normal" agreements with Israel following the Abraham Accord.¹⁷

Future

The rise of the Islamic State exposed jihadist tactics of carrying out opportunistic attacks. Its leaders are urging their followers to attack with whatever they can make use of, starting from vehicles to using knives and stones. Attacks with explosive laden trucks have been carried out by many terrorists - in Nice (2016), Berlin (2016), Stockholm (2017) and New York City (2017), among other places causing significant casualties. Islamic State spokesman Abu Muhammad al-Adnani in a speech in September 2014, said: "If you don't find an IED or a bullet, then hit the head of the American or the Frenchman with a rock, or slaughter him with a knife, or run him over with your car."¹⁸

Terrorists are likely to seek out emerging technologies and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and artillery or deadly weapons in their relentless pursuit of raining terror on local people. As Audrey Kurth Cronin noted, "the level of system integration and command control and the emerging technologies it provides has never been achieved by smaller groups."¹⁹ Former National Security official in the U.S., Mary McCord, warned in 2018, "The global availability of blueprints for production of plastic guns could mean that the extremists could make imperceptible firearms for use against Americans here in the homeland."²⁰

Terrorist groups, including the Islamic State, the Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Jabhat al-Nusra, have all shown growing interest in the use of drones.

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

The Islamic State has gone to the extent of having a dedicated unit of drones, known as the "Unmanned Aircraft for" -Mujahideen."²¹ The Islamic State, in particular, has shown that when it comes to drones, it is smart, seeks solutions and embraces the concept of Do-It-Yourself (DIY) among those forces assigned to the program. With the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), in the near future, terrorists can release drone mobs or stabilise self-propelled vehicles that could be sent as a car bomb without a driver. Also, with crypto-currencies becoming pervasive in everyday life, it will provide terrorists with an opportunity to send money to their operatives in a different country anonymously. The recent development of crypto-currencies has made them attractive to terrorists seeking to transfer, store, or collect funds beyond the purview of a licit financial system.

In 2020, the US Department of Justice announced the most prominent hijacking of accounts of crypto-currency organisations, in which terrorists fund campaigns sponsored by al- al-Qa' ida, the Islamic State, and the Hamas military, al-Qassam Brigades.²² In the ongoing cat-and-mouse game of terrorist financing, it is inevitable that these terrorist groups and others will continue to devise methods of avoiding detection by the authorities as they adapt to the cyber era. UN member states have raised concerns about the growing use of crypto-currencies by terrorists.

Conclusion

The international jihadist movement has survived the attacks of the most powerful military alliance in modern history, led by the United States. While its global base has dwindled, the campaign has gained local and regional influence. As Ali Soufan puts it, the jihadi ideology continues to provide "a renewable resource."²³ The fanatic ideology still inspires violent domestic extremists in the West to invade, take over the vast range of western powers and their intelligence agencies.

The ongoing pandemic of COVID-19 will inevitably require a change in priorities, with additional resources allocated for public health and emergency

response, shifting attention and capacity to deal with the current epidemic, and preparing for future disasters. The COVID-19 epidemic has already erupted and will continue to provide countless opportunities for terrorist groups.

In Lebanon, the Hezbollah filled the administrative space and received public support for fulfilling the role of public health amid the epidemic. In Pakistan, the Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Jaish-e-Muhammad provide critical care to COVID-affected citizens. Worldwide, terrorists, rebels, and other powerful actors have used the COVID-19 epidemic to defame governments, recruit new members and spread their message among docile masses.

There is also a war-within-a-war going on in jihadi circles and how this will play out will also affect the strength of radicals. Over the past several years, al-Qa'ida and the Islamic State ideologues have been engaged in discourses on various aspects of Islam and disagreements among them may keep them apart, or even trigger violent encounters, which may weaken these groups.

In East Africa, the Islamic State and al-Shabaab have been fighting for the past few years. In the Arabian Peninsula, AQAP and the the Islamic State of Yemen have repeatedly clashed, fought for territory and securing of jobs. The Taliban-al-Qaida alliance in Afghanistan continues to fight the IS-K. In the *Al Naba* magazine, published after the Taliban invasion of Kabul, the Islamic State accused the Taliban of being a "hypocritical Islamist group" used by the United States to mislead Muslims deliberately.²⁴ The Islamic State has also said it is preparing for a new jihadist movement, which could show a plan to strengthen its focus on Afghanistan's theatre in the coming months.

Lastly, the terror climate is expected to be influenced by the movement of internally displaced people in terror-affected regions. Humanitarian disasters, floods, droughts, wildfires and many other climate-related issues may spread unusual migration across borders and lead to regional unrest. This instability can be seen in countries already at risk of lacking infrastructure to protect people from the distressing effects of climate change. Economic pressures

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

and limited resources can also exacerbate some fragile situations in which terrorists are already thriving. The long-term effects of climate change can be devastating, leading to massive conflict and violence while supporting and increasing the drivers of terrorism plaguing the weak and failing states today.

All in all, the threat from terror organisations is far from over. Therefore, there is a need to continuously track the evolution and growth of these outfits and map out their ideology, orientation, areas of influence and their agenda to make it possible for policy makers to evolve counter-measures to deal with them effectively.

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TERRORISM DATABASES AND DATA SETS: INVENTORY

Academic, Think Tank And Independent Databases

Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED)

Host Institution: University of Surrey, United Kingdom.

Scope: Political violence and protest in Africa (1997 – Present) and Asia from 2010.

Access: Free.

Website: <http://www.acleddata.com>

E-Mail: <http://acleddata.com/contact/>

Summary: The ACLED data set comprises political violence data from Africa, both historical and real-time, covering the period 1997 until the present. In addition, data covering Asia from 2010 onwards is currently being coded. The data set also provides real-time updates. The ACLED project produces an annual data set. Events data includes: date, location, type of violence and actors.

Big, Allied and Dangerous (BAAD) Database 1 - Lethality Data, 1998-2005.

Host Institution: The Project on Violent Conflict (PVC) Rockefeller College of Public Affairs & Policy, University of Albany, State University of New York (SUNY), United States.

Scope: Terrorist groups, ideologies, fatalities, religion.

Access: Free.

Website: <http://www.albany.edu/pvc/data.shtml>

E-Mail: rg8097@albany.edu

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

Summary: The Big, Allied and Dangerous (BAAD) Database's principal focus is on terrorist organizational characteristics. The database is divided into two data sets. BAAD1 codifies the activities of 395 terrorist Organisations between 1998 and 2005. BAAD2 codifies the organizational variables of terrorist groups, for example: size, structure, ideology, financial support and social network data. Further development of the BAAD datasets in conjunction with the University of Maryland's National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) is now available via their new Big, Allied and Dangerous (BAAD) online platform.

BBC News Database of Jihadists

Host Institution: British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), London, United Kingdom.

Scope: Database of United Kingdom individuals successfully prosecuted since 2014 for Jihadist activities and individuals who have died or are in the Syria or Iraq region.

Access: Free.

Website: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-32026985>

E-Mail: N/A

Summary: This interactive BBC News database presents users with a series of interactive filters detailing individuals who have either been convicted, have died or are still at large in the Syria/Iraq region in connection with jihadist activities. The filters include, for example, runaway teenagers, suicide bombers, female extremists and returnees among several other search criteria. A short synopsis of each case is generated by the database, with hyperlinks to BBC News website pages. The database contains 269 jihadists. The database is generated from open source material and BBC research.

B'Tselem Statistical Data Sets

Host Institution: B'Tselem - The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, Jerusalem, Israel.

Scope: Fatalities on Palestinian, Israeli and third party nationals killed in conflict between Israel and Palestinians.

Access: Free.

Website: <http://www.btselem.org/statistics>

E-Mail: Mail:@btselem.org

Summary: The B'Tselem Statistical Data Sets records fatalities resulting from the on-going conflict between Israel and Palestinians. Key variables include the name of the person(s) killed, residence, event date, location and the agent that caused the fatality. The database records incidents since 2000. Further detailed statistical data on fatalities are listed within B'Tselem's website.

Canadian Incident Database (CIDB)

Host Institution: Canadian Network for Research on Terrorism, Security and Society (TSAS), Canada.

Scope: Incidents of terrorism and extreme crime incidents in Canada from 1960

onwards.

Access: Free.

Website: <http://www.extremism.ca/default.aspx>

E-Mail: N/A Twitter: @tsasnetwork

Summary: The Canadian Incident Database (CIDB) provides data on terrorism and extreme crime incidents in Canada dating back to 1960. Source data is un-classified. The CIDB project was developed in conjunction with the Canadian Safety and Security ProgramEs (CSSP) National Security Data Initiative (NDSI). Five Canadian Universities work with the TSAS CIDB to support the database: Simon Fraser University, the University of British Columbia, the University of Waterloo, Carleton University and the Université de Montréal.

Chronology of Jihadism in Western Europe 1994–2007: Planned, Prepared and Executed Terrorist Attacks

Host Institution: [Academic Publication] Studies in Conflict and Terrorism, Vol. 31, Iss. 10, 2008. pp.924-946. Taylor & Frances Online.

Scope: Jihadism in Western Europe 1994 – 2007.

Access: Free.

Website: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10576100802339185>

Summary: This Chronology of Jihadism in Western Europe 1994-2007, prepared by Petter Nesser, lists attacks by salafi-jihadis (attempted and executed attacks), using open source material.

Chronological List of Armenian Terrorist Activities from 1918 to 1989

Host Institution: Armenian Genocide Resource Center.

Scope: Armenian terrorist activity 1918-1989.

Access: Free.

Website: <http://armenians-1915.blogspot.com/2009/01/2694-chronological-list-of-armenian.html>

Summary: This blog site holds a collection of resources on Armenian terrorist activity including a Chronology of Armenian Terrorist Activities from 1918-1999. Other source material includes historical newspaper screen shots from the 1800's onwards and research papers related to Armenian activities.

Comprehensive Database of African Counter-Terrorism Law and Policy

Host Institution: The Institute for Security Studies (ISS), Pretoria, South Africa. **Scope:** African counter-terrorism law, policy, technical and training issues.

Access: Free.

Website: <https://issafrica.org/ctafrika/african-national-legislation>

E-Mail: iss@issafrica.org

Summary: The Comprehensive Database of African Counter-Terrorism Law and Policy

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

holds a wide- ranging collection of legislation relating to counter-terrorism in the continent of Africa. In addition, the database contains policy documents, regional and international instruments, training manuals and technical assistance. The database can be queried using the variables: keywords, title, language, country and year. Documents produced are in .PDF format.

Countermeasures against Extremism and Terrorism (CoMET) Database

Host Institution: START National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, University of Maryland, Maryland (MD), United States.

Scope: Records countermeasures by government and non-government agencies against terrorist and extremist activity.

Access: Upon request.

Website: <http://www.start.umd.edu//news/new-database-provides-insights-terrorism-countermeasures>

E-Mail: infostart@start.umd.edu

Summary: The Countermeasures against Extremism and Terrorism (CoMET) Database logs countermeasures by both Government and non-government actors against the operations of UK Home-grown Islamic Violent Extremist (HIVE-UK), al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Anti-Abortion Extremists (AAE) in the United States. Statistical data is also produced.

Criminal Proceedings: A Timeline of U.S. Terror Cases

Host Institution: Anti-Defamation League (ADL). United States.

Scope: American Muslim extremists charged, convicted or sentenced on terrorism related offences.

Access: Free.

Website: http://archive.adl.org/main_Terrorism/american_muslim_extremists_criminal_proceedings.htm?Multi_page_sections=sHeading_2

E-Mail: <http://support.adl.org/site/PageNavigator/contactus.html>

Summary: Criminal Proceedings: A timeline of U.S. Terror Cases is produced by the United States Anti- Defamation League (ADL). The timeline covers the period 2002-2012 and lists American Muslim extremists who have been charged with terrorism-related incidents. It also includes individuals convicted and sentenced. Each respective yearly list provides chronological entries of terrorism-related criminal proceedings.

Critical Infrastructure Terrorist Attack (CrITerA) Database

Host Institution: Center for Terrorism and Intelligence Studies (CETIS), San Jose (CA), United States.

Scope: Terrorist attacks against critical infrastructure.

Access: Contact CETIS.

Website: <http://www.cetisresearch.org/research.htm>

Terrorism Databases And Data Sets: Inventory

E-Mail: blair@cetisresearch.org

Summary: The Critical Infrastructure Terrorist Attack (CrITerA) Database codes terrorist attacks against critical infrastructure. The database does not record every terrorist incident against critical infrastructure. The CrITerA database holds in excess of 3,000 cases covering the temporal period 1933 until present day.

Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) Harmony Database

Host Institution: The Combating Terrorism Center (CTC), United States Military Academy at West Point, New York (NY), United States.

Scope: Inner-functioning of al-Qa'ida and associate movements.

Access: Free.

Website: <https://ctc.usma.edu/programs-resources/harmony-program>

E-Mail: <https://ctc.usma.edu/contact>

Summary: The CTC Harmony database program allows analysts and researchers to access material sourced from the U.S. Department of Defence's Harmony database. The programs aim is to contextualise primary source material related to the inner functions of al-Qa'ida, its associates and related terrorism and security issues. The database contains thousands of documents, personal letters and multimedia. The CTC produce analytical reports to accompany respective material. The Harmony material was acquired during operations in Afghanistan, Iraq and other military theatre. The CTC acknowledges that the material collected for the Harmony database was not collected on a scientific basis.

Counter-Terrorism Initiatives (African Union) Resource Database

Host Institution: Canadian Global Security. Canada

Scope: Counter-Terrorism policy-oriented research within the African Union

Access: Free.

Website: <http://www.canadianglobalsecurity.com/project/ctiau/>

E-Mail: aedgar@wlu.ca

Summary: The Counter-Terrorism Initiatives (African Union) Resource Database allows users to filter and search for policy orientated Counter-terrorism initiatives within the African Union.

Database on Terrorism in Germany (DTG)

Host Institution: German Institute on Radicalization and De-Radicalization Studies, Germany.

Scope: Right-wing extremism and Jihadism in Germany.

Access: Contact Institute.

Website: <http://www.girds.org/projects/database-on-terrorism-in-germany-right-wing-extremism>

E-Mail: contact@girds.org

Summary: The Database on Terrorism in Germany (DTG) focuses on two main

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

streams: right-wing extremism (DTGrwx) and Jihadism terrorism in Germany (DTG-II). The database contains quantitative data incidents on right-wing terrorism (explosive incidents). Variables include data on right-wing arson attacks, murders, kidnappings, extortions and robberies – all dating back from 1971- present. Data on right-wing terrorist actors are also held (1963 - present). The database holds qualitative data including media reports, court verdicts and interviews with victims and perpetrators.

Domestic Terrorist Victims Dataset (Version 1)

Host Institution: Luis de la Calle and Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca, Centre for Advanced Study in the Social Sciences, Fundación Juan March, Madrid, Spain.

Scope: Domestic Terrorism Killings, Western Europe (1965-2005).

Access: Free.

Website: <http://www.march.es/ceacs/proyectos/dtv/datasets.asp>

E-Mail: <http://www.march.es/ceacs/proyectos/dtv/people.asp>

Summary: The Domestic Terrorist Victims dataset (Version 1) has coded 4,955 terrorist killings in Western Europe over a temporal period of thirty years (1965-1995). Data set variables include location, date, victim name(s), perpetrators (terrorist group), and method of killing. Source data is derived from monographs, local media and victims lists.

Global Pathfinder

Host Institution: International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR), S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore.

Scope: Global terrorism and political violence, with specific emphasis on Asia-Pacific.

Access: Subscription-based.

Website: <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/research/icpvtr>

E-Mail: isngsp@ntu.edu.sg

Summary: The Global Pathfinder database holds a large array of data, particularly focusing on the Asia-Pacific region. This includes: terrorism events data, terrorist group profiles, counter-terrorism literature, training manuals and legal documentation. Reports, graphs and statistical data can also be generated.

Global Terrorism Database (GTD)

Host Institution: START National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism. University of Maryland, Maryland (MD), United States.

Scope: Domestic and International Terrorism.

Access: Free.

Website: <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd>

E-Mail: infostart@start.umd.edu

Summary: The Global Terrorism Database (GTD) contains in excess of 170,000 terrorist incidents, covering the period 1970-2016. The data is unclassified. The early

Terrorism Databases And Data Sets: Inventory

data for the GTD was sourced from the former Pinkerton's Global Intelligence Services (PGIS) database (1970-1993). Building upon this foundation, the GTD was developed as a terrorism events database in its own right codifying events data retrospectively and in real-time. The GTD provides a detailed array of events data, incident summary and graphical functions. Further additions to the GTD include data sets previously held by the National Counterterrorism Center's (NCTC) Worldwide Incidents Tracking System (WITS).

Global Terrorism Index 2016

Host Institution: Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), Sydney, NSW, Australia.

Scope: Summary of trends and patterns in terrorism covering the period 2000-2015 worldwide.

Access: Free.

Website: <http://economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Global-Terrorism-Index-2016.2.pdf>

E-Mail: info@visionofhumanity.org

Summary: This annual publication by the Institute for Economics and Peace (Sydney, NSW, Australia) provides a large collection of statistical data and commentary derived from the Global Terrorism Database (GTD), Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), at the University of Maryland. A comprehensive series of indexes ranks 163 countries and their impact upon terrorism.

The International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism, ICT's Incidents and Activists Database

Host Institution: International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT), Interdisciplinary Center (IDC), Herzliya, Israel.

Scope: Domestic and International Terrorism.

Access: Free.

Website: <http://www.ict.org.il/ResearchPublications/DatabaseReports/tabid/380/Default.aspx>

Summary: Dating back to 1975, the ICT Database is one of the longest established databases on terrorism. The database holds in excess of 33,000 terrorist and counter-terrorist incidents. Reports generated from the ICT database contain a mixture of statistical data, chronological listings of terrorism events, narrative commentary and terrorism and counter-terrorism related news and regional developments.

Iraq Body Count

Host Institution: Conflict Casualties Monitor LTD, London, United Kingdom.

Scope: Solely civilian violent deaths from the post-invasion of Iraq 2003.

Access: Free.

Website: <https://www.iraqbodycount.org/database/>

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

E-Mail: analyst@iraqbodycount.org

Summary: The Iraq Body Count (IBC) records solely civilian violent deaths from 2003 onwards in the post-invasion period of the Iraq war of 2003, as a result of military intervention by the United States and some of its allies.

Data Set: ISVG Violent Extremism Knowledge Base (VKB)

Host Institution: Institute for the Study of Violent Groups, University of New Haven, Connecticut, (CT), United States.

Scope: Violent extremism and transnational crime.

Access: Upon request.

Website: <http://www.isvg.org/capabilities-database-structure.php>

E-Mail: info@isvg.org

Summary: The ISVG relational database contains over 1500 variables relating to violent extremism and transnational crime. Open-source data populating the database is eclectic. Information ranges from news media, private sector intelligence data, government and non-governmental (NGO) reports to court papers and third-party data sets. The relational design of the database permits link association across the 223,000 incidents logged worldwide. A range of advanced functional operations provide temporal, link association, statistical and geographical visualizations.

John Jay and ARTIS Transnational Terrorism

Database Host Institution: The City University of New York, United States.

Scope: Islamist terrorists and associates.

Access: Free.

Website: <http://doitapps.jjay.cuny.edu/jjatt/index.php>

E-Mail: terrorism@jjay.cuny.edu

Summary: The John Jay and ARTIS Transnational Database codes Islamist terrorists and associates who have committed acts of terrorism as part of a “core” network. The database codifies individuals based on their level of contribution to an attack. The database contains information on individual attributes, attack network data and terrorist group evolution data. The data sets are available in a.CSV and .XLS format, with accompanying codebooks. The project was funded by the United States Air Force Office of Scientific Research (AFOSR).

Monterey WMD Terrorism Database

Host Institution: Center for Nonproliferation Studies’ WMD Terrorism Research Program, Monterey Institute of International Studies, Monterey, California, (CA) United States.

Scope: Incidents relating to acquisition, possession, the threat and use of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) by sub-state actors.

Access: Restricted.

Website: <http://wmddb.miiis.edu/>

E-Mail: wmdt@miiis.edu

Summary: The Monterey Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) Database codifies incidents by sub-state actors who acquire, possess, threaten and use Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). The database holds in excess of 1100 events dating back to 1900. Specific types of incidents would relate to the use of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear materials (CBRN). The WMD Terrorism Database is hosted and operated by the Center for Nonproliferation Studies, at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies, Monterey, California, United States.

MPAC Post 9/11 Terrorism Incident Database

Host Institution: Muslim Public Affairs Council, Washington, D.C., United States.

Scope: Muslim and non-Muslim extremist acts and threats against the United States post 9/11.

Access: Free.

Website: <https://www.mpac.org/publications/policy-papers/post-911-terrorism-database.php> [Publication]

E-Mail: contact@mpac.org

Summary: The MPAC Post 9/11 Terrorism Incident Database contains two respective data sets on Muslim and non-Muslim acts and threats against the United States post 9/11. Recently, a third data set codifying Muslim extremist plots since the election of President Barack Obama has been added. The Muslim data set codifies incidents and plots originating both within and-out with the United States. The non-Muslim data set only records plots and terrorist events originating within the United States.

Profiles of Incidents involving CBRN by Non-state actors (POICN) Database

Host Institution: START National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism. University of Maryland, Maryland, (MD), United States.

Scope: Terrorism events data related to CBRN agents.

Access: Contact START.

Website: <http://www.start.umd.edu/start/announcements/announcement.asp?id=412>

E-Mail: infostart@start.umd.edu

Summary: The POICN database is an open-source fully relational database recording terrorism events data with reference to Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) material and related weapons.

Replication Data: Revolutionary Terrorism in the Developed World, 1970-2000

Host Institution: [Publication] Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca: "Revolutionary Dreams and Terrorist Violence in the Developed World: Explaining Country Variation", *Journal of Peace Research*, 46 (5) 2009: 687-706.

Scope: See **summary** below.

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

Access: Free.

Website: <http://www.march.es/ceacs/proyectos/dtv/datasets.asp>

E-Mail: <http://www.march.es/ceacs/proyectos/dtv/people.asp>

Summary: The replication files and accompanying information used in this publication can be found at the web site cited above.

Replication Data: Rebels Without a Territory. An Analysis of Non-Territorial Conflicts in the World, 1970-1997.

Host Institution: [Publication] De la Calle, Luis and Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca. 2012. :Rebels Without a Territory. An Analysis of Non-territorial Conflicts in the World, 1970-1997R. Journal of Conflict Resolution. Online first: April 18, 2012.

Scope: See summary below.

Access: Free.

Website: <http://www.march.es/ceacs/proyectos/dtv/datasets.asp>

E-Mail: <http://www.march.es/ceacs/proyectos/dtv/people.asp>

Summary: The replication files and accompanying information used in this publication can be found at the web site cited above.

South Asia Terrorism Portal

Host Institution: Institute for Conflict Management, New Delhi, India.

Scope: South Asia: domestic and international terrorism events data.

Access: Free.

Website: <http://www.satp.org>

E-Mail: icm@satp.org

Summary: The South Asia Terrorism Portal serves a large geographic expanse. Spatial coverage of terrorism events data is wide, ranging from Pakistan to Nepal and India to Sri Lanka among others. The SATP includes chronologies, statistical data, maps, graphs and detailed commentary on terrorist events within the region. A series of weekly, monthly and yearly reports is produced. The SATP was founded in 2000.

Terrorism, Counterterrorism and Radicalization (Research Database)

Host Institution: Centre for Terrorism and Counterterrorism (CTC), Leiden University, The Hague, The Netherlands.

Scope: Database of research projects on Terrorism, Counterterrorism and Radicalization in the Netherlands.

Access: Registration Required.

Website: <http://www.terrorismdata.leiden.edu>

E-Mail: infodatabase@campusdenhaag.nl

Summary: The research database Terrorism, Counterterrorism and Radicalization holds an extensive array of terrorism, counterterrorism and radicalization projects underway in

Terrorism Databases And Data Sets: Inventory

The Netherlands. The key categories are: Divisions (Counterterrorism, Future forecasts, Polarization, Radicalization, Terrorism and Flemish-Dutch Network of the Terrorism Research Initiative), Researchers, Organizations and Groups, Areas (Geographic), Categories, Time Frames and Academic Disciplines.

The Terrorism and Extremist Violence in the United States (TEVUS) Database

Host Institution: START National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism. University of Maryland, Maryland, (MD), United States.

Scope: Behavioural, geographic and temporal characteristics of extremist violence in the United States.

Access: Request form - <http://www.start.umd.edu/tevus-portal-access-request>

Website: <http://www.start.umd.edu/tevus-portal>

E-Mail: infostart@start.umd.edu

Summary: The TEVUS database contains open-source data compiled from four related databases, dating back to 1970. These are The American Terrorism Study (ATS), The Global Terrorism Database (GTD), The U.S. Extremist Crime Database (ECDB) and the Profiles of Perpetrators of Terrorism in the United States (PPT-US). Key coded variables include incidents, temporal, behavioural and geographic characteristics of terrorism and extremist violence within the United States. Extensive other units of analysis can be queried on the database including: pre-incident activities and the identification of relationships between, for example, terrorist perpetrators and event incidents.

The Terrorism & Preparedness Data Resource Center (TPDRC)

Host Institution: University of Michigan's Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), Michigan (MI), United States.

Scope: Domestic and international terrorism data.

Access: Free.

Website: <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/content/NACJD/guides/tpdrc.html>

E-Mail: nacjd@icpsr.umich.edu

Summary: The Terrorism & Preparedness Data Resource Center (TPDRC) is a central archive and distribution mechanism for data generated by Government, NGO's and researchers on domestic and international terrorism. Among a wide array of materials the TPDRC holds is data on international terrorism incidents, terrorist organisation, victim data and responses to terrorism.

Terrorism in Western Europe Events Data (TWEED)

Host Institution: Department of Comparative Politics, University of Bergen, Norway.

Scope: Internal Terrorism within 18 Western European Countries.

Access: Free.

Website: <http://folk.uib.no/sspje/tweed.htm>

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

E-Mail: jan.engene@isp.uib.no

Summary: This data set covers terrorist events data in eighteen Western European countries for the period 1950-2004. The TWEED data set covers internal terrorism events and excludes international acts of terrorism. Data used to populate the TWEED data sets is exclusively sourced from Keesing's Records of World Events. The TWEED data set can be downloaded in SPSS format via the TWEED **website**. The code-book for the data set is also available from the **Website**.

United States Extremist Crime Database (ECDB), 1990-2010

Host Institution: START National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism. University of Maryland, Maryland, (MD), United States.

Scope: Violent and non-violent criminal behaviour associated with far right-wing extremists groups in the United States.

Access: Contact START.

Website: <http://www.start.umd.edu/research-projects/united-states-extremist-crime-database-ecdb-1990-2010>

E-Mail: infostart@start.umd.edu

Summary: The United States Extremist Crime Database (ECDB) 1990-2010 contains data on all publicly known violent and financial crimes by extremists with a connection or association with al-Qa'ida and AQAM – its associated movement. The database also codifies data on other extremist groups who form some association with Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Animal Liberation groups. The database is relational in design. Key variables include actual incidents, perpetrators, victims and related organisations.

United States Political Violence Database

Host Institution: See: Dynamics of political instability in the United States, 1780-2010. Journal of Peace Research, 1-15, Sage (2012).

Scope: Political Violence events in the United States (1780-2010).

Access: Free.

Website: http://peterturchin.com/PDF/Turchin_JPR2012.pdf

Summary: The United States Political Violence Database is an amalgam of other research data and the authors own research. It codes political violence events data in the United States, such as acts of terrorism, lynching and riots for the period 1780-2010.

Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) Reports on Political Violence (Bangladesh)

Host Institution: Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Scope: Political violence incidents in Bangladesh between political parties, within political parties and clashes with law enforcement agencies.

Access: Free.

Website: <http://www.askbd.org/ask/2018/01/17/political-violence-january-december-2017/>

E-Mail: <http://www.askbd.org/ask/contact/>

Summary: Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), a legal aid and human rights organisation based in Dhaka, produces a series of monthly political violence incidents occurring within Bangladesh. The political violence incident reports provide data on intra and inter political party violence as well as law enforcement clashes with political parties. They are compiled by the ASK Documentation Unit. Variables include number of incidents, number of injuries and individuals killed.

The BFRS Political Violence in Pakistan Data Set

Host Institution: The Empirical Studies of Conflict Project (ESOC), Princeton University, New Jersey (NJ), United States.

Scope: Incidents of political violence in Pakistan (1988-2011).

Access: Free.

Website: <https://esoc.princeton.edu/files/bfrs-political-violence-pakistan-dataset>

E-Mail: <https://esoc.princeton.edu/contact>

Summary: The BFRS Political Violence in Pakistan Data Set codes incidents of political violence in Pakistan for the period 1988-2011. Key incident variables include: location, type of violence, perpetrator (if known), consequences and cause.

Electoral Political Violence Monitoring Factsheets – Democracy Resource Center, Nepal

Host Institution: Democracy Resource Center, Nepal (DRC-N) Kumaripati, Lalitpur, Nepal.

Scope: Electoral Political Violence Monitoring, Nepal.

Access: Free.

Website: <http://democracyresource.org/political-violence-monitoring>

E-Mail: info@democracyresource.org

Summary: The Democracy Resource Center, Nepal (DRC-N) is a non-profit, non-political organisation focused on promoting democracy in Nepal. The DRC-N also produces a series of analysis update reports on electoral political violence within Nepal. These factsheet updates contain a mixture of qualitative analysis and quantitative data, with accompanying graphics.

Esri Story Maps – Terrorist Attacks

Host Institution: Esri Story Maps and Peace Tech Lab, United States.

Scope: Terrorist attacks worldwide (2016 – present day).

Access: Free.

Website: <https://storymaps.esri.com/stories/terrorist-attacks/>

E-Mail: <https://www.esri.com/en-us/contact#c=gb&t=0>

Summary: The Esri Story Maps provide an interactive chronological map of terrorist attacks worldwide from 2016 until the present day. The project is a joint initiative

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

between Esri Story Maps and Peace Tech Lab. Data used to populate the maps is crowd-sourced from the web site Wikipedia. The web site acknowledges the subjective nature of the definition of terrorism.

Global Conflict Tracker

Host Institution: Council on Foreign Relations, Washington, D.C., United States

Scope: Global conflicts, including transnational terrorism

Access: Free.

Website: <https://www.cfr.org/interactives/global-conflict-tracker#!/global-conflict-tracker>

E-Mail: communications@cfr.org

Summary: The Council on Foreign Relations Global Conflict Tracker allows users to track key global conflicts. This ranges, for example, from Transnational Terrorism in the Middle East to Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. In addition, a broad range of other conflict information is provided, accompanied by commentary and data. Filtering permits users to query the tracker by impact on U.S. interests, region, conflict status and type of conflict.

High Casualty Terrorist Bombings, 1989-2017

Host Institution: Center for Systemic Peace, Vienna, Austria.

Scope: High Casualty Terrorist Bombings $n > = 15$, 1989-2017

Access: Free.

Website: <http://www.systemicpeace.org/inscrdata.html>

E-Mail: contact@systemicpeace.org

Summary: The High Casualty Terrorist Bombings, 1989-2017 (HCTB) data set records bomb attacks directed at civilian and political non-combatant targets instigated by non-state actors. The minimum level entry to the data set is 15 deaths or more. The data set, listed in a spreadsheet, contains 1,272 incidents.

Jihadist Foreign Fighters Monitor (JihFFMON)

Host Institution: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, The Hague, The Netherlands.

Scope: Dutch and Swiss jihadists who have travelled and remain(ed) in Syria and Iraq.

Access: Free.

Website: https://dwh.hcss.nl/apps/ftf_monitor/

E-Mail: reinierbergema@hcss.nl

Summary: The Jihadist Foreign Fighters Monitor (JihFFMON) is an interactive tool allowing users to analyse Dutch and Swiss Jihadist foreign fighters who have travelled to Syria and Iraq. The JihFFMON monitor provides graphical data, filtering functions and statistical data as well as hyperlinks to related documents on travelling jihadi foreign fighters and returnees.

The Kivu Security Tracker (KST)

Host Institution: Congo Research Group, Center on International Cooperation, New York University, New York City (NYC), United States and Human Rights Watch.

Scope: Violence by state security forces and armed groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

Access: Free.

Website: <https://kivusecurity.org/map>

E-Mail: info@kivusecurity.org

Summary: The Kivu Security Tracker is an interactive website that maps violence in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo by state security forces and armed groups. A series of interactive maps (with narrative), graphs and reports provide researchers with both quantitative and qualitative data. The data sets can be used for trend analysis and causal analysis of violations covered by international human rights and humanitarian law. Key incident variables include: violent death, mass rape, political repression and kidnapping (for ransom).

LADB – Latin American Digest Beat

Host Institution: Latin American Digest Beat, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico (NM), United States.

Scope: Social, political and economic issues in South America, including terrorism and political violence incidents.

Website: <http://ladb.m.edu/>

Email: ladb@unm.edu

Summary: LADB – the Latin American Digest Beat, provides a database of over 28,000 articles drawn from a wide array of journals and news media sources on material relating to South America. Key searches on ‘Political Violence’ and ‘Terrorism’ within the archive provides hundreds of entries on political violence and terrorism incidents in South America.

Major Episodes of Political Violence, 1946-2017, War List

Host Institution: Center for Systemic Peace, Vienna, Austria.

Scope: Major episodes of political violence worldwide 1946-2017.

Access: Free.

Website: <http://www.systemicpeace.org/inscrdata.html>

E-Mail: contact@systemicpeace.org

Summary: The Major Episodes of Political Violence (MEPV) data sets records major armed conflict for the period 1946-2017. A major episode of political violence is defined as a minimum of 500 ‘directly related’ deaths. as a result of systematic, intense and sustained political violence. Episodes of political violence in the MEPV can include,

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

for example inter-state, intra-state or communal events.

Muslim Public Opinion on U.S. Policy, Attacks on Civilians, and al Qaeda

Host Institution: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), University of Maryland (MD), United States.

Scope: Muslim public opinion in the larger society on U.S. policy, attacks on civilians and on al Qaeda since 9/11.

Access: Free.

Website: <https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=hdl%3A1902.1/16069>

E-Mail: infostart@start.umd.edu

Summary: This series of survey data sets, undertaken by World Public Opinion in Egypt, Morocco, Pakistan and Indonesia, attempts to assess Muslim public opinion on Islamic groups, including al Qaeda in the post-9/11 era. Among the broad range of key research questions this study assesses, are the views of the larger Muslim societies, their prevailing narratives and their understanding of U.S. efforts to combat terrorism. The research is undertaken by WorldPublicOpinion.org with the principle support from academic staff at the University of Maryland's START consortium.

The Nigeria Security Tracker (NST)

Host Institution: Council on Foreign Relations, Washington, D.C., United States.

Scope: Political violence within Nigeria.

Access: Free.

Website: <https://www.cfr.org/nigeria/nigeria-security-tracker/p29483>

E-Mail: communications@cfr.org

Summary: The Nigeria Security Tracker (NST), hosted by the U.S. Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), records acts of political violence in Nigeria. Source data are derived from weekly surveys of both local Nigerian media reports and international news sources. The NST began monitoring in May 2011. The data and information are mapped onto a graphical interface. This includes an interactive map of Nigeria accompanied by commentary, statistical data and graphs. Much of the NST's data is linked to underlying political, economic and social problems within Nigeria. For example, the weekly tracker includes the activities of militant Islamist groups such as Boko Haram, ethnic group violence and state violence against groups and individuals.

Nuclear Facilities Attack Database (NuFAD)

Host Institution: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), University of Maryland, (MD), United States.

Scope: Global coverage of assaults, sabotages and unarmed breaches of nuclear facilities.

Access: Free.

Website: <http://www.start.umd.edu/nuclear-facilities-attack-database-nufad>

E-Mail: infostart@start.umd.edu

Summary: Developed and operated by START, the Nuclear Facilities Attack Database (NuFAD) is an interactive open source database covering the years 1961-2014. This interactive database recorded 80 incidents of sabotage, assaults and unarmed breaches relating to radiological threats and threats to nuclear facilities. An interactive map, timeline and filtering systems provides users with a series of criteria while an accompanying narrative describes each incident.

Odhikar Statistical Data Sets on Political Violence

Host Institution: Odhikar, Bangladesh.

Scope: Statistics on Political Violence 2001 – May 2018.

Access: Free.

Website: <http://odhikar.org/statistics/statistics-on-political-violence/>

E-Mail: <http://odhikar.org/contact-us/>

Summary: Odhikar, a human rights organisation based in Bangladesh, produces a series of data sets on human rights issues, including incidents of political violence in Bangladesh from 2001-2018. The data sets present data on individuals killed in acts of political violence in Bangladesh as well as data on intra-party clashes between the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and the Awami League (AL).

The Pakistan Geo-Referenced WITS Data (2004-2009)

Host Institution: The Empirical Studies of Conflict Project (ESOC), Princeton University, New Jersey (NJ), United States.

Scope: Incidents of terrorism in Pakistan (civilian and non-combatant) 2004-2009.

Access: Free

Website: <https://esoc.princeton.edu/files/pakistan-geo-referenced-wits-data-2004-2009>

E-Mail: <https://esoc.princeton.edu/contact>

Summary: The Pakistan Geo-Referenced WITS data set contains geo-referenced incidents of terrorism recorded in what was formerly the United States Worldwide Incidents Tracking System (WITS) database. The incidents covering the period 2004-2009 record acts of violence in Pakistan involving non-combatants and civilians.

Pew Research Center - Data Surveys on Terrorism

Host Institution: Pew Research Center, Washington, D.C. United States

Scope: Broad ranging public surveys on terrorism related themes.

Access: Free.

Website: <http://www.pewresearch.org/topics/terrorism/>

E-Mail: info@pewresearch.org

Summary: The Pew Research Center is a non-partisan organisation, headquartered in Washington D.C. It is a 'fact tank' covering a wide array of topics, including social, political, scientific and religious issues. Its key work focuses on public opinion polls and trends research as well as empirical analysis and demography. The Pew Research Center

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

also collates data on terrorism issues related to the United States, e.g., American citizens' concern on ISIS, American attitudes in the post 9/11 period and American Muslims views on groups such as al Qaeda. The reports include narrative commentary, statistical data and graphic information.

Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS)

Host Institution: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), University of Maryland (MD), United States.

Scope: Identified individuals involved in violent and non-violent extremist incidents within the United States (1948-2016).

Access: Free. Requires legal terms and conditions agreement to be completed.

Website: <http://www.start.umd.edu/data-tools/profiles-individual-radicalization-united-states-pirus>

E-Mail: pirus@start.umd.edu

Summary: The Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS) data set contains open source data on 1,800 violent and non-violent extremists with far left, far right and Islamist ideologies, as well as single-issue perpetrators. The data presents information on individuals, their attributes, backgrounds and the processes by which they were radicalised. In addition to the core PIRUS data set, users can access a highly sophisticated data visualization tool.

Profiles of Perpetrators of Terrorism in the United States (PPT-US)

Host Institution: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), University of Maryland (MD), United States.

Scope: Terrorist activity against the United States homeland: 1970-2016.

Access: Free.

Website: <https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=hdl%3A1902.1/17702>

E-Mail: infostart@start.umd.edu

Summary: The PPT-US data set records incidents of terrorist activity by organisations, targeting the United States homeland for the period 1970-2016. An extensive array of variables is included in the PPT-US, including: terrorist incident, perpetrators (organisations) goals, ideology, alliances, networks and financial resources.

Terrorism Against Israel (1920-Present)

Host Institution: Jewish Virtual Library a project of AICE (The American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise), Maryland (MD), United States.

Scope: Terrorism incidents against Israel since 1920.

Access: Free.

Website: <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/terrorism-against-israel>

E-Mail: <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/contact-us>

Terrorism Databases And Data Sets: Inventory

Summary: The Jewish Virtual Library (JVL) is a project of The American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise (AICE). The JVL publishes an extensive set of data on terrorism incidents against Israel, covering also the period before the country came into existence. The figures dating back to 1920, include data and statistics on fatal attacks, trends in anti-Israeli terrorism, major attacks worldwide (against Israel) and counter-terrorism.

Terrorist and Extremist Organisations (TEO) Database

Host Institution: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), University of Maryland (MD), United States.

Scope: Terrorist and extremist organisation.

Access: Contact START.

Website: <http://www.start.umd.edu/research-projects/terrorist-and-extremist-organizations-teo-database>

E-Mail: infostart@start.umd.edu

Summary: The Terrorist Extremists Organizations (TEO) Database project attempts to gain better insights into the process of individuals forming into groups and organizations to pursue common objectives using terrorism and violence as a tactical method. The project analyzed the formation of organisation, the bonds that keep them together, their tactical use of terror and violence, how they survive and how organisation wither away and cease.

Commercial Databases

Control Risks Risk Maps

Host Institution: Control Risks, London, United Kingdom

Scope: Global series of forecast maps on political and security risks

Access: Free.

Website: <https://www.controlrisks.com/riskmap-2018/maps>

E-Mail: <https://www.controlrisks.com/contact-us>

Summary: The Control Risks Risk Map series provides a set of forecasts on worldwide political and security risk in high resolution map format. The nine maps cover a wide array of political and security themes. These include, for example, political and security risk, terrorism and militancy, kidnap, travel risk and maritime piracy. Each map contains accompanying keys, rating security and political risk and theme related keys.

The United States Sanctions Tracker

Host Institution: Enigma Public, United States.

Scope: United States Government sanctions, 1994 - Present.

Access: Free.

Website: <https://labs.enigma.com/sanctions-tracker/>

E-Mail: <https://www.enigma.com/contact>

Summary: The United States Sanctions Tracker is an interactive website providing narratives, data and graphics on U.S. sanctions against countries, companies, Specially Designated Individuals (SDN's), organisations and industries, dating back to 1994. The tracker provides a list of thematic sanctions issues, including terrorism. Terrorism data for the tracker is sourced, among others, from the Specially Designated Terrorist (SDT) and the Global Terrorism Sanctions Regulations (SDGT). An interactive timeline map provides information on key sanctions-related topics: terrorism, narcotics trafficking, Iran, Ukraine/Russia and North Korea. The tracker allows users to identify the U.S. Presidential administrations (from Clinton to Trump) that have invoked specific sanctions. The tracker does not include embargoes, nor does it cover all U.S. sanctions.

Gallup Polls on Terrorism-related Topics

Host Institution: Gallup, Washington, D.C., United States.

Scope: Survey polls on terrorism-related topics.

Access: Free.

Website: <https://news.gallup.com/topic/terrorism.aspx>

E-Mail: <https://news.gallup.com/contact.aspx>

Summary: The Gallup survey polls provide a comprehensive selection of surveys on topical issues related to terrorism. For example, the public's worries about terror attacks on the United States, about visa controls and about the relationship between religion

Terrorism Databases And Data Sets: Inventory

and terrorism are covered. Narrative comments, statistical data and graphs as well as information on the methodology used for each survey is also provided.

Maplecroft Terrorism Dashboard (MTD)

Host Institution: Verisk Maplecroft, Bath, United Kingdom.

Scope: Terrorism Incidents Worldwide.

Access: Contact Verisk Maplecroft.

Website: <https://www.maplecroft.com/portfolio/new-analysis/2013/08/06/maplecroft-terrorism-dashboard-maps-over-12000-terror-attacks-over-last-20-months/>

E-Mail: info@maplecroft.com

Summary: The Maplecroft Terrorism Dashboard (MTD) was a proprietary geo-coded dashboard of incidents of terrorism worldwide. Developed in 2012, the dashboard provided interactive mapping to facilitate geographic trend analysis of terrorism incidents. In addition to the 12,000 incidents coded on the MTD, the company planned to incorporate retrospectively all incidents from the Worldwide Incidents Tracking System (WITS), developed and built by the U.S. National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC). The current operating status of the MTD is unknown.

Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium (TRAC) Database

Host Institution: Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium (TRAC), United States.

Scope: Database of terrorism group profiles and related terrorism intelligence.

Access: Subscription based.

Website: <https://www.trackingterrorism.org/>

E-Mail: <https://www.trackingterrorism.org/contact-us>

Summary: The Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium (TRAC) is a subscription-based service offering use of its database and related terrorism resources. The TRAC database provides information on terrorist group profiles, ideologies, operations, maps as well as terrorist groups. The TRAC database also encompasses 'chatter categories', videos and research publications. The database operates in real-time.

Armed Conflict Database

Host Institution: International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), London, United Kingdom.

Scope: Armed conflict world-wide, international and domestic terrorism events, insurgencies and civil wars.

Access: Subscription

Website: <https://acd.iiss.org>

Summary: The Armed Conflict Database (ACD) is a subscription-based service covering international conflict, internal conflict and terrorism, dating back to 1997. The ACD provides a series of interactive web maps with accompanying variables, statistics and reports. In addition, advanced query and report functionality is provided. The

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

database holds in excess of seventy conflict/terrorism data sets worldwide.

Global Extremism Monitor

Host Institution: Centre on Religion & Geopolitics (CRG) London, United Kingdom.

Scope: Tracks violent religious extremism and state responses globally.

Access: Free.

Website: <http://www.religionandgeopolitics.org/global-extremism-monitor>

E-Mail: info@religionandgeopolitics.org

Summary: The Global Extremism Monitor provides a monthly report in .PDF format detailing violent religious extremism and state responses to religious extremism. The reports provide, for example, detailed statistics on incidents, fatalities, graphical data and detailed contextualised narrative on areas of high intensity religious extremist activity throughout the world.

International Security & Counter-Terrorism Reference Center (ISCTRC)

Host Institution: EBSCO Information Services, Ipswich, Massachusetts (MA), United States.

Scope: Terrorism and conflict data (domestic and international) and risk management.

Access: Subscription based service.

Website: <https://www.ebsco.com/products/research-databases/international-security-counter-terrorism-reference-center>

E-Mail: <https://www.ebsco.com/contact>

Summary: The EBSCO International Security & Counter-Terrorism Reference Center (ISCTRC) full-text database is an open-sourced repository of data and information on conflict, terrorism, domestic security and risk management information. The database contains a wide variety of terrorism and homeland security related material including academic journals, books, reports, news feeds and summaries on individuals and organisations.

Intel Center Database (ICD)

Host Institution: Intel Center, Alexandria, Virginia (VA), United States.

Scope: International and domestic terrorist events, rebel incidents, country and groups/individual profiles.

Access: Subscription Required.

Website: <https://intelcenter.com/>

E-Mail: info@intelcenter.com

Summary: The IntelCenter Database (ICD) holds in excess of 220,000 records on terrorism events and related areas. Some of the key ICD variables include: incident(s), photos/video, geospatial data, group profiles, logos and analysis documentation. Information is updated 24 hours a day, and includes client alert notification of significant terrorism events.

ITERATE (International Terrorism: Attributes of Terrorist Events)

Host Institution: Vinyard Software Inc., Dunn Loring, Virginia (VA), United States.

Scope: International Terrorism and transnational terrorism.

Access: Commercial data sets – payment required (US \$ 50.- per annual dataset).

Website: <http://www.vinyardsoftware.com>

E-Mail: vinyardsoftware@hotmail.com

Summary: The ITERATE (International Terrorism: Attributes of Terrorist Events) is one of the longest established data sets on international and transnational terrorism. The collection of ITERATE data sets covers terrorism events (textual data) from 1960-2007 and coded data from 1968-2016. The textual data form part of a series of periodic chronologies on terrorism published from 1968 onwards, available from Vinyard Software. The accompanying numeric data sets on terrorism and transnational terrorism events data is made up of four files: COMMON file, FATE file, HOSTAGE file and SKYJACK file. The data sources for these files are sourced from the ITERATE chronologies. A wide range of official Government sources and media sources are used to populate the data sets.

Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Centre, Event Database

Host Institution: IHS Markit, London, United Kingdom.

Scope: Non-state armed group events (domestic and international terrorism and insurgency).

Access: Commercial database – payment required.

Website: <https://www.ihs.com/products/janes-terrorism-insurgency-intelligence-centre.html>

E-Mail: <https://www.ihs.com/about/contact-us.html>

Summary: The Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Centre's Events Database dates back to 1997. The key unit of analysis is the terrorist and insurgent event. Other variables include target, location, group information and number of casualties. In addition, subscription to the database provides other data such as country briefings, terrorist and insurgency group profiles, subject matter analysis and visualization tools.

The Risk Advisory Terrorism Tracker

Host Institution: Risk Advisory Group plc/Aon, London, United Kingdom.

Scope: Domestic and international terrorism.

Access: Commercial database.

Website: <https://www.terrorismtracker.com>

E-Mail: terrorismtracker@riskadvisory.net

Summary: The Risk Advisory Terrorism Tracker is a commercial database of worldwide terrorism events and terrorist plots. The temporal range for the database starts from the 1st January 2007 and is on-going. Each coded terrorist incident is geo-tagged to permit visual mapping of events. Timeline functionality and trend analysis is incorporated into

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

the database's functionality. The Terrorism Tracker database is produced in conjunction with the risk management company Aon plc.

Terrorism and Political Violence Risk Map 2016

Host Institution: Aon Plc. London, United Kingdom.

Scope: The unit of analysis measures risk of political violence towards international business.

Access: Free. [Publication]

Website: <http://www.aon.com/terrorismmap/>

E-Mail: scott.bolton1@aon.com

Summary: The Aon Terrorism and Political Violence Risk Map provides data and information on the risk of terrorism and political violence across six countries specifically: Egypt, France, India, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the United States, and other country data generally. Key areas of risk are measured against such variables such as: TPV Risk Rating, Key Belligerents, Terrorism Casualties and Comparable Security Environments

Governmental Databases

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Terrorism Most Wanted Lists

Host Institution: Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Washington, D.C., United States.

Scope: FBI Most Wanted – Terrorism.

Access: Free.

Website: <https://www.fbi.gov/wanted/terrorism>

E-Mail: <https://www.fbi.gov/contact-us/>

Summary: The United States Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) produces a series of interactive lists on 'Most Wanted Terrorists', 'Domestic Terrorism' and 'Seeking Information – Terrorism'. Users can filter by category and search information covering the period 2010-2018. Detailed profile information pertaining to named individuals is provided, including, for example, alleged terrorist group connection, alleged terrorism incident(s) indictments, photographs and warnings to the public.

Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) Sanctions List Search Tool

Host Institution: U.S. Department of the Treasury, Washington, D.C., United States.

Scope: U.S. Specially Designated Nationals (SDN) and Consolidated Sanctions List.

Access: Free.

Website: <https://sanctionssearch.ofac.treas.gov/>

E-Mail: <https://home.treasury.gov/utility/contact>

Summary: The Sanctions List Search Tool, is operated by the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) within the U.S. Department of the Treasury. The tool allows users to search Specially Designated Nationals (SDN) and the Consolidated Sanctions List against a range of subject areas including identified terrorists and drug traffickers. It includes the names of countries, such as Iran, Sudan and Cuba that OFAC has applied economic sanctions against. The Sanctions List Search Tool includes information on groups of individuals, including designated terrorists.

Terrorism in Great Britain: the Statistics.

Host Institution: [Publication] United Kingdom Parliament, House of Commons Library, London, U.K. (Authors: Graeme Allan and Noel Dempsey).

Scope: Terrorism statistics for Great Britain 2001 – present.

Access: Free.

Website: <http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7613/CBP-7613.pdf>

E-Mail: papers@parliament.uk

Summary: *Terrorism in Great Britain: the Statistics*, is a briefing paper produced by the UK House of Commons' research service for Members of Parliament (MP's) and their

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

support staff. The briefing publishes statistics on terrorism in Great Britain issued by the U.K. Home Office as well as other sources, including the START Global Terrorism Database (GTD) of the University of Maryland. Key statistical data include: deaths due to terrorism, terrorism arrests, prosecutions and convictions for acts of terrorism and number of foreign fighters present in Syria.

National Counter Terrorism Database (NCTD), Pakistan [under development]

Host Institution: National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA), Islamabad, Pakistan. **Scope:** Database to counter terrorism and extremism in Pakistan.

Access: Restricted.

Website: <https://nacta.gov.pk/national-counter-terrorism-database/>

E-Mail: <https://nacta.gov.pk/> [**Contact form**]

Summary: The National Counter Terrorism Database (NCTD) is currently being developed by the Pakistan National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA). The NCTD will log: incidents of terrorism, individuals detained, proscribed and wanted persons, as well as under-trial prisoners. Further parts of the real-time NCTD will hold information on Madaris (Muslim schools with emphasis on Islamic studies), Masajid (Mosques), terror-alerts and profiles of convicted terrorists and extremists.

Counter-Terrorism Statistics (Operation of Police Powers under the Terrorism Act 2000) United Kingdom

Host Institution: The Home Office, Office of the National Coordinator of Terrorist Investigations (United Kingdom).

Scope: Series of statistical data on terrorism arrests and their outcomes.

Access: Free.

Website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/counter-terrorism-statistics>

E-Mail: N/A

Summary: The Home Office (United Kingdom) produce an extensive series of quarterly statistical data reports relating to the Terrorism Act 2000 (TACT). The data includes arrests and outcomes of arrests. Further break-down of data on stop and searches is also provided. The format is a mixture of narrative analysis and statistical data tables available in various OpenDocument formats.

Country Reports on Terrorism 2016

Host Institution: United States Department of State, Washington D.C. United States.

Scope: Domestic and International Terrorism.

Access: Free. [Publication]

Website: <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/272488.pdf>

E-Mail: <https://register.state.gov/contactus/>

Summary: The U.S. State Departments Country Reports on Terrorism is an annual publication, first produced in 2004. The format is mainly a narrative account of

Terrorism Databases And Data Sets: Inventory

terrorism events by country. It also documents issues on legality, state sponsored terrorism, Weapon of Mass Destruction (WMD), terrorist 'safe havens' and State Department 'Designated Foreign Terrorist Organisations' (FTO). The Country Reports replaced, in 2004, the State Departments Patterns of Global Terrorism. The U.S. State Department is required by law to present the report to Congress by the 30th of April each year. In addition, the Country Reports on Terrorism is accompanied by an Annex of Statistical Information, including analysis. Since 2012, this has been produced by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). See: <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/272485.pdf>

The European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TE-SAT) 2017

Host Institution: Europol, The Hague, The Netherlands.

Scope: Terrorism events within the European Union

Access: Free. [Publication and on-line]

Website: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/tesat2017.pdf>

E-Mail: See Europol **website:** <https://www.europol.europa.eu>

Summary: The European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TE-SAT) is compiled by Europol from data provided by the European Union's respective law enforcement and intelligence agencies. It is an annual publication. TE-SAT originated as a response to counter-terrorism responses to the 9/11 attacks on the United States in 2001. In addition to providing statistical data on terrorism events and data on arrest of suspects within the European Union, TE-SAT also provides narrative commentary on a wide range of terrorism related issues. These include: single-issues, right-wing terrorism, left-wing terrorism, religiously inspired terrorism and ethno-nationalist and separatist terrorism.

Listed Terrorist Entities

Host Institution: Public Safety Canada (Canadian Government), Canada.

Scope: Lists groups or individuals deemed by the Canadian Government to be associated with terrorism.

Access: Free.

Website: <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/ntnl-scrt/cntr-trrrsm/lstd-ntts/index-en.aspx>

E-Mail: <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/bt/cntct-en.aspx>

Summary: The publicly accessible Listed Terrorist Entities provides information on groups and individuals deemed under Canadian legislation (the Anti-Terrorism Act) to be associated with terrorism. Key public information provided includes: aliases of groups or individuals, a description of the groups or individuals, a listing date and a review date. Individuals or groups officially listed are subject to potential seizure/restraint and can also include the forfeiture or seizure of assets. For detailed criteria for inclusion in the Listed Terrorist Entities see Public Safety Canada website. An agreed entity eligible for the Listed Terrorist Entities is also published in the Canada Gazette (<http://www.gazette.gc.ca>).

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

The RAND Database of Worldwide Terrorism Incidents (RDWTI)

Host Institution: The RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, California, United States.

Scope: Domestic and International Terrorism

Access: Free.

Website: <https://www.rand.org/nsrd/projects/terrorism-incidents.html>

E-Mail: <http://www.rand.org/nsrd/projects/terrorism-incidents/about/contact.html>

Summary: The RDWTI is among the longest established and comprehensive data sets on domestic and international terrorism. The original RAND data sets on terrorism events data were established in 1972 and were known as The RAND Terrorism Chronology. The project was the result of a request to RAND from the United States Cabinet Committee to Combat Terrorism, following the 1972 Munich Olympic massacre and terrorist attacks on Lod Airport, Israel by the Red Army terrorist group. The data sets coded so far (in excess of 40,000 entries) cover the period from 1968-2009. Although The RAND Corporation owns the data sets, other organisations have periodically hosted the RDWTI, including the Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence (CSTPV) at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland (1994-1998) and the Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism, Oklahoma (MIPT).

Terrorist Identities Datamart Environment (TIDE)

Host Institution: National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), Washington D.C., United States.

Scope: United States Government's central repository of information on international terrorist identities.

Access: Restricted.

Website: https://www.dni.gov/files/Tide_Fact_Sheet.pdf

E-Mail: nctcpao@nctc.gov

Summary: The Terrorist Identities Datamart Environment (TIDE) serves as the United States Government's (USG) key central database and knowledge bank on international terrorist identities – both known and suspected. The TIDE system also feeds information into the United States Terrorist Screening Center (TSC)

Terrorism and Political Violence Risk Map 2016

Host Institution: Aon Plc. London, United Kingdom.

Scope: The unit of analysis measures risk of political violence towards international business.

Access: Free. [Publication]

Website: <http://www.aon.com/terrorismmap/>

E-Mail: scott.bolton1@aon.com

Summary: The Aon Terrorism and Political Violence Risk Map provides data and information on the risk of terrorism and political violence across six countries specifically: Egypt, France, India, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the United States, and other

country data generally. Key areas of risk are measured against such variables such as: TPV Risk Rating, Key Belligerents, Terrorism Causalities and Comparable Security Environments.

Terror Attack Database

Host Institution: Ooda Loop, Washington D.C., United States.

Scope: Terrorist Attacks Worldwide.

Access: Commercial Database payment required.

Website: <https://www.oodaloop.com/category/attack/>

E-Mail: <https://www.oodaloop.com/general-inquiry/>

Summary: The Terror Attack Database formerly run by Terrorism.com holds in excess of 10,000 terrorism incidents.

Counter-Terrorism Statistics (Operation of Police Powers under the Terrorism Act 2000) United Kingdom

Host Institution: The Home Office, Office of the National Coordinator of Terrorist Investigations (United Kingdom).

Scope: Series of statistical data on terrorism arrests and their outcomes.

Access: Free.

Website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/counter-terrorism-statistics>

INDEX

- Afghanistan 3, 7, 14, 23-25, 27-28, 33, 58, 89, 113-14, 116, 147-51, 157, 167, 179, 181, 200, 205-06, 208-13, 220, 223, 236-38, 240-42, 244-45, 249-50, 252, 255, 258, 278-79, 282, 285, 287, 292-95, 299-301, 310, 312, 315-16, 319, 325, 331, 351, 353, 356, 358, 366, 369, 376-79, 381-97, 399, 401-14, 417, 419-20, 425
- Afghans 42, 382, 387, 398
- Africa 33, 38, 167, 184, 190, 196, 198, 203, 249, 261-62, 264-65, 278, 404, 412-15, 417-18, 421, 423-24, 434
- African Union 32, 412, 425
- African Union Mission in Somalia 32, 412
- Ahle Hadith Andolan Bangladesh 319, 321
- Al Badr 3-8
- Al Barq 9-12, 245, 270, 274
- Algeria 101, 261-62, 264-65
- Al-Itihad al-Islami 31
- All Pakistan Muslim League
- Al Qaeda 13-18, 47, 57-58, 61, 63-4, 103, 113-116, 139, 147-48, 152-53, 156, 172, 181, 184, 218-219, 236, 250-51, 259, 266, 272, 292, 310-12, 315-16, 321-22, 329-35, 353, 370, 397, 402
- Al Qaeda and Associated Movements 13
- Al Qaeda in Iraq 13, 114, 116, 259
- Al Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb x, xvi
- Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula x, 57, 64
- Al Shabab xv
- Al Umar Mujahideen xv, 43-44, 272
- Al-Umar Mujahideen 39-40, 128, 236
- America 38, 64, 97, 103, 105, 177, 223-24, 227, 233, 237, 258, 280, 293, 377-79, 435
- Amir 22, 85, 90-91, 96, 99, 110, 124, 144, 206, 210-11, 213, 218-19, 240, 251, 273-74, 313-15, 330, 332, 334-35, 341, 346, 364-65, 370-74, 392, 407
- ammunition 11, 258, 325
- Ansar al-Sharia Brigade 45
- Ansar al-Sharia Derna 45
- Ansar al-Sharia Libya 45
- Ansar al Shariya Libya xv
- Ansar Al-Shariya Tunisia 51
- Apostate 97, 150, 159, 331, 397
- Arab 71, 82, 95, 97, 100, 114, 147, 159, 160, 162, 166-67, 199-200, 225-28, 230, 241, 305, 309, 355, 402, 415
- Armed Islamic Group x, 261
- Arms 11, 16, 24, 48, 65, 68, 72, 75, 91, 138, 142, 162, 194, 196, 203, 208,

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

- 219, 247, 257-58, 264, 272, 293, 299, 304, 308, 314, 316, 320-21, 325, 332-33, 340-41, 344, 347, 355
- Army xi, xiv, xvi, 14, 20, 26, 28, 49, 63, 68, 86, 128, 130, 149, 154-55, 175, 230-31, 233, 235-36, 238, 245, 256, 283, 288, 290, 295-96, 310, 329, 331, 338-39, 385, 399, 448
- Asia 8, 12, 24, 28-30, 43-44, 69-70, 93-95, 100, 102-03, 105, 107, 114, 125, 134-35, 139-40, 145-46, 153-54, 166, 180, 184, 188-89, 206, 213-16, 220-22, 225, 227, 232, 235, 242-43, 249, 252-53, 270-71, 275-77, 279-80, 283-84, 287, 299-301, 310-11, 315, 317, 326-27, 334-38, 348-49, 358-59, 365-66, 374-75, 381, 383, 385, 392-93, 395-96, 400, 402, 408, 414, 421, 426, 430, 434
- Asia Bibi 336-38
- Asif Reza Commando Force 106
- Attack 4, 6, 21-23, 26, 34, 38, 40, 42, 44-45, 48-49, 55, 60-63, 66, 86, 88-89, 92, 94, 101, 107-08, 110-11, 117, 121-22, 125, 128, 148, 151-52, 173, 180-83, 189, 191, 193-94, 196, 202, 207, 209, 217-19, 236-39, 242, 245-47, 249, 262, 265-66, 270, 274, 278-79, 289, 291-95, 298-99, 303, 308, 311, 315, 322, 330, 332, 339, 354, 361-62, 369, 378, 385, 387, 396, 402, 405-06, 414-15, 419, 428, 436, 449
- Azad Kashmir 122, 126, 249, 273
- Baghdad 256
- Baloch Liberation Army 288
- BANGLADESH 318
- Barelvi 336-38, 340-41, 350, 354-55, 360-67, 374
- Belt and Road Initiative 289, 291
- Bharatiya Janata Party 12, 177
- Blasphemy 97, 336-38, 340, 363
- Blast 109, 111, 118, 121, 139, 182, 207, 211, 249, 330, 345, 354, 362, 364, 393
- Boko Haram 190
- bomb 21, 22, 59-61, 108-09, 111-12, 118, 121, 128, 137, 161, 168, 207, 214, 218-19, 221, 238, 259, 281, 315, 330, 345, 354, 387, 390, 416, 434
- Bombing 22-23, 26, 48, 62, 66-67, 75, 88, 151, 182, 193, 207, 211, 217-18, 220, 239, 246, 256, 263, 274, 278, 294, 303-04, 315, 325, 393
- Border 12, 31, 52, 110-11, 144, 199, 210, 223, 300, 315, 324, 351, 358, 382, 384, 388, 390-91, 398
- Britain 99, 100, 102, 204, 445-46
- Brotherhood 71-72, 75-77, 80, 82, 96, 102, 158-70, 200-01, 231, 368
- Cadre 6, 42, 91, 123, 212, 220, 258, 265, 308, 315, 333, 348, 356, 381
- Caliph 96, 163, 257, 367, 411
- Caliphate 53, 55, 58, 80, 96-98, 103, 147, 182, 386, 407, 408, 411-12, 418
- Central Asia 100, 102, 105, 206, 252, 374, 395-96, 400
- Central Executive Committee 132
- Central Reserve Police Forces xi
- China 79, 100, 242, 289, 291-92, 294-95, 297-300, 301, 311, 320, 381, 401, 405
- China-Pakistan Economic Corridor 289, 291
- Christians 98, 115, 178, 181, 208, 218, 238, 307, 311, 331
- Citizenship Amendment Act 171
- Cold War 80, 166-67, 199, 377
- Commander 4, 25, 42, 85, 266
- Congo 435
- Corruption 190, 223-24, 377
- Counter terrorism 391, 446
- Crusade 280
- Current Status 7, 12, 17, 27, 36, 43, 49, 55, 68, 79, 92, 110, 118, 124, 133,

- 139, 144, 165, 196, 203, 212, 220, 226, 232, 242, 252, 259, 265, 274, 284, 294, 300, 308, 324, 334, 341, 348, 357, 365, 373, 381, 390, 404
- Custody 29, 66, 70, 124, 129, 133, 164, 191, 315
- Democratic Constitutional Rally 51
- Deoband 206, 367, 370, 386
- Deobandi 20, 23, 27, 149, 206, 208, 210, 212, 217, 236, 238, 241, 319, 337, 338, 340, 350, 354-56, 360-66, 368, 373-74, 386
- Dhaka 99, 207, 209, 322-25, 327, 432, 433
- Dollar 248, 291
- Domestic 59, 61, 97, 176, 187, 261, 356, 411, 416, 430-31, 441, 442-43, 448
- Donation 248
- Donations 5, 55, 62, 78, 89, 102, 117, 152, 177, 183-84, 239, 248, 281-82, 293, 322, 364, 371, 404
- Drone 26, 59-60, 74, 148-51, 211, 220, 282, 299, 332-33, 389, 402, 405, 408, 411, 416
- Drugs 117, 255, 299
- Dukhtaran-e-Millat 65, 69, 70, 136, 138
- Dukhtareen-e-Toiba 69
- East Turkestan Islamic Movement 300
- East Turkistan Islamic Movement 297
- East Turkistan Islamic Party 297
- Egypt 46, 57, 76, 78, 81, 100, 113, 116, 158-69, 199-200, 202-04, 222, 278, 436, 444, 448
- Egyptian Islamic Jihad 116, 199, 204, 278
- Ethiopia 31-33, 37-38, 203
- Explosives 4, 11, 24, 88, 92, 138, 142, 183, 193, 207-08, 219, 238, 247, 251, 285, 315, 320, 322, 332, 346, 347, 355, 362
- Extortion 27, 37, 38, 41, 89, 110, 196, 203, 263-64, 299, 346, 389, 397, 404
- Extremism 37, 55-56, 82-83, 168, 170, 266, 285-86, 383, 393, 406, 408, 424, 428, 442
- Extremists 56, 72, 148, 167, 194, 304, 344, 347, 351-52, 415-16, 422, 424, 432, 438, 446
- Faction 20, 22, 26, 33, 46, 85, 86, 120-21, 131, 133, 192, 194, 217, 228, 231-33, 237, 241, 269, 271-72, 274, 315, 322, 324-25, 345, 347, 353, 356, 364, 373-74, 377, 384
- Fatwa 313
- Federally Administered Tribal Areas 147, 206, 247, 362, 384
- Foreign Contribution Regulation Act 183
- Foreign Terrorist Organisation 7, 22, 206, 237, 246, 261, 291, 354, 384
- Formation 25, 133, 141, 151, 194, 225, 230, 232, 256, 277-78, 280, 283-85, 345, 351, 363, 391, 439
- France 82, 97, 183, 250, 262-63, 339-40, 412, 444, 448
- Free Syrian Army 14, 231, 233
- Fundamentalism 375
- Fundamentalist 5, 11, 33, 53-54, 65, 67, 69, 95, 98, 136, 142, 367, 376, 386
- Funding 5, 11, 17, 19, 26, 34, 43, 49, 55, 62, 68, 78, 88, 102, 110, 117, 119, 122, 132, 138, 143, 151, 165, 196, 202, 209, 225, 232, 239, 248, 258, 264, 271, 281, 293, 299, 306, 322, 333, 346, 355, 364, 371, 380, 389, 404
- Funds 5, 17, 26, 34-37, 66, 68, 85, 89, 110, 113, 123, 143, 151, 173, 183, 184, 196, 202, 236, 239, 248, 250, 251, 281-82, 306, 313-14, 316, 322, 324, 333, 346, 356, 358, 364, 370, 380, 385, 389, 404, 416
- Future 69, 80, 92, 134, 166, 259, 415, 431

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

- Gaza 58, 71-79, 81-83, 168, 176, 188
Geopolitics 118, 442
Germany 78, 100, 169, 177, 250, 305, 425, 426
Ghazwa-e-Hind 280
Global 13, 15, 33-34, 47, 57-58, 60-61, 97-99, 150, 158-59, 198, 202, 213, 244, 252, 262, 278-79, 295, 304-05, 311, 320, 326, 367, 386, 397-98, 400-01, 403, 406, 410-12, 415-16, 418, 420, 434, 442
Global Jihad Fund 250
Global Reach 252
Goals 13, 15, 18, 49, 52, 54, 58, 108, 138, 147-49, 163, 171, 179, 183, 199-200, 208, 277, 280-81, 319, 386, 398, 412, 438
Government 27-28, 32, 40, 77-78, 93, 99, 125, 144, 172, 174, 176-77, 184, 186-87, 190-92, 252, 278, 290, 323-24, 326, 342, 353, 373, 376, 384, 387, 395, 424, 431, 440, 443, 447-48
Group for Call and Combat xi
Gulf 17, 26-28, 33, 78, 99, 102, 110, 128, 143, 162, 165-66, 183-84, 225, 323, 371, 380, 389

Hamas 71-83, 159, 162, 164, 166-67, 415-16
Hanafi 368, 374
Haqqani Network 250, 381, 384-87, 389-90, 392-98
Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami 205-06, 210, 213-15, 235, 240, 250, 271-72, 371
Harkat-ul-Mujahideen 25, 85, 206, 217, 220-21, 235, 270-71, 282, 331, 353, 370-71
Harkat-ul-Mujahideen al-Alami 217
Hate 168, 188
Hawala 11, 281-82
Hezbollah 77, 80, 162, 166-67, 225-26, 230, 265, 302-09, 313, 416-17
Hindus 108, 128, 181, 208, 238, 245
Hizb-ul-Mujahideen 3, 7, 42-43, 68, 84, 93-94, 120, 129-30, 134, 137, 142, 249, 269
Hizbul Mujahideen 94, 172, 181, 271
Hizb ut Tahrir 104-05
Holy War 3, 142
Houthi Movement xvi
Hurriyat 10, 66-68, 88-89, 94, 122, 129, 137
Hussain 21, 91, 104, 114-15, 341, 351, 406-07
Hybrid 170

Ideology 5, 15, 18, 23, 33, 41, 46, 50, 53, 67, 75, 88, 97, 104, 107, 115, 118, 122, 131, 138, 142, 149, 163, 192, 200, 208, 218, 224, 228, 230, 238, 246, 257, 259, 263, 270, 276, 280, 292, 298, 305, 317, 320, 330, 340, 346, 354, 363, 369, 379, 386, 397
Illegal 68
Improvised Explosive Devices
India 3-7, 9-11, 28, 39, 41-44, 66-67, 70, 84, 86-88, 91-93, 99, 106-11, 120-22, 125-28, 130-36, 139, 142, 144, 171-89, 206, 208-13, 235-236, 238-42, 244-49, 251-52, 268-73, 275-80, 282-86, 292-93, 295, 322-25, 327-28, 367-70, 372-73, 375, 383, 390, 392, 404, 414, 430, 444, 448
Indian Mujahideen 106, 111-12, 246, 249, 278
Indian Union Muslim League 172
Indonesia 100-01, 310-11, 313-14, 317, 436
Intelligence Bureau 180
Internally Displaced People xi
International Crisis Group 44, 59, 62, 326-27
Inter-Services Intelligence 3, 9, 26, 41, 66, 84, 108, 120, 132, 139, 142, 172, 209, 236, 245, 268, 385
Investigation 66, 89, 111, 152, 181, 185, 273, 404, 445

- Iran 14, 26, 28, 35, 38, 58, 78-80, 101, 166-67, 183, 202-03, 223-27, 232, 255, 258, 264, 292-93, 303-07, 309, 344, 346-47, 351-52, 355, 382, 396-97, 404, 414, 419, 440, 445
- Iranian 21, 24-25, 80, 166, 226, 230, 255, 345, 347, 352, 355, 377
- Iraq 13-14, 47, 49, 58, 101, 104, 113-16, 154-55, 166, 223-24, 227, 233, 251, 254-61, 265, 277-79, 330, 395-97, 403-05, 411, 422, 425, 427-28, 432, 434
- Islam 15-16, 20, 31, 34, 46-47, 53, 73, 75, 87-88, 90, 95-98, 100-01, 103, 108, 113, 115, 120-21, 124, 136, 138, 141-44, 149, 173, 175-76, 181, 183, 190-91, 206, 222-24, 229-32, 237-38, 241, 244, 255, 257-58, 262, 269, 274, 280, 283, 298, 310-12, 319-22, 324-25, 327, 342, 346, 356-57, 363, 365, 368-70, 373-76, 382, 396-97, 412, 417
- Islamic 4, 5, 7, 11, 13-16, 18, 21, 23-24, 27, 31-33, 37, 41, 45-47, 52-53, 55-58, 61-63, 65, 67-69, 71, 73, 75-76, 78, 80, 95-99, 101-04, 106, 113-16, 118, 128, 130-32, 136-39, 141-43, 147, 149, 151-52, 158-59, 161, 163, 165-66, 169, 172-77, 181, 183-85, 189-95, 198-202, 204-205, 208-10, 212, 223-226, 229-231, 233, 238, 241, 244, 247-50, 257-58, 261-63, 266, 270, 272, 274, 277-80, 282, 297, 299-301, 303, 305, 310-11, 312, 314-15, 319-20, 322, 323-25, 327, 330-32, 336, 344, 346, 351, 353-55, 361, 365, 367-68, 370-71, 373, 375-77, 379, 386, 390-91, 395-98, 401, 404-08, 411-420, 424, 432, 436, 446
- Islamic Courts Union 31, 37
- Islamic Front 229, 270, 272, 371
- Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps 225
- Islamic State Khorasan Province 406-408
- Islamic State-Khorasan Province 181, 406, 408
- Islamic State of Iraq 13, 114, 116, 233, 330, 395, 405, 411, 432
- Islamic State of Iraq & Levant 13, 114
- Islamic State of Iraq & Syria 13
- Islamic State's West African Province 192
- Islamisation 67, 124, 208, 360
- Islamist 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 20-21, 24, 26, 32, 36, 39-40, 54, 67-68, 71, 75-77, 80, 84, 86, 88, 95, 97-98, 114, 120, 122-23, 126, 128, 131-32, 137-39, 141, 143, 147, 158-61, 163, 166-67, 196, 205, 206, 208-09, 212-13, 217-18, 229-30, 235-38, 240, 242, 244, 246, 248-49, 252, 256, 261-63, 265, 268, 270, 272, 277, 292, 295, 320, 326-27, 329-30, 336, 338, 340, 344, 356, 379, 384, 386, 398, 417, 428, 436, 438
- Israel 5, 58, 71-82, 97, 99, 162, 166-67, 176, 200, 223, 247, 302, 304-05, 308-09, 415, 422, 427, 438, 439, 448
- Israeli Defence Forces 72
- Jaish-e-Mohammed 4, 11, 27, 40, 89, 123, 209, 235-36, 243, 246, 249, 269, 272, 292, 353, 357-58
- Jamaat 3-7, 84, 89, 106, 111, 120, 129, 137, 173, 178, 182, 184, 200, 212, 237, 246-48, 250, 318-19, 324, 326-27, 329, 331-32, 354, 356, 367-75, 396, 398, 401
- Jamaat-e-Islami 3, 5, 7, 84, 89, 106, 111, 129, 137, 173, 329, 331-32, 356, 368, 401
- Jamaat-e-Islami Hind 106, 137
- Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh 182, 250, 318
- Jamiat Ansarul Afghaneen 205, 210
- Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan 338, 361, 364
- Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen 120, 137, 217, 269-70, 272-74
- Jammu and Kashmir Affectees Relief Trust xii

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

- Jammu Kashmir 5, 10, 39, 84, 120, 126-27, 144, 268, 271-72
- Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front 5, 10, 39, 84, 120, 126-27, 144, 268, 271
- Jammu Kashmir National Liberation Front 126
- Jews 98-99, 206, 208, 223-24
- Jihad 6, 10, 40, 47, 50, 53, 56, 73, 85, 108, 114, 116, 118, 121, 123, 125, 143, 172, 181, 191, 199-200, 203-06, 210, 213-15, 235, 238, 240, 249-50, 255, 259, 262, 268-72, 275, 277-78, 280, 282, 287, 306-08, 312, 313, 319, 321, 333, 356-57, 371, 374, 386, 393, 395
- Jundullah 278, 329-35, 395
- Kafir 150
- Kalashnikov 24
- Karachi 21-22, 26, 152-53, 182, 205, 208, 210, 212, 217-18, 221, 235-36, 241, 279, 282, 291-92, 294-95, 329-34, 339-40, 346, 348, 354, 356, 360-61, 365
- Kashmir 3-6, 9-10, 12, 27, 39-44, 65-69, 84-85, 87-90, 92-94, 104, 120, 122-31, 134-37, 141-42, 144, 147, 189, 205-06, 208, 212, 236-40, 244-51, 268-69, 271-75, 280, 283-84, 325, 356-57, 360, 369, 414
- Kashmir Freedom Forum 269, 273
- Kashmiri 7, 9, 39-41, 68, 70, 84, 86-89, 91-93, 98, 121-24, 126, 129-33, 138, 143, 182, 211-13, 236, 240-41, 246, 248-49, 268-69, 281, 284
- Kashmir Resistance Forum 269, 273
- Khilafat 108, 395, 400-01
- Khuddam-ul-Islam 237
- Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 6-7, 147, 206, 356, 362
- Kidnapping 196, 281
- Killings 426
- Laden 31, 57, 90, 94, 113-14, 139, 148, 175, 201-02, 206, 219, 236, 240-41, 254-56, 262, 277-78, 280, 300, 312, 333, 371, 378, 411
- Lashkar-e-Jabbar 65, 136, 139-40
- Lashkar-e-Jhangvi 20, 28-30, 241, 344-45, 347, 353, 357, 360, 362, 400
- Lashkar-e-Taiba 4, 10, 41, 66, 69, 85-86, 89, 108, 121, 123, 137, 142, 209, 241, 244-45, 252-53, 269, 272, 281, 283, 292, 323, 358, 360-61, 371, 396, 398, 402, 417
- Leadership 6, 16, 24-25, 35, 42, 48, 54, 59, 68, 77, 90, 99, 109, 116, 124, 132, 144, 150, 164, 194, 198, 201, 210, 219, 225, 239-40, 250, 258-59, 264, 272-73, 282, 293, 306, 313, 321, 331, 341, 347, 357, 364, 371, 380, 389, 402-03, 407
- Lebanon 77, 82, 99-100, 113, 202, 224, 226, 265, 302-05, 308, 417
- Libya 14, 45-46, 49-50, 52, 55-56, 113-14, 259, 262-64, 322
- Line of Control 4, 85, 127
- Madrassa 205-06, 210, 373, 386
- Magazine 168
- Maghreb 52, 57, 194, 261-63, 265-66, 279, 424
- Maldives 414
- Markaz-e-Dawa-wal-Irshad 244, 250
- Media 49, 59, 86, 104, 116, 177, 259, 263, 314, 333, 375
- Members 56, 76, 164, 176, 179, 209, 248, 445
- Membership 17, 49, 54, 60, 100, 109, 116, 195
- Metropolitan 325
- Middle East 19, 31, 62, 78, 80, 82, 95, 97, 100, 118, 162, 183, 200, 234, 251, 259, 261, 267, 285, 303, 305, 323, 371, 407, 414, 434

- Militants 12, 38, 56, 118-19, 135, 286, 316, 327, 394
- Military 144, 161, 231, 239, 314, 425
- Milli Yekjehti Council 346
- Mission 32, 412
- Modus Operandi 5, 11, 15, 24, 34, 41, 48, 53, 61, 67, 75, 88, 101, 108, 115, 122, 131, 138, 142, 152, 163, 174, 193, 203, 208, 219, 226, 232, 238, 247, 257, 263, 270, 280, 292, 298, 305, 320, 331, 340, 346, 354, 363, 370, 379, 386, 399
- Mogadishu 31, 32, 34-35, 37
- Money 83, 323
- Mujahideen 3, 7, 25, 39-40, 42-44, 68, 84-85, 93-94, 106, 111-12, 114, 120-21, 125, 128-30, 134, 137, 141-42, 145-46, 172, 181-82, 205-06, 217, 219, 220-21, 235-36, 244, 246, 249-50, 256-57, 269-74, 278, 282, 316, 318, 320, 325-27, 331, 353, 370-71, 376-77, 385, 412, 416
- Mujahideen Shura Council 114, 256, 257
- Muslim 13, 15, 17, 20, 41, 46-47, 49, 53, 58, 65, 71-72, 75-77, 79, 82, 84, 88, 96-98, 100-03, 106-09, 114-16, 123, 129, 136-37, 139, 152, 158-70, 172, 174, 176-80, 183-85, 191-92, 194-95, 200-01, 206, 222-24, 231, 247, 255, 257, 269-70, 272, 274, 280, 302, 304, 320, 336-37, 340-41, 351, 365, 368-69, 373-75, 377-78, 388, 397, 400, 403, 424, 429, 436, 446
- Muslim Brotherhood 71-72, 75-77, 79, 82, 96, 158-70, 200-01, 231, 368
- Muslim Relief Network 184
- Muslim World League 184
- Muttahida Qaumi Movement 362, 365
- Myanmar 206, 212, 278, 283, 320, 401
- National Development Front 172
- National Investigation Agency 66, 89, 111, 185, 273, 404
- National Population Register 179
- National Register of Citizenship 175
- NATO 379, 381, 386, 395-96, 404
- Network 6, 12, 27, 89, 123, 143, 153-55, 184, 197, 209, 219, 240, 248, 250, 258, 265, 271, 307, 317, 333, 356, 364, 381, 384, 385-90, 392-98, 406-07, 419, 422, 431
- News and Media Alliance 86
- Nizamuddin 236, 371-74
- Non-Alignment Movement 199
- Objectives 5, 11, 23, 52, 67, 75, 88, 96, 108, 122, 138, 142, 163, 200, 208, 218, 223, 230, 238, 246, 270, 280, 292, 298, 320, 330, 340, 346, 354, 363, 369, 379, 386, 397
- Organization 155
- Pakistan 3-12, 20-29, 39-41, 43-44, 58, 61, 65-70, 84-93, 99-101, 104, 106-11, 120, 122-23, 126-28, 131-34, 139, 141-44, 147-57, 172, 179, 182, 205-09, 211-13, 217-20, 235-38, 240-42, 244-49, 251-53, 268-86, 288-95, 300, 315, 320, 322-23, 329-34, 336-66, 369-70, 373-74, 378, 381-82, 384-85, 386, 388-92, 394-97, 399-400, 402-05, 407-08, 413, 417, 430, 433, 436-37, 446
- Pakistan Occupied Kashmir 10, 40, 126, 212, 269
- Pakistan Stock Exchange 292
- Pakistan Sunni Tehreek 362, 364-65
- Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaaf 365
- Palestine 58, 71-73, 75-78, 80, 82, 113, 162, 176, 178, 184
- Palestine Liberation Organisation 71
- Palestinian National Authority 73
- Pandits 41, 129
- Pashtuns 7, 42, 376
- Popular Front of India 171-72, 180, 187-89

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

- Power 343, 419
Propaganda 406
- Qatar 17, 19, 78-80, 162-67, 170, 183-84, 232, 391
- Quran 47, 98, 108, 320, 323, 368, 382
- Radical 103, 257
- Ramadan 49, 66
- Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh 172
- Rawalpindi 5, 90, 92, 241, 337, 341
- Recruitment 17, 36, 46, 49, 54, 60, 79, 91, 100, 109, 116, 123, 164, 195, 212, 241, 258, 265, 284, 308, 322, 348, 356, 373, 381, 389, 404
- Regional 313, 419
- Rehab India Foundation 180
- Religion 108, 366, 374, 442
- Religious 16, 50, 326
- Rights 178, 237, 422, 435
- Rockets 82
- Russia 14, 79-80, 100, 166, 204, 249, 303, 377, 381, 401, 440
- Saddam 114-15
- Sahel 261, 264-65, 267, 412, 419
- Salafi 14-15, 18, 47, 50, 52-53, 58, 61, 115, 141, 145, 200, 232-33, 255, 259, 261, 280, 298, 311, 370, 374, 398, 400, 411, 420
- Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat 261
- Saudi Arabia 5, 23-24, 26, 47, 59, 78, 89, 102, 117, 132, 143, 163, 165-67, 183, 211, 223-24, 226-27, 232, 245, 248, 251, 259, 278, 322-23, 355, 369, 374, 381, 387, 444, 448
- Sect 15, 47, 200, 224, 360, 374
- Shabaab 31-38, 57, 194, 196, 412-13, 417
- Sharia 33, 45, 47, 49, 50, 53, 55-56, 59, 96-97, 159, 163, 192, 209, 230-31, 233, 262-63, 280, 319-20, 331, 336, 340, 377, 379, 386, 397-98, 400
- Shariya 13, 45-46, 51-52, 54, 108, 115
- Shia 20-21, 23-24, 26, 77, 80, 115, 167, 224-25, 230, 232, 238, 241, 331, 338, 344-47, 350-55, 363, 382, 398
- Shura 25, 35, 48-49, 60, 77, 114, 148, 150, 231, 256-57, 264, 282-83, 306-07, 313, 321, 372-73, 380, 385, 388-89, 396, 402, 411
- Sipah-e-Mohammed Pakistan 344
- Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan 20, 236, 338, 344-45, 350-51, 358-61
- Smuggling 78
- Social Democratic Party of India 176
- Somalia 31-38, 236, 240, 370, 412-14
- Somalian Transitional Federal Government 32
- South Asia 8, 12, 24, 28-30, 43-44, 69-70, 93-94, 100, 103, 125, 134-35, 139-40, 145-46, 153, 188-89, 206, 213-16, 220-21, 235, 242-43, 252-53, 270-71, 275-77, 279, 280, 283-84, 287, 299, 326-27, 334-35, 348-49, 358-59, 365-66, 375, 383, 385, 402, 414, 430
- Spring 114, 160, 167, 226-27, 230
- Sri Lanka 118, 180, 182, 414, 430
- Structure 16, 24-25, 42, 48, 54, 59, 77, 90, 99, 116, 124, 132, 144, 150, 164, 194, 201, 219, 225, 231, 234, 239, 258, 264, 272, 283, 299, 306, 313, 321, 364, 372, 380, 387, 402
- Student Islamic Movement of India 106, 173
- Subcontinent 218, 277-78, 280, 28-87, 365-66
- Sudan 101, 159, 203, 264, 415, 445
- Sunnah 47, 98, 191
- Sunni 20, 23, 26, 46-47, 57-58, 71, 75, 77, 80, 115-16, 141-42, 158, 163, 167, 200, 229, 232, 241, 254, 257, 298, 303-05, 307, 330-31, 336, 338, 340, 344-47, 350-52, 354-56, 360-66,

- 376, 384, 386, 398, 400, 414
- Sunni Ittehad Council 362, 363, 364, 365
- Sunni Tehreek 338, 354, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365
- Sunni Tehrik 366
- Supreme 25, 35, 42, 85, 133, 164, 169, 336, 338, 357, 388
- Supreme Military Command xiii
- Syria 13, 17-18, 47-49, 55, 79-80, 98, 113-18, 154-55, 162-63, 166, 168, 181, 229-30, 233, 255, 259, 277, 279, 303, 305, 307, 314, 316, 330, 333, 395-97, 403-04, 411, 414, 422, 434, 446
- Syrian Democratic Forces 14
- Syrian Islamic Front 229
- Syrian Islamic Liberation Front 231
- Tablighi 178, 184, 212, 324, 367-75
- Tablighi Jamaat Movement xvi
- Taliban 6, 27, 33, 45, 80, 147-48, 150-57, 208, 211-13, 219, 236, 238-39, 242, 249, 251-52, 278, 282-83, 285, 287, 295, 299-300, 319, 325, 329, 338, 353, 356, 358, 360, 362, 364-65, 376-86, 388, 390-402, 404-414, 417-19, 420
- Talibanisation 362-64
- Teachings 191
- Tehreek 141, 145-46, 153, 155, 270-71, 274, 278, 329, 336-39, 341-44, 347-48, 353-54, 358, 360-65, 390
- Tehreek-e-Jafariya Pakistan 344
- Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan 336, 342-43
- Tehreek Labbaik Ya Rasool 337
- Tehreek-ul-Mujahideen 141, 145-46, 271, 274
- Tehrik e Taliban Pakistan 399
- Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan 282, 362, 395-96
- Territory 84, 242, 279, 430
- Terror 29, 38, 64, 83, 153-55, 181, 237, 275, 327, 329, 393, 420, 424, 449
- Terrorism 8, 19, 28-30, 38, 43-44, 50, 56, 64, 69-70, 82-83, 93-94, 104-05, 125, 139-40, 145-46, 153-57, 186, 188-89, 196, 198, 204, 213-15, 220-21, 228, 243, 253, 260, 275-76, 286, 317, 319, 325-27, 330, 332, 339, 348, 349, 358-59, 361, 374-75, 392-94, 406-09, 418-20, 422-49
- Theology 104
- Treasury 17, 300, 40-405, 408, 445
- Troop Contributing Countries 34
- Turkmenistan 401
- United Baloch Army 290
- United Democratic Front 172
- United Jihad Council 6, 10, 40, 85, 121, 123, 125, 143, 238, 240, 249, 268-69, 275
- United Liberation Front of Asom 210, 272
- United Nations 32, 178, 214, 226, 277, 285, 300-01, 305, 317, 392, 402, 413, 418-19
- Unlawful Activities Prevention Act xiv
- USSR 27, 376-77
- Uzbekistan 100, 250, 278, 299, 353, 387, 389-90, 396-98, 401
- Valley 4, 6, 10, 39, 41-42, 65-68, 84-93, 120, 123-24, 128-29, 130-32, 135-36, 143, 151, 245
- Violence 53, 75, 77, 359, 426, 429, 431-33, 435, 437, 444, 448
- Wahabi 149, 191-92, 248, 345
- Waziristan 147, 149, 153-54, 210-12, 282-83, 330, 333, 384, 388, 390
- Weapons 48, 428-29
- West Africa 198, 262, 264-65
- West Asia 107, 114, 166, 180, 184, 222, 225, 227, 232, 249, 252
- Women 137, 375, 378

A Compendium of Terrorist Groups

World Assembly of Muslim Youth 184
Xingjian 178
Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region 297
Yemen 46, 55, 57-64, 101, 104, 166, 203, 222-228, 236, 415, 417
Young 36, 165, 169
Youth 184-85, 298
Zakat 183, 281, 351, 397
Zawahiri 14, 16, 159, 201-02, 251, 277-78, 280, 282, 285, 287, 391
Zia 41, 283, 318, 342-43, 345, 350-52, 357, 360-61

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