

Samina Yasmeen, "Islamic Groups and Pakistan's Foreign Policy: Lashkar-E-Toiba & Jaish Muhammad" in *Islam and the West. Reflections from Australia* (eds. Shahram Akbarzadeh & Samina Yasmeen; Sydney: UNSW Press, 2005) 45-62

The role played by religion has traditionally been ignored in the discipline of international politics with its reliance on the geostrategic/realist paradigm, focusing on national interest. The role of religion, especially Islam, has only been recognised after the end of the Cold War and the Gulf War of 1991. Huntington's claims of a clash of civilizations paradoxically has strengthened the locating of religion's role within national/state boundaries. The link between Islam and foreign policy continued to be ignored as political Islam was studied largely in terms of Islamic movements within states. Consequently, transnational links between Islamic groups were ignored or marginalized. Terrorist attacks are changing this approach.

The Context for Militancy

A distinction must be made between societal and state-sponsored Islam:

- Societal Islam: "the process in which a series of independent or inter-linked economic, political, military, social and cultural factors cause groups in society to identify more closely with Islam..." (46). This is characterized by increased references to the primacy of Islam in society and talk of organising the state along Islamic lines.
- State-Sponsored Islam: "the process by which the state or the government introduces piecemeal ideas about Islamisation for the purposes of seeking political legitimacy" (46). While this indicates members of the society attach significance to their Islamic identity, it also involves a process encouraging society to internalize Islamic ideas and identity via media, educational institutions and formal legislation.

The direction taken by the process of Islamisation depends on the relative balance between those subscribing to liberal or orthodox Islamic values in decision-making circles and/or society. Further, there is a cyclical relationship between societal and state-sponsored Islam as illustrated by the "Iranian revolution of 1979, the emergence of a theocratic regime in Tehran and subsequent use by Iranian women of Islam to secure more rights" (47). This cyclical relationship has been operating in Pakistan for over 20 years.

Yasmeen traces the change from Pakistan's initial favouring of liberal Islamic groups to the current tipping of the balance towards those subscribing to Orthodox interpretations of Islam (since Zia ul-Haq, 1977). Seeking political legitimacy for his regime, General Zia established a de facto alliance with Jamaat-I-Islami and launched a number of policies aimed at "Islamising" Pakistan, which strengthened Orthodox Islamic groups. By Zia's death in 1988 Islamic groups had become a significant part of Pakistani society.

During the democratic era (1988-1999) both Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif were in precarious positions and not able or willing to stem the tide of Islamic Orthodoxy. Indeed, they too used Islam for political legitimacy. However, this preference for Orthodoxy has led some Islamic groups to opt for radical militant ideas, including the development of Lashkar-e-Toiba (Army of the Pure) and Jaish Muhammad (Army of the Prophet).

Lashkar-E-Toiba & Jaish Muhammad

Origins

Lashkar-e-Toiba emerged from the shared experiences of those who fought against Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, with certain Pakistani lecturers having been influenced by Saudi Arabian thinkers. When the Soviets left Afghanistan, this jihadist group turned its attention to Kashmir, with Hafiz Mohammad Saeed formally establishing the organization in 1990 to wage a Jihad in the Indian part of Kashmir.

It had a significant presence in Pakistan during the 1990s. By 2001 Lashkar claimed 14,369 Jihadis had been martyred in the struggle against Indian occupation in Kashmir.

In 1994 Maulana Masood Azhar, another veteran of the Afghan war, had been arrested during a secret visit to India. However, after militants hijacked an Indian Airlines plane in 1999, he was released in accord with the hijacker's demands. In 2000, less than a month after his release, Azhar founded Jaish Muhammad. Following Osama bin Laden's own intervention JM was able to establish a strong presence in Pakistan.

World Views

The two groups represent different religious traditions: Lashkar, Ahle Hadith ideology; JM, Deobandi tradition. While differing on their understanding of the nature of an Islamic state the two groups have a similar world view:

1. The world is divided between the Muslim *umma* and the non-Muslim world, with the latter (especially the US) seeking to subjugate and oppress the former. This occurs both at the *core* and the *periphery*. At the regional level are identified core states with an anti-Muslim agenda, fueled by hatred of Muslims. At the local level in Muslim states there are views which fit the larger subversive American agenda. Global relationships are characterized by collusion, co-operation and exploitation, with core states using those at the periphery to perpetuate their control.
2. Both emphasise the need for Jihad.
 - a. Lashkar members see Jihad as a soul purifier enabling Muslims to realize their true potential. They reject the distinction between the Lesser Jihad and the Greater Jihad - Islam requires all Muslims to engage in armed struggle, including *fida-e-hamlay*, which are not regarded as "suicide attacks", but the highest form of struggle and sacrifice.
 - b. JM members see Jihad as the main concern of the Qur'an, with Masood Azhar insisting that the Qur'an requires all Muslims to engage in Jihad as long as the *kuffar* remain powerful. To fail to engage in Jihad, under religious leadership, is to incur God's wrath.

Differences between the two groups:

1. The role of women in Islamic society.
 - a. Lashkar: women must stay at home as nurturers, submitting to limits placed on them by their husbands, proud of their contribution to Jihad through their domestic support. Women must graciously accept the martyrdom of their husbands as a sign of God's blessing on the family.
 - b. JM: women may be both nurturers and active participants in Jihad.
2. The attention given to global, regional and local scenarios (though both see India as the main regional enemy of Muslims in South Asia):
 - a. Lashkar: greater attention.

b. JM: little attention.

Influence on Pakistan's Foreign Policy

Before September 11: A Regional Focus

Both groups were created and patronized by ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence), evidently as part of the Pakistani strategy vis-à-vis India. Both organizations were allowed to freely recruit members. During the 1990s the Indian Government had good grounds for accusing Pakistan of training and sending insurgents into the Indian part of Kashmir, despite Pakistan's denials.

After September 11: A More Globalised View

When Islamabad joined the US-led coalition for its "war on terror" it had to stop supporting and using Lashkar and JM against Indian control of Kashmir, both of which the US declared to be terrorist organizations with their assets frozen. Under US pressure, President Musharraf announced a ban on the two groups in January 2002, but it seems clear that the Pakistan Government nevertheless continued to use these two militant groups as indirect instruments of foreign policy. Those making decisions about Pakistan's foreign policy are strongly influenced by Islamist and Orthodox ideas. Both militant groups continue to operate as rather autonomous actors within Pakistan.

JM celebrated its identification of being a terrorist organization as a "medal" and threatened the Pakistan Government if it dared to clamp down on it. Lashkar also warned the Pakistan Government of the dire consequences of siding with the US. Both groups are committed to struggling against the US, something further fueled by the US invasion of Iraq in March 2003. These groups are no longer *totally* under the control of the Pakistan government:

The Pakistan government, therefore, is facing a situation where, while participating in a coalition against terrorism, it cannot guarantee that groups created by it will not participate in terrorist activities (59).

Pakistan and Militancy

Yasmeen asks, "What implications does the autonomy acquired by the two militant groups have for Pakistan's foreign policy?" (59).

At a global level this undermines Pakistan's participation on the war on terror. Pakistan authorities believe JM was involved in the Karachi bombings of 2002.

At the regional level they can continue to limit Pakistan's ability to improve links with India.

At the local level these groups are promoting their Jihadi ideology inside Pakistan. JM was implicated in the 2003 attack on President Musharraf.

Yasmeen concludes:

In the long term, it can be argued, the relationship between the Islamic militants and the Pakistan Government may come to resemble the relationship between Washington and the Afghan mujahideen of the 1980s. The erstwhile supporters may become the targets of an ideology of Jihad by those they once supported (60).