

# Political Islam in South Asia

Are Knudsen

R 2002: 14



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Price: NOK 50

ISSN 0805-505X

ISBN 82-8062-026-5

This report is also available at:

[www.cmi.no/public/pub2002](http://www.cmi.no/public/pub2002)

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### **Indexing terms**

Islam

Militancy

Terrorism

South Asia

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## **Foreword**

This study was prepared for the Norwegian Department of Foreign Affairs. The views contained in this report represent those of the principal researcher, Are Knudsen, and not necessarily those of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (UD) or the Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI). The report is based on a literature review and selected magazine and newspaper articles from the international and the Pakistani press as well as interviews. The interviews were tape-recorded in Pakistan by Mohammad Manzar Zarin, who also prepared the English translation (Appendix I). Richard Moorsom proof-read the manuscript.

AK, Bergen, September 2002



# Executive summary

This report examines the growth of political Islam in South Asia (Pakistan, Afghanistan and India's Jammu and Kashmir Province). It is structured around cross-referenced themes that are central to the growth of political Islam. It is argued that there are a number of contingent factors that account for the growth of political Islam and are related to the course state-formation took in these countries as well as the politicisation of Islam in the Middle East over recent decades. Together these factors contributed to a groundswell of political Islam that now represents a formidable challenge to the civil and military leaders in South Asia.

In Pakistan the failure of parliamentary democracy and the weakening of civil society have spurred the growth of social protest in the form of a political Islam. The Pakistan army likes to portray itself as the guardian of democracy but is in fact an obstacle to it. The army has consistently intervened in the political process and vetoed decisions considered contrary to its interests. The frequent power struggles between elected governments and the opposition as well as military coups have prevented Pakistan from developing viable democratic institutions. This has contributed to the growth of political Islam and has given political protest a religious outlet. The call for implementing Sharia (the holy law of Islam) and the expansion of jihad (in the sense "holy war") are examples of political protest expressed in a religious idiom.

The Kashmir conflict has for half a century marred relations between India and Pakistan and is currently the biggest security threat in the region. The intensification of the conflict since 1989 in the form of an insurgency against Indian rule was in large measure due to growth of political Islam. Some of the most ruthless militant groups are engaged in the struggle for what they see as the liberation of Kashmir and, more recently, in terrorist attacks in Pakistan. The militant groups engaged in sectarian conflict (Sunni vs. Shia) or the Kashmir insurgency draws their members and fighters not from the country's poor but from its lower middle class. The organisations are very hard to control and have recently stepped up terrorist attacks on foreigners in Pakistan.

Some these attacks may have been carried out in connection with Taliban and Al Qaeda “cells” in Pakistan.

The Taliban movement was created and nurtured by Pakistan and support for its regime in Afghanistan was a cornerstone of Pakistan’s foreign policy. Following the fall of the Taliban regime, some of the fighters fleeing Afghanistan have sought refuge in Pakistan’s tribal belt along the Afghan border. There is considerable support for the Taliban in the orthodox “Quran belt” in Pakistan’s North-West Frontier Region and some of the resident Pashtun tribesmen have provided security cover to fleeing Taliban fighters and Al Qaeda members. The presence of the Taliban and the Al Qaeda in Pakistan could pose a political challenge to the fledgling Afghan leadership in Kabul. It might also pose a security risk to the foreign missions and religious minorities in Pakistan but not to the Pakistani authorities.

The growth of political Islam has to a considerable degree been caused by the proliferation of Islamic seminaries (*madrassa*) since the outbreak of war in Afghanistan in the late 1970s. Increased control over the seminaries have been difficult to implement and is fiercely resisted both on religious and political grounds. The seminaries’ blend of literacy and militancy has made them a convenient scapegoat for the growth of Islamic militancy in Pakistan. Although the seminaries have played a key role in the radicalisation of Pakistan and helped create the Taliban movement, their role in creating a groundswell of political Islam seems exaggerated. The failure of parliamentary democracy, the deliberate state Islamisation programme under Zia ul-Haq (1977–88) and the Pakistan army’s patronage of militant Islamic groups have all contributed to the growth of political Islam.

Pakistan may be under siege from Islamic militants, but is not about to be taken over by them. Pakistan is still a moderate Islamic country, but with a growing and increasingly violent Islamic militant lobby. The army is still firmly in charge but because of its patronage of the key militant groups, cannot take decisive action against them. The patronage support to the militant groups and religious parties have been important for advancing Pakistan’s foreign policy goals in Afghanistan and Kashmir. Despite



considerable international pressure, Pakistan has only reoriented rather than revoked these policies. This probably reflects a power struggle within the army and its powerful intelligence branch, the ISI.

The mainstream political parties (PPP, PML) are weakened and their leaders in exile. Recently, president Musharraf has tightened his grip on power, so that the prospects for a true democracy are bleak. The power struggle between the president, the prime minister and the Chief of Army staff is bound to continue following elections later this year. This means that any elected government will be short-lived. In fact, during the past 55 years not a single elected government in Pakistan has served its full five-year term. They have all been deposed by presidential fiat or removed in a coup d'état. Following Pakistan's decision to join the US-led attack on the Taliban regime, the religious parties (JI, JUI) have strengthened their popular support but in contesting the forthcoming elections they will again be marginalised.



# Introduction

The attack on the World Trade Centre on 11 September 2001 had a series of repercussions for political Islam in South Asia, Pakistan's future political course and the relationship between India and Pakistan. It also brought Osama bin Laden and his Al Qaeda network to world attention and ultimately led to the American offensive against Afghanistan's Taliban regime that began in early October the same year. Within weeks, the political backdrop for the future of political Islam on the subcontinent was irrevocably changed: the Taliban regime was ousted, Pakistan was embraced as a key ally in the campaign against "terrorism", and India – Pakistan's main adversary – was sidelined. In addition, sanctions against Pakistan were lifted and economic aid was forthcoming. Was Pakistan able to capitalise on these gains? This report argues that Pakistan has neither been able to wrest control of the roots of Islamic resurgence nor of its own destiny.

This study focuses on Pakistan because it is generally considered the lynchpin for the growth of political Islam on the subcontinent. Pakistan was instrumental in nurturing the Taliban and aided the movement in its rapid takeover of Afghanistan in 1996. Within Pakistan, the same policy that helped launch the Taliban contributed to the rapid growth of a plethora of Islamic militant groups. These groups have in turn grown powerful enough to become a challenge to state security and a threat to the country's internal stability. By covertly supporting Islamic militant groups in Kashmir, Pakistan has for the past decade engaged in a "proxy war" in India's Jammu and Kashmir Province. For the past year the Kashmir conflict has brought India and Pakistan closer to war than any time since 1971. The conflict is a major security threat to the region and despite international pressure on both countries, is in danger of erupting again if the militant groups are able to stage new attacks and suicide missions in Kashmir.

In January 2002 president Musharraf declared war on Islamic extremists, but there is still little evidence of the government fulfilling its promise. The militant groups have in recent months staged a number of terrorist attacks in Karachi. There has also been an influx of former Taliban fighters into Pakistan's tribal areas and major

cities. These may pose a future security threat, especially if they align themselves with the virulent extremist organisations that currently operate there. In order to understand these developments and the future of political Islam in Pakistan, Afghanistan and India's Jammu and Kashmir Province (Figure 1) it is important to look more closely at the many factors that have allowed political Islam to flourish during the past few decades.



**Figure 1: Pakistan, Afghanistan and Kashmir**

# 1. Religion

## Islam

The term Islam (Ar. *Islâm*) means “submission to the will of God”.<sup>1</sup> Of late there has been increasing interest in Islam not as a religious faith but as a political ideology. This has variously been termed “political Islam”, “Islamic revival”, “Islamic resurgence”, “fundamentalism”, “Islamic extremism” or simply “Islamism”. In this report the term “political Islam” is taken to mean the various ways Islam is used as a charter for political action at the individual, regional and state level. This does not mean that political Islam is a unified political movement. This is also evident in the Indian subcontinent, where moderate Islamic parties, militant groups and terrorist organisations all claim to represent a particular brand of political Islam. What unifies them is a common concern with Islamising society – what separates them is the means by which to achieve this goal.

In the study of political Islam it is important to distinguish between what Oliver Roy calls “Islamism” and “neo-fundamentalism” (Roy 1994). The Islamists want to purify Islam and reform the state with a particular emphasis on the introduction of Sharia – the holy law of Islam (see SHARIA). Although implementation of the Sharia is a goal, society needs to be Islamised. Islamists approve of schooling for women and their participation in social and economic life. The Islamists maintain their right to individual interpretation of the Quran and the Sunna (Traditions of the Prophet’s life) and they can therefore be considered anticlerical. The importance the Islamists’ place in society means that their political philosophy centres on the leader (amir) and the advisory council (shura). Islamists believe in the reform of the state through social and political action. To accomplish this it is necessary to “leave the mosque”, so to speak (ibid.: p. 36). The Islamists hence advocate a reform of society from “the top”. In Pakistan, the

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<sup>1</sup> The transliteration of Arabic terms follows Netton (1992). After first use, the terms are written in a simplified version without the use of diacritics.

party that most closely fits this description is the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), the largest and most influential of the Islamic parties (see PARTIES).

During the 1980s the Islamists gradually lost momentum and a new breed of “neo-fundamentalists” emerged. Instead of transforming society, there is again an emphasis on implementing the Sharia. The right to individual interpretation of the Quran and the Sunna is surrendered.<sup>2</sup> Islamisation is now set to grow from below and no longer through reform of the state (Roy 1994: p. 24). Compared to the Islamists, the neo-fundamentalists therefore espouse a more dogmatic Islam, are less concerned with state reform and more concerned with the implementation of Sharia, if necessary by violent means in an Islamic revolution. Compared to the Islamists, they do not have a distinctive theory of political organization. Moreover, they do not want women in public life and place great emphasis on Muslim ritual (prayer), dress and behaviour. A typical example of the neo-fundamentalist ideology is Afghanistan’s Taliban regime (see TALIBAN).

The ideological roots of political Islam can be traced to the Middle East. The first examples of an Islamic resurgence can be traced to the Society of the Islamic Brotherhood, founded in Egypt in 1928. Some years later, in 1941, Maulana Abdul-ala Maududi established the Jamaat-e-Islami in what was then British India. These organisations differed in many respects, but their common concern with Islamism was evident. They have provided ideological and organisational models for contemporary Islamic movements and organisations (Esposito 1997: p. 9). They range from the Palestinian Hamas, which emerged from the Muslim Brotherhood, to the Afghan mujahedin, which is generally considered the high point of the Islamist revival.

How should we interpret political Islam? There are, broadly speaking, two diverging methodological approaches to the study of political Islam (Salla 1997). The

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<sup>2</sup> The question of whether Islamic jurisprudence allows for individual reasoning or interpretation (Ar. *ijtihad*) is contested. The “reformists”, such as Maududi and Jamaat-e-Islami, maintained that interpretation was not a prerogative of the clerics, and the movement may therefore be considered anticlerical. The “traditionalists” (such as the Taliban) reject individual interpretation, maintaining that only following or imitating (Ar. *taqlid*) the tradition is allowed.

“essentialists” give prominence to the textual interpretation of Islam, which they see as enduring and immutable insight into the essence of Islam and the Muslim world. They maintain that Islam is a monolithic threat to the West. An example of this school of thought is Samuel Huntington’s “Clash of Civilizations” thesis. The other group of scholars, the “contingencists”, rejects this analysis and argues for a study less based on scriptural Islam, and with a greater emphasis on the diversity in Islam based on studies of Muslim practice. They argue that there is no monolithic Islam but a diversity of movements, beliefs and practices. Their views are closely linked to the critique of essentialism in Western scholarship as creating a false, dogmatic and “orientalist” image of the Muslim world (Said 1978).

In the study of political Islam in South Asia it is important to keep in mind that the Islamists are often portrayed negatively and equated with militant extremists. It is worth noting that in many cases, political protest is a reaction against lack of democratic rights, poor living conditions and a host of other failures of civil society (see FRONTIER). In fact civil society has gradually weakened in Pakistan and is virtually non-existent in Afghanistan. The failure of popular (parliamentary) democracy has also contributed to the Islamic revival in the form of a dogmatic politicised Islam.

## **Jihad**

One of the commonest terms used in connection with political Islam is “jihad” (Ar. *Jihâd*). Etymologically the term comes from the Arabic root “jahada” meaning “to struggle” or “to strive”. Despite being frequently used, the term is little understood in the West and is often glossed as “holy war”. However, jihad has a more complex meaning which is not linked to Islamic militancy and the global radicalisation of Islam. As Barbara Metcalf (1984: p. 197) has noted, the Quran distinguishes between “the greater jihad”, which can be translated as the “transformation of self”, and “the lesser jihad”, which can be translated as “outright warfare or militance against enemies of Islam”. “The ‘lesser’ ideally entails the ‘greater’”, says Metcalf, “an aspect of Islamic movements often neglected by foreign observers” (ibid.). In Islam, the concept of jihad

is therefore carefully circumscribed. The concept also concerns when jihad is legitimate and a Muslim duty, as well as who has the right to call jihad. Despite this fact, jihad tends to be used as synonymous with armed struggle (“holy war”). The concept has thus become a favourite among the religious right and is deployed to legitimate the use of violence against all enemies of Islam. In general, there is evidence of a gradual decentralisation of the right to declare jihad and an attendant reinterpretation of jihad as a duty for all Muslims. This expansion of jihad is one explanation why foreigners came to fight alongside the mujahedin in Afghanistan. In the same manner, the fights in Jammu and Kashmir have been couched in jihadist terms, so that these too could legitimately be considered religious battles (see KASHMIR).

In President Musharraf’s speech to the people in January 2002 the importance of jihad was a key issue and Musharraf claimed that the extremists had abused the concept of jihad.<sup>3</sup> As stressed by Musharraf in his speech, the lesser jihad (“holy war”) should be abandoned in favour of the greater jihad. In short, the lesser jihad is neither relevant nor valid. While Pakistan’s silent majority shares this view, radical Islamic groups vehemently oppose it. For them, jihad in the form of a militant struggle is a religious duty and their main *raison d’être*. This view is also shared by many clerics, religious leaders as well as leading Islamic teaching institutions. Even the Jamia Ulumia Islami (Institute of Islamic Learning) in Karachi, one of the largest and most influential seminaries in Pakistan, stresses that “*Jihad is compulsory for all Muslims*” (Newsweek 2002).

While jihad has gained currency among a wider part of the population, the call for jihad in the form of militant struggle has seen fewer adherents. This is demonstrated by the fact that the call for jihad in relation to the attack on the Taliban leadership in Afghanistan in October 2001 was answered by a tiny portion of the Pakistani populace.

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<sup>3</sup> “In Islam, Jihad is not confined to armed struggles only. Have we ever thought of waging Jihad against illiteracy, poverty, backwardness and hunger? This is the larger Jihad. Pakistan, in my opinion, needs to wage Jihad against these evils. After the battle of Khyber, the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) stated that Jihad-e-Asghar (Smaller Jihad) is over but Jihad-e-Akbar (Greater Jihad) has begun. This meant that armed Jihad i.e. the smaller Jihad was now over and the greater Jihad against backwardness and illiteracy had started. Pakistan needs Jihad-e-Akbar at this juncture. By the way we must remember that only the government of the day and not every individual can proclaim armed Jihad. The extremist minority must realise that Pakistan is not responsible of waging armed Jihad in the world” (Excerpted from, Musharraf 2002)



The majority ignored the call for jihad. Failing to note this point leads to an oversimplification of the political implications of jihad. An example of this is Jessica Stern's (2000) claim that Pakistan has a "jihad culture". This gloss underestimates the complexity of the growth of militant Islam during the past decade. Nonetheless, the culture "card" is frequently used to explain Pakistan's descent into lawlessness and mayhem. The term "Kalashnikov culture" has gained currency among journalists and the news media. It refers to the proliferation of automatic arms, especially the Kalashnikov AK-47, which has increased the level of violence throughout the country. There is no doubt that the proliferation of arms, together with the call to jihad in the sense of "armed struggle", has created a deadly mix that accounts for the growth of Islamic militancy over the past decade.

In late February 1998 an Arabic newspaper based in London published the full text of the call for jihad against the United States. The faxed declaration carried a lengthy title, "Declaration of the World Islamic Front for Jihad against the Jews and the Crusaders", and was signed by Osama bin Laden and leaders of Islamic militant groups in Egypt, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The declaration blamed the United States ("the Crusaders") for desecrating the Holy Land "Arabia", attacking Iraq and for supporting the Jews and the state of Israel. These crimes, the declaration stated, were tantamount to a "war by the Americans against God, his Prophet, and the Muslims" (cited in, Lewis 1998: p. 15). On the basis of this, the declaration ended with a ruling (*Ar. fatwâ*) stating that hurting America and killing Americans and their allies was every Muslim's individual duty. The declaration is typical of the political use of jihad – now interpreted as an individual (rather than communal) Muslim duty – but unusual in the sense that it is not targeting infidels or apostates but specifically targeted towards the United States and its citizens and allies. This is important to keep in mind when considering the role of bin Laden and his organisation, the Al Qaeda, in the region's wars (in Kashmir) and Pakistan and in the Taliban regime's domestic policies (see TALIBAN, TERRORISTS).

## Sharia

Implementation of the Sharia (Ar. *Shari‘a*) has been one of the major demands of Pakistan’s religious “right”. The Sharia is not a legal document in the sense that Western laws are, but a body of texts comprising the Quran (Ar., *Qur‘ân*) and the Sunna (also known as the *Hadîth*), which gives a record of the saying and doings of the Prophet Mohammad and his companions. This is regarded as a source of Islamic law (dogma and ritual) only second to the Quran itself.<sup>4</sup>

It is, however, important to distinguish between the political nature of Sharia and the Sharia in religious terms. Pakistan, for example, has never implemented Sharia, but only elements of it such as the Islamic penal laws (Ar. *Hudûd*, “limit”) in the form of the Hudood Ordinance of 1979. During the rule of Zia ul-Haq the so-called Sharia Courts were set up, led by an Islamic scholar or cleric (*Qazi*). Zia also introduced an Islamic tax on bank accounts (Ar. *zakât*) and land (Ar. *ushr*), but the full implementation of the Sharia was never effected.

On various occasions the former premier Nawaz Sharif tried to implement Sharia in the form of a Sharia Bill that was first introduced in 1990 after having initially been proposed by Zia ul-Haq in 1985 but never passed. In 1998 the Sharia Bill passed the lower house of the Parliament with the help of the PML majority. However, to become law, the bill had to be approved by two-thirds of the Senate. There the PML was in a minority and the bill was stuck and has remained so since. As of 2002, the Sharia is not implemented in Pakistan, although in a few areas of the NWFP the Sharia has been implemented following local rebellion (Box 1). Villagers have lost faith in the country’s secular laws and the judiciary, and demand justice through the implementation of the Sharia. As Leonard Binder (1987) has observed:

The Islamic movements do not propose some form of Islamic policy to solve the many problems, they rather urge the implementation of the sacred law [Sharia] for

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<sup>4</sup> The four main sources (*usûl*) of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) are the *Quran*, *Sunna*, *ijmâ‘* (consensus) and *qiyâs* (analogical reasoning).

its own sake and in the pious expectation that such implementation will either be an efficient solution or bring some divine favour.

It is in this respect important to note that many of the Islamist parties oppose the implementation of Sharia through governmental decree. Both the JI and the smaller Sunni (Deobandi) groups such as Ahl-i-Hadith argue that the state cannot legislate Sharia and in the late 1980s opposed the Sharia Bill (Roy 1994: p. 118). It is worth noting that the Sharia has two important characteristics: its autonomy and its incompleteness. The first means that Sharia is independent of any state, state laws or politics. In this sense the Sharia creates a separate religious domain or space that prevents it from being manipulated. The second characteristic, incompleteness, refers to the fact that the Sharia is not “closed” in the sense that any legal opinion is never final and can be reversed by a higher authority (ibid.: 9–10).

## **Seminaries**

Most analysts agree that the religious seminaries (Ar. *madrassa*, pl, *madâris*) have played a key role in the growth of Islamic militancy in Pakistan and beyond its borders, in Afghanistan and India’s Jammu and Kashmir Province. The growth of the seminaries began with Zia ul-Haq’s policy of a religious tithe (*zakat*) that was to be automatically collected from people’s bank accounts. By the mid-1980s close to 10 percent of the *zakat* funds went to the support of the seminaries (Nasr 2000). This allowed the seminaries to mushroom, especially in the border areas of the NWFP. In 1982 the government announced that seminaries that undertook certain changes in their curriculum would be allowed to issue certificates that would be considered equivalent of school certificates. This allowed the seminaries to recruit members from a much broader spectrum of society and take up a more central role in society (ibid.: 146).

The seminaries offer the students free schooling and boarding. Some even pay the parents for sending their children to the school. Most of the students come from rural backgrounds (Malik 1999). In fact, most of the graduates from Deobandi seminaries in the NWFP come from villages with less than 10,000 inhabitants (ibid.: 236). In rural

areas, being a religious scholar, a *Maulvi* or a *Maulana*, is an honorific title and local dignitaries also now send their sons for religious education. The quality and breadth of the education that is offered varies a lot. Most of the lower grade seminaries are based on rote memorization of Arabic texts with few other subjects being taught. When the students graduate, it is clear that their limited exposure to Islamic scholarship has not prepared them for jobs in the private or government sector. Instead they are limited to becoming low-level clergy (Mullah) and many of them remain jobless and form a frustrated and volatile segment of the population. As low-ranked clergy preaching in rural mosques, seminaries and other institutions, they tend towards dogmatic Islamic extremism. As Nasr has pointed out, “this transformed madrasahs from intellectual institutions to political ones” (2000: p. 152). The seminaries, hence, were politicised and thanks to liberal funding, proliferated across the country. Following the outbreak of the Afghan war in 1979, the seminaries also benefited from liberal donations from abroad, especially from the Middle Eastern countries. The donations from Saudi Arabia sources, especially, spurred the growth of the puritan brand of Islam known as “Wahabism”, which is frequently mixed with Deobandi Islam. Pakistan’s Sunni majority distinguish themselves into sects according to their school: Deobandi, Barelvi, Wahhabi and Ahl al-Hadith, with the two first being most influential. Before the outbreak of the Afghan war, the Barelvi sect was much larger and more influential than the Deobandi. There is agreement that the traditional Barelvi-Islam which included belief in saints and worship at shrines, has lost ground to Deobandi Islam. The rise of Deobandi Islam has been a fundamental part of the growth of Islamic extremism.<sup>5</sup>

There have been frequent attempts to rein in the seminaries. In June 2000 the Pakistan authorities attempted to register every seminary in the country. Out of an estimated 50,000 seminaries (the exact number is unknown), only about 4,350 schools registered. The rest ignored the statute. The leader of the Federal Board of Islamic Seminaries called the government’s edict a “*threat to religion and religious values. We will not permit any checking of accounts or funding sources, nor any review of our curriculum*”

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<sup>5</sup> The Deoband movement that has come to dominate in Pakistan’s seminaries can itself be traced to the reformist Deoband movement established in 1867 in Deoband in Northern India. The Deobandis were Muslim reformers who set up the first academy (*madrasa*) for the purpose of training future clerics (Ar. *Ulamâ*).

(Herald 2001d). The fierce resistance towards government control is both historically and religiously motivated (Zaman 1999). This is also one reason why many of the seminaries deplore government support in the form of state *zakat* funds. Many of them consider this a “political bribe” that threatens the seminaries’ autonomy.

In late 2001 the “new madrassa strategy” was launched to increase the government’s control over recruitment, financing and the curricula of the seminaries. There are a number of reasons why the government has been cautious in extending its control of the seminaries. One reason is the fear of offending the religious “right”. A second concern is that the seminaries belong to time-honoured tradition and have been an important part of legitimate social protest in South Asia. For many it is mandatory to keep the seminaries separate from the state educational system. Only in this way can the role of religion in society be safeguarded. A third and more pragmatic reason is that by neglecting the formal schooling system, Pakistan has come to depend on the seminaries for providing basic education. Pakistan spends less than 2 per cent of its gross national output on public education (Singer 2001).<sup>6</sup>

The state’s neglect of basic formal education has had serious consequences and given the seminaries a tremendous leverage on Pakistan’s youth. A more difficult question is whether the seminaries have become “centres of Islamic militancy” and a “breeding ground for terrorists”. There is a danger that in the eagerness to pin down the causes of Pakistan’s drift towards Islamic militancy and sectarianism, the religious seminaries become a simple target. According to government sources, only between 10-15 per cent of the seminaries espouse a militant agenda. Other sources claim that of the around 2,700 seminaries registered in the Punjab, 750 are involved in military training and 1,700 receive foreign funding (Herald 2001d, see also, Zaman 1998). (Appendix III)

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<sup>6</sup> In order to improve the education sector, the government of Pakistan recently asked Western countries for financial and technical assistance ((Johannessen 2001).

## 2. Politics

### Parties

The political parties in Pakistan can broadly be defined as “mainstream” or alternatively as “religious” or “Islamic”. The mainstream parties are the People’s Party Pakistan (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League (PML), which throughout the 1990s shifted power among themselves. Because of their failure to implement a lasting democracy in Pakistan, both the parties and their leaderships have been weakened. Both of their leading figures are gone: Benazir Bhutto is in self-imposed exile and Nawaz Sharif expelled to Saudi Arabia. It is worth noting that although the mainstream parties are not Islamist in outlook, they have been instrumental in the growth of a political Islam in Pakistan.

There are a number of Islamist parties, but only a few of them have any political clout (see APPENDIX II). Chief among them is the oldest of the Islamic parties, Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), led by Qazi Hussein Ahmed, a former university professor. The JI was founded by the noted Islamic scholar and Maulana Abdul-Ala Maududi (1903–78). Following Maududi’s teachings, the JI has strongly advocated the implementation of Sharia as the only source of law. At the same time, the JI is a reformist party (with roots in the Deobandi movement in pre-partition India), which for example favours schooling for women. The JI also takes a liberal view concerning the question of interpreting (*ijtihad*) the founding Islamic texts (the Quran and the Sunna) (see ISLAM). As will be discussed in some detail below, the JI has formed coalitions with the mainstream parties.

The other leading Islamist party is the Jamiat-e-Ulema-i-Islam (JUI). The JUI was originally a religious movement set up by Deobandis. In the early 1960s it was transformed into a political party and consequently split into different factions. The Pashtun-dominated faction persisted and in the 1970s mobilised against military rule. The JUI’s progressive Islamic programme was both strongly anti-American and anti-

imperialist. In the 1980s, leadership of the JUI was taken over by Maulana Fazlur Rehman (Rashid 2000: p. 89). Currently the JUI is split into two factions, one led by Maulana Fazlur Rehman (JUI-F) and another by Maulana Samiul Haq. Like many other Islamic parties, the JUI tends to do poorly at national elections but has always been a factor in the streets. In 1988 JUI-F (the faction led by Fazlur Rehman) got only seven seats in the national assembly, in 1990 only six seats, in 1993, four seats, and in 1997 only two seats. In none of these elections did the JUI capture more than 3 per cent of the electoral vote. It is worth noting that in the 1997 provincial elections, that is after the Taliban regime had taken control of Afghanistan, the JUI-F failed to win a single seat in the NWFP Provincial Assembly (ICG 2002). Apart from the Islamist agenda and militant rhetoric, this underlines that the JUI has a very weak electoral base. Despite its militant rhetoric the JUI has tended to distance itself from the militant sectarian organisations but has forged close ties with those seeking to liberate Kashmir (see KASHMIR). The pragmatic approach to politics is also evidenced by the JUI's tendency to ally itself with any party that can win it influence. When the JUI falls out of favour and is excluded from the corridors of power, it becomes more oppositional and sharpens its Islamic rhetoric (ibid.).

The JUI is an ardent supporter of the Taliban regime and its closest allies in Pakistan. Following the US attack on Osama bin Laden in 1998, a pro-Taliban group called the "Afghan Defence Council" was formed under the leadership of JUI's Maulana Samiul Haq, thereby uniting an otherwise divergent set of Sunni groups. The Jamaat-e-Islami, which until then had been the only major party to remain opposed to the Taliban, also joined the council (Herald 2001c: p. 32).

Despite the religious differences between the JI and JUI, both parties were ardent critics of President Musharraf's decision to support the attack on the Taliban regime. Both Maulana Fazlur Rehman (JUI-F) and Qazi Hussein Ahmed (JI) were detained or placed under house arrest. Fazlur Rehman was even charged with treason. Not long after, however, most of the detainees were released and the charges dropped, officially for "lack of evidence". Critics argued that the arrests were only a temporary measure to appease India. The event shows, however, that the power of the Islamic groups and

parties is overrated. Instead of threatening to overrun the state, they are dependent on government patronage (see DEMOCRACY). This is reflected in this quote from a prominent member of the JUI in the Sindh Province: “*Jihadi groups can’t function and survive without official patronage*” (Herald 2001g: p. 58).

The role of the Islamic parties in Pakistan politics has differed over recent decades. In brief, in the first epoch, the “guided democracy” of Ayub Khan (1958–69), the Islamic parties were marginalised and sidelined. During this period the family laws were secularised and the 1962 constitution even removed the term “Islamic” from the official name of the state (Esposito and Voll 1996). The second epoch, that of Zulifqar Ali Bhutto’s populist Islamic socialism (1971–77), was marked by an increasing appeal to religion and promotion of Islam (introducing Islamic laws regulating the use of alcohol). More controversial was Bhutto’s attempt to legitimise the state’s socialist policies (nationalise banks, industries, land reform etc.) and couch this within a Islamic idiom as expressing Islamic “equality” (*musawwat*) which was condemned by religious leaders such as Maulana Maududi of Jamaat-e-Islam. This, together with other factors, made Bhutto bow to the pressure and declare the Ahmadiya sect a non-Muslim minority. Eventually, at the 1977 national elections the PPP was opposed by a broad coalition of secular and religious opposition parties, the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA), promising an Islamic system of government known as “Nizam-i-Mustafa” (“the system of the Prophet Mohammad”). The elections were marred by irregularities that eventually ended with a coup d’état by General Zia ul-Haq. The Zia epoch of Islamic authoritarianism (1977–88) was crucial to growth of political Islam and indeed laid the groundwork for the Islamic revival in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Where previous regimes had tried to suppress or manipulate the Islamists, Zia succeeded in co-opting them by forging an alliance with the main Islamist party, Jamaat-e-Islami (JI). Soon after taking power Zia embarked on a number of initiatives to Islamise the country, a strategy that was meant to placate the Islamists. For a long time Zia’s strategy actually succeeded in controlling the Islamists and it was not until after the 1985 elections, where the Islamic parties performed poorly, that they became more critical of the Zia regime (*ibid.*). In the post-Zia period (1988–96) and the return to democratic rule, the mainstream political parties, PPP and PML, attempted to align themselves with the



religious parties. Between 1988 and 1993, the Jamaat-e-Islam was part of a ruling coalition led by the PML. Mutual distrust between the PPP and the Islamic parties prevented them from forming a coalition.

## **Democracy**

Pakistan has long had troubled relations with democracy. Since its inception more than fifty years ago, Pakistan has experienced four military coups (Ganguly 2000). The first was staged by General Ayub Khan (1958), followed by General Yahya Khan (1969), General Zia ul-Haq (1977) and, finally, General Pervez Musharraf (1999). The end of the Zia era opened the way for parliamentary elections. The first non-party elections were held in 1985. The first democratic elections were held in 1988. And for the remainder of next decade the civilian governments came and went. In 1990, 1993 and 1997, the PPP and PML shifted between carrying the majority of the votes but neither succeeded the other after electoral defeat, all being deposed by the military or dismissed by presidential fiat (Cohen 2002). Frequent political turmoil characterised this period with the army watching closely and at times intervening (see PARTIES).

The latest military takeover took place in 1999, following the ill-fated Kargil crisis in Kashmir (see KASHMIR). This humiliating defeat was the beginning of the end for Sharif. Shortly after, in September 1999, a power struggle between Sharif and his hand-picked leader of the Armed Forces, General Pervez Musharraf, sealed Sharif's fate. He was brought down in a bloodless coup led by Musharraf. Like his predecessor Zia ul-Haq, Musharraf adopted the title Chief Administrator. Following a lengthy trial, the former prime minister Nawaz Sharif was sentenced to life imprisonment but was later (10 December, 2000) pardoned and exiled to Saudi Arabia. The people of Pakistan welcomed the military takeover and the end of Sharif's erratic government. Still, Pakistan was becoming politically isolated and was sinking further in to the economic quagmire, caused in part by the economic sanctions imposed on the country following the nuclear tests conducted in May 1998. Internationally, Pakistan was increasingly isolated and mostly due to the fiscal crisis, there was little money for the bold reforms

that Musharraf had announced. In March 2000, Pakistan's political isolation was confirmed with President Clinton's five-day tour of India and the perfunctory five-hour stopover at a Pakistani airbase.

Pakistan's fledgling democracy is a hybrid: a power-sharing arrangement between civilian and military rule (Rizvi 1998: p. 110). The political troika leading Pakistan – the Chief of Army Staff, the Prime Minister and the President – all vie for power. At critical junctures when the Army has felt its key interests threatened, they have sacked the prime minister, the president (or both) or if this was impossible, staged a military coup. There has also been a continuous battle between the president and the prime minister, each of whom has tried to reduce the others' power. There has also all the time been a serious power struggle with the fourth pillar of democracy, the judiciary (the Supreme Court). Together this has meant that elected governments have been ineffective and wasted much of their power in beating political enemies or avoiding being dismissed by unconstitutional means. Instead of much-needed economic and social reforms, the country has slipped into political, social and economic turmoil that has laid the ground for discontent, disillusionment and opposition. In this respect, democracy's failure in Pakistan has laid the groundwork for the growth of political Islam. Tired of elections (*intekhab*), the country has demanded accountability (*ethasab*) (Malik 2001). This is especially important considering Pakistan's crushing foreign debt, most of it amassed under military governments. Currently the army consumes more than one-fourth of the country's national budget. The country's nuclear programme has also been very costly (Malik 2001). On top of this, corruption is rampant, Pakistan places third on Transparency International's list of the world's most corrupt countries and tax evasion is estimated to total more than 150 billion rupees per year (*ibid.*). Some observers argue that the longer the military's khaki bureaucrats rule the country, the less the chance of coming to grips with Pakistan's economic problems (ICG 2002).

The need for accountability and for saving the country from political and economic turmoil has been the official reason for most military coups in Pakistan. Each time, the military has portrayed its intervention as being in the best interests of country. The army's strength and the weakness of civilian institutions have made the army very

strong and some argue, a threat to liberal democracy: “The military in Pakistan”, wrote the *Economist* in October 2000, “is the problem to which it pretends to be the solution” (Shah 2002). Nonetheless, the army has in general portrayed itself in the dual role of guardian of the state as well of the Islamic ideology and protector of democracy. Shortly after taking power in Pakistan on 12 October 1999, General Musharraf announced in a televised address to the nation: “This is not martial law, only another path towards democracy. ... The armed forces have no intention to stay in charge any longer than is absolutely necessary to pave the way for true democracy to flourish in Pakistan” (Constable 2001). This was in many ways reminiscent of Zia ul-Haq’s pledge in 1977 to hold elections within three months, elections that never materialised. It is also worth noting that only months after the coup, Musharraf demanded that judges in the Supreme Court must pledge loyalty to the provisional constitutional order that had legalised the military takeover in September 2001. While a few opposed taking an oath of allegiance, the majority did so.

On 14 August 2001, Pakistan’s fifty-fourth Independence Day, president Musharraf unveiled his “roadmap to democracy” and the plans for new elections to provincial and national assemblies (and the Senate) in October 2002. But how fundamentally has it changed Pakistani politics? It is rather the democratisation programme – what President Musharraf has termed, the “roadmap to democracy” – that has been put on hold. President Musharraf’s tenure could perhaps best be described as “liberal dictatorship” and whether he will be able to institute a true democracy in Pakistan remains questionable. The recent referendum (30 April 2002) on his presidency found that he had bagged nearly all of the about 44 million votes cast. In a televised speech to the nation following the election, Musharraf thanked Pakistan’s “silent majority” for their support. The turnout for the election was about 70 percent, the highest in any election in the country despite the fact that many of the opposition parties (including the PPP and PML) belonging to the Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy (ARD) had asked people to boycott the referendum. Although the legitimacy of Musharraf’s presidency remains questionable, the referendum nonetheless enables him to stay in power for another five-year term (2002–07). This of course also gives the Army an enormous leverage in Pakistani politics, a position they seem unwilling to relinquish.

Musharraf has been accused of preparing the ground for the elections in late 2002 by making special engagements with the mainstream political parties, PPP and PML. In particular the president has wooed the pro-military section of the PML leadership, which many believe is meant to help the party win the elections (Shah 2002). As has been mentioned previously, the army and the ISI have at critical junctures intervened in the election process in order to buttress the PML's chances of beating its main rival, the PPP.<sup>7</sup>

On the other hand, Musharraf has initiated sweeping electoral reforms. The most important part of these reforms is building a local democracy from the ground up through non-partisan elections to local councils comprising more than 100 districts. Secondly, candidates with business ties to the government are barred from running while a university degree has become mandatory. Finally, the voter registration system has been overhauled (Constable 2001: p. 24). Together these changes represent a major restructuring. The question remains, however, whether the military leadership will be able to follow through with these reforms.

As mentioned already, Pakistan's democracy has been marred by continuing power struggles between the president and the prime minister. In 1993 President Ghulam Ishaq Khan dismissed prime minister Nawaz Sharif when he tried to wrest power from the president. In 1996, President Farooq Leghari dismissed the government of Benazir Bhutto and dissolved the National Assembly. To curb the power of the presidency, Nawaz Sharif made sure of repealing the presidential prerogative of dismissing the prime minister when he returned to power in 1997. A recent news bulletin suggests that in this respect history repeats itself. According to this report, Musharraf plans a constitutional amendment that will enable him to dismiss the prime minister and the cabinet (BBC News 2002a). Under the current constitution, the president must act on the prime minister's advice. The planned amendment will reverse this, and allow Musharraf to appoint his own prime minister as well the right to dissolve the parliament.

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<sup>7</sup> In 1988, the ISI helped to reunify the PML, and to persuade a number of other parties to join the PML, an alliance that was named *Islami Jamhoori Ithehad* (IJI, Islamic Democratic Alliance). (Rizvi 1998)

In addition, it will secure a permanent role for his 10-member National Security Council (NCS) headed by the president himself. It is expected that these changes will be implemented ahead of the elections in October 2002.

Following the military intervention in Afghanistan, Musharraf seized the opportunity to tighten his grip on power. In October 2001, the leader of the Army intelligence agency (ISI), General Mehmood Ahmed, was eased out and replaced by lieutenant-general Ehsanul Haq. Most analysts interpreted this as a move to curtail the pro-Taliban wing of the ISI.<sup>8</sup> This reflects the tendency to portray the officers in the Army as “moderates” and the ISI officers as “hawks”. Following this line of reasoning, the ISI (and not the Army) is held responsible for the growth of political Islam and religious extremism in Pakistan, and, especially, the rapid rise of the Taliban and its military success in capturing most of Afghanistan. An alternative analysis suggests that the ISI is not a “rogue” agency, but firmly under the control of the army (ICG 2002). Musharraf’s “shake-up” of the ISI was therefore not implemented to purge the agency of Taliban sympathisers, but to get rid of a political opponent: Mehmood Ahmed commanded the Rawalpindi corps, and was therefore a threat to Musharraf’s power. It is also worth noting that during 1995–96 President Musharraf was Director-General of Military Operations at the Army General Headquarters in Rawalpindi. This position placed Musharraf in a key role overseeing Pakistan’s support for the Taliban. Musharraf’s military career therefore exemplifies the close links between the ISI and the military (ibid.).

This also ties in with another myth, that of the “mullah versus military” (Shah 2002). There has for many years been a consensus that the army and the Islamic groups are on a collision course. An excellent study by the International Crisis Group suggests otherwise (ICG 2002). This study argues that the army and the religious groups and parties have a similar outlook on a number of key issues such as the defence budget and the Kashmir and Afghan policies (ibid.). An example substantiating this argument is the events following president Musharraf’s decision to join the international coalition and, by implication, endorsing the attack on the Taliban regime. This decision was expected

to generate mass demonstrations in Pakistan. Although there were protests and people took to the street in cities such as Peshawar, Quetta and Karachi, the scale of the demonstrations was relatively modest and easily contained by the Pakistani army. Many of the protesters were Afghans and sympathisers from Pakistani religious parties. The average Pakistani, though unhappy with Pakistan's stance, did not take to streets. This suggests that there is a symbiotic relationship between the Army and the Islamic extremist groups. Far from being overrun by these groups, the military government has used the groups to "justify its hold on power, improve its standing in the West and resist restoring secular democracy" (ibid.).

## Frontier

Nowhere in Pakistan has the call for the implementation of Sharia been stronger than in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP). There are many reasons for this – historical and contemporary as well as political. The NWFP is dominated by ethnic Pashtuns. The Pashtuns are tribally organised and have traditionally resisted government control. While most of the province is governed by the provincial assembly in Peshawar ("settled areas"), a significant part (25 per cent) is loosely administered in the form of "tribal areas" by the federal government (hence the name "Federally Administered Tribal Areas", FATA) where the local tribes enjoy considerable political autonomy (Figure 2). The tribal areas are divided into seven tribal agencies located along the 2,400 km border with Afghanistan. Until 1996 there was no adult franchise in the tribal areas and the villagers only had the choice of voting for accredited representatives (*Malik*) of the tribes (Ali and Rehman 2001: p. 44ff). Nonetheless, the political setup of the tribal areas remains unchanged, and is based on a complex power-sharing arrangement inherited from British rule. It includes appointed representatives of the federal government ("Political Agents"), local dignitaries (*Khan*), leaders (*Malik*), tribal elders (*spin giris*, "white beards") and clerics (*Maulvi*, *Mullah*). In times of internal conflict or

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<sup>8</sup> Little is known about the ISI. According to Time Magazine the agency has a budget of US\$ 45 million, and a staff of about 10,000 (Time 2002b).

in response to government intrusion they can call on tribal armies (*lashkar*) to fight against enemies or invaders.

It is now well documented that in both the settled and tribal areas of the NWFP the clerics, both low-ranked village “Mullahs” as well as educated Maulvis, have become influential. Their power has grown at the expense of the secular leaders such as Maliks and Khans. Many of the scholars have been able to convert religious authority into political power and have contested provincial elections. This has been important for the growth of political Islam, and periodic Islamic rebellions in the frontier. There are many reasons – both internal and external – for this shift. The seminaries that popped up in the wake of the Afghan war are one reason. Strung along the border with Afghanistan they were originally conceived as a bulwark against communist expansion and for this reason were generously supported by a number of Middle Eastern countries. Located on the border with Afghanistan, there has traditionally been close contact between the Pashtuns living on either side of the porous border. The influx of more than 2.5 million Afghan refugees, perhaps a million of them now naturalised as citizens of Pakistan (carrying Pakistani identity cards), also served to change the social fabric of the frontier. The Taliban movement and the rise of Sunni fundamentalism in the so-called “Quran belt” along southern Afghanistan has also strongly influenced the tribal areas. The gradual radicalisation has increased the influence of the pro-Taliban parties such as the JUI.<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, the JUI has been unable to convert this into political power during elections (see PARTIES).

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<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, the most influential political parties are still the PPP and the PML, in addition the Awami National Party (ANP) propagating Pashtu nationalism (see PARTIES).



**Figure 2: NWFP and the Tribal Areas**

It has also sharpened conflicts between the Sunni majority and the tiny Shia minority, who tend to occupy better and more productive land, which in itself is a source of acute tension. Due to increasing radicalisation of Shia and Sunni identities, sectarian differences have been sharpened and the most severe clashes between Shias and Sunnis in Pakistan have taken place in the NWFP. In 1996 about 200 persons were killed in a five-day armed conflict between Sunnis and Shias in the Kurram Agency (Newsline 1996). A final reason for the radicalisation of the frontier has been local discontent over poverty, abysmal living conditions and poor infrastructure in many parts of the province. This has given rise to popular discontent that has spurred a religious rather than political outlet and a demand for the implementation of Sharia (Box 1).



Box 1

**The demand for Sharia in the Malakand Division, NWFP**

In February 1994 the Pakistani Supreme Court ruled that customary tribal courts (based on tribal customs) should be replaced throughout the NWFP by government tribunals based on Pakistani civil law. This was a move to extend the government's control and power in the frontier at the expense of the customary system of local self-rule and decision-making. This quickly sparked a local uprising spurred by one of the emergent Islamic sects, the Tehrik Nifaz Shari'a-e-Mohammadi (TSNM) led by Maulana Sufi Muhammad. In 1989, Sufi Muhammad had left the Jamaat-e-Islam to found the TSNM, which as the name implies was a movement to implement Sharia law. To the TSNM the secular judicial system as well as the judges were corrupt and heretical.

In May the same year, thousands of TSNM supporters converged on the historic Malakand Pass guarding the entrance to Swat valley. The protesters rejected the government tribunals and demanded the immediate implementation of the Sharia and Sharia courts. The sheer force of the protest obliged the governor of the province to agree to their demand. The success of this show of force increased the support of the TSNM, which rapidly spread to the neighbouring Bajaur Agency and the Malkand Division (a settled area). Although the provincial authorities had promised to implement Sharia, in reality the civil law and the Sharia coexisted. The government's half-hearted implementation of the Sharia was demonstrated in November the same year when four visiting judges tried to settle pending court cases in Matta in upper Swat, based on civil and not, as promised, on Sharia law. This enraged local villagers and sparked a local outcry. Soon more than 600 tribesmen picked up their arms, took the judges hostage and stormed the local administrator's office. Not long after the word spread that the TSNM had launched a jihad. This induced more tribesmen to join in and the rebellion swelled to include more 5,000 armed men. They proceeded to take control of the major towns (Mingora, Saidu Sharif), the airport, government buildings and police stations as well as to hold more than 60 government officials captive. To crush the rebellion, the government called in elite paramilitary contingents of the Frontier Constabulary and Frontier Corps. In the ensuing conflict, 20 persons were killed and a number of people arrested, including the TSNM leader himself, and the rebellion subsided. Nonetheless, the force of the rebellion was enough for the provincial authorities to bow to the rebels' demand for implementing the Sharia. This was seen as a passive submission to the militants' demands. More demonstrations a month later also forced the

authorities to release all the prisoners.

In interpreting this case, it is worth noting that the centre of the rebellion, Matta in upper Swat, was not an extremist hotbed, but a bastion of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), which at the time also held the majority in the provincial assembly. Prior to the election the PPP representatives had toured Swat and the Malakand Division and promised social reforms. In Matta, the PPP supporters staged the largest mass meeting ever to be held in Swat. After the PPP had won the election, none of the promised reforms was implemented, something which disappointed and angered the local population. This transformed social and political discontent into religious protest and support for the TSNM. The example also shows that the state has little legitimacy in the area and attempts to curtail local self-determination are met with violent opposition.

Sources: (Herald 1994b, Lindholm 1999)

The volatility of the tribal areas often poses a stiff challenge to the federal authorities. In some cases the tribal areas serve as sanctuary for criminals and suspected terrorists. The frontier regions and the tribal areas are therefore important in the spread of political Islam and may at times act as refuge for militants seeking protection from prosecution. It is believed that following the collapse of the Taliban regime, a large number of the Taliban were able to flee to Pakistan. An unknown number may have sought refuge in the NWFP or, according to some reports, have established "terrorist cells" in the large cities (see TERRORISTS). Whereas the tribal areas are known to harbour Taliban soldiers (and perhaps also some of its leaders), it would be incorrect to claim that tribesmen in the NWFP have a "natural affinity with terrorists" (Time 2002b). Instead, the tribesmen have been sympathetically inclined towards their ethnic brethren with whom they also share Pashtun cultural tenets – especially the Pashtun code of honour (*Pashtunwali*), which among other things stresses the importance of hospitality and offering refuge. In fact, the ethnic and cultural unity of the area has been the reason for the call for a separate Pashtun state, Pashtunistan. It has been argued that Pakistan's support for the Taliban to a large degree was meant to check the growth of Pashtun nationalism in the NWFP. This strategy backfired and the Taliban would neither accept the current border

(the Durand Line) nor drop Afghanistan's claim to a part of the NWFP (Rashid 2000: p. 187).<sup>10</sup>

Although many of the tribesmen were sympathetic to the cause of the Taliban and the Al Qaeda, there was no outpouring of support for the Taliban and the call for jihad against the Americans was rejected by the majority of the populace. The majority of the angry protesters were Afghans residing in the major cities such as Quetta and Peshawar, but only a few of them picked up a gun and joined the fighting in Afghanistan. The majority of the protesters who joined the Taliban were members of the militant Islamic movement known as the TSNM (see Box 1). Following the outbreak of the war in Afghanistan in October 2001 about 2,000 (some sources say 10,000) TSNM supporters heeded the call for jihad and travelled to the Pakistan-Afghan border (Herald 2001b). Most of them were sent back by the local Taliban leadership. A few hundred laid down their lives in Afghanistan while the remainder are missing in action. In January 2002, the TSNM was one of five militant Islamic groups banned by the Pakistan government (see APPENDIX II). The ban was justified on the basis of the organisation's role in "misleading thousands of simple poor people into Afghanistan" (Musharraf 2002).

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<sup>10</sup> The Durand Line was established by the British in 1893 to create a buffer state in Afghanistan separating imperial Russia from its empire in India.

## 3. Militancy

### Militants

Unlike the Islamist political parties, the militant organisations neither seek political influence nor contest elections, but are engaged in a struggle to cleanse Islam and restore Muslim society (see APPENDIX II). In their pursuit of this goal, the use of violence is not only accepted but becomes an integral part of their armed struggle, which is often couched as a jihad (see JIHAD). The use of unlicensed violence puts them at odds with each other, the government and the Islamist parties (see PARTIES). The militant groups in Pakistan are of two main kinds. The first consists of groups whose main aim is to purify Islam. The majority of these groups are based in Pakistan. The other type is the groups that are engaged primarily in the liberation of Kashmir. In this section I will concentrate on the former, leaving the second to a separate discussion on Kashmir (see KASHMIR).

As already mentioned, the Islamisation of Pakistan was a state enterprise that began under the military regime of General Zia ul-Haq (1977-88). From the late 1970s, Zia embarked on a series of reforms meant to turn Pakistan into a truly Islamic state. Among these was the imposition of *zakat*, a religious tax in 1979. The *zakat* policy was fiercely resisted by Pakistan's Shia minority, who demanded to be exempted from the tax on religious grounds. Following large demonstrations in 1980, they were exempted from the tax but this sowed the seeds of anti-Shia sentiments and a growing sectarian violence. Over time these differences were manifested in a growth of new types of movements which were virulently anti-Shia.

In 1980 the clash over the *zakat* issue led to the formation of a Shia movement called the Tehrik-e-Jafria Pakistan (TJP).<sup>11</sup> As the name indicated, this was a movement for the implementation of Shia law as opposed to the (Hanafi) Sunni legal school promoted

by the Zia regime. The rise of a Shia organisation at the height of the Iranian revolution was certain to provoke a countermove from Sunni zealots. In 1985, the first Sunni organisation was formed under the name Anjuman Sipahi-e-Sahaba, but at a later stage it changed to its current name, Sipahi-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP). The SSP, under the leadership of Haq Nawaz Jhangvi, started a hard-line anti-Shia agenda and demanded that Shias be termed infidels (Ar. *Kafir*) (Nasr 2000: p. 163). Thus began the strife between the (Shia) TJP and the (Sunni) SSP, in which leaders and followers alike were killed in bloody encounters and outright assassinations. When the SSP leader was killed in 1990, an even more violent offshoot was created in his name, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LJ). The formation of the LJ in turn sparked the formation of another militant Shia organisation, Sipah-e-Mohammed Pakistan (SMP) in 1993. Both the LJ and the SMP are more ruthless than their parent organisations (SSP, TJP). In particular the LJ has proved to be the most violent sectarian organisation ever to have existed in Pakistan (Herald 2001f: p. 60).

Civilian governments have tried to curb the most virulent Islamic groups but have met with little success. In 1998 the Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif tried to curb extremism and announced a crackdown on these groups. Shortly after, in January 1999, he was nearly killed in a bomb attack carried out by the LJ. Backed by the military apparatus, President Musharraf could strike harder against the militants. In mid-August 2001, the government banned the two most violent organisations: the Sunni Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and the Shia Sipah-e-Mohammed Pakistan (SMP). In addition, the sectarian organisations from which they originated, the Sunni SSP and the Shia TJP, were placed “under observation” (Herald 2001f).

The military takeover in October 1999 did little to quell the problem of sectarian violence. In the two-year period (October 1999–August 2001) after the military takeover, about 222 persons were killed and 200 injured in sectarian violence. Most of these incidents took place in Karachi (33), leaving 54 people dead. In the tribal areas of the NWFP 61 persons were killed in just seven incidents (Herald 2001e). Nonetheless, compared to the situation under civilian governments the situation has improved

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<sup>11</sup> The organisation was first called Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Fiqh-e-Jafariyya (Movement for the defence of the

somewhat. For example, during 1989-94, the sectarian riots in Punjab killed 208 persons and injured more than 1,600 (Zaman 1999).

In January 2002, President Musharraf, now under pressure from India and the United States to curb terrorism (see KASHMIR), reiterated the ban on the LJ and SMP, and announced a further ban on their parent organisations, the SSP and the TJP. In addition, two organisations active in Kashmir, Jaish-e-Mohammad and Lashkar-e-Toiba, were banned, as was a lesser known organisation, the Tehrik Nifaz Shari‘a-e-Mohammadi (TSNM), whose members had joined the Taliban in the fight against the US troops in Afghanistan (see FRONTIER). This meant that all the better-known sectarian organisations in Pakistan were banned (SSP, TJP, LJ, SMP, TSNM) as well as two of the hard-line organisations seeking to liberate Kashmir (see APPENDIX II).

## **Kashmir**

Since 1947 the status of Kashmir has been a festering sore in relations between India and Pakistan. The two countries have fought three wars over the region (1947, 1965, 1999), all of which Pakistan lost. The old feudal kingdom is today carved into three: the Pakistani-held “Northern Areas” (pop. 1.5 mill.), the Pakistani-controlled “Azad (Free) Kashmir” (pop. 2.8 mill.) and the Indian-held “Jammu and Kashmir Province” (pop. 9 mill.). The conflict is over the Indian part, which consists of three distinct regions: the predominantly Buddhist Ladakh, the Hindu Jammu and the Muslim Vale of Kashmir. The province as a whole is 75 per cent Muslim but the Vale of Kashmir, the centre of the insurgency against Indian rule, is 95 per cent Muslim. Since 1948 Pakistan has demanded the implementation of the Security Council resolution (Resolution 47, 1948) demanding that the future status of Kashmir be decided by a plebiscite. For as many years India has rejected this claim. Pakistan welcomes external arbitration in the conflict, but India rejects third-party mediation and insists that this is a strictly bilateral issue as enshrined in the Simla Agreement.

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Jafari [Shia] law).

Most of the fighting takes place at the Line of Control (LoC), the 700 km cease-fire line that was created after the Simla Agreement in 1972. The ritualistic shelling across the LoC is indicative of the troubled relations between India and Pakistan but of little military relevance beyond endangering the lives of the people on both sides of the LoC. The deeper and more complex part of the conflict is concerned with the low-level warfare carried out by Islamic militants and freedom fighters against an overwhelming body of Indian security forces. Caught in the cross-fire, the social costs to the Kashmiris have been formidable. Since the insurgency started in 1989, the number of people killed has been at least 25,000; some even claim that 60,000 persons have been killed, most of them civilians.<sup>12</sup>

The grassroots insurgency against Indian rule began after claims of extensive vote-rigging during the Kashmiri elections in 1987 (Schofield 2000: p. 137). Soon after, the first major pro-independence group was formed, the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Force (JKLF), which was soon followed by other groups of Islamist persuasion such as the Allah Tigers. However, these indigenous organisations were of little consequence to the question of the future status of Kashmir. This changed with the emergence of the Hizbul Mujaheddin (HM), another pro-independence group, which was founded in 1989 (see APPENDIX II). The HM does not, unlike some of the other militant groups, engage in suicide attacks (Evans 2002) and in July 2000 announced a unilateral cease-fire. Considered a betrayal by the other militant groups, the cease-fire crumbled a month later.

In 1993 the about 30 pro-independence groups formed the All-Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC). The aims of the APHC were threefold: to assure the rights of the Muslim majority in the Vale of Kashmir, resolve the Kashmir problem through a tripartite dialogue (India, Pakistan and the Kashmiris themselves) and end the Indian army's occupation of Kashmir and harassment of its Muslim population (Peace Initiatives 2000). The APHC has consistently boycotted the local elections and is likely to do so again in the elections later this year. Due to the boycotts, the strength of the

political support enjoyed by the APHC is not known. For this reason, the APHC has recently come under pressure from the United States and the European Union to contest the upcoming elections.<sup>13</sup>

In 1994 the JKLF unilaterally renounced armed struggle and its leaders were set free. By then the Indian counter-insurgency had wiped out many of the first-generation of militants and fighters. However, the real battle for the future of Kashmir was yet to come. In 1995, two new militant groups, Lashkar-e-Toiba (LT) and Harakat-ul-Ansar (HUA), later renamed Harakat-ul-Mujadeen (HUM), appeared on the scene (Evans 2001a: p. 184).<sup>14</sup> These groups introduced a foreign element into what had until now been primarily an indigenous “independence” (*azadi*) movement. Both the LT and HUM were based in Pakistan and their members consisted both of Pakistani nationals and of Afghans and Arabs. The new fighters, euphemistically termed “guest militants”, were better trained and armed than the Kashmiri-based groups and ideologically motivated not so much by Kashmiri nationalism as pan-Islamism. It is thus from this date that one can talk of foreign meddling in the dispute and a “talibanising” of the Kashmir conflict (Evans 2001b). This ideological shift thus coincided with the emergence of the Taliban in Afghanistan from 1995–96. During the coming years, these and other organisations of the same mould mushroomed and the conflict escalated into a full-blown insurgency. This also drove out the last of the Hindu population in the Vale of Kashmir, who since the early 1990s had been forced to resettle in government camps. By the end of the decade, about 135,000 Kashmiri Hindus (“Pandits”) lived in refugee camps in Jammu.

From 1999, the conflict escalated further when Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), another militant group, took up armed struggle against the Indian occupation of Kashmir. Founded by a former member of HUM, Maulana Masood Azar (see TERRORISTS), the JeM has close links with the Sipahi-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), one of the militant Sunni

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<sup>12</sup> Indian sources have estimated losses at 26,226, including civilians (10,310), security forces (3,520) and terrorists (12,396). (Peace Initiatives 2000)

<sup>13</sup> In the 1996 elections, the APHC’s boycott may have contributed to the landslide victory of the current Chief Minister, Farooq Abdullah, the leader of the National Conference Party, who was elected unopposed.



organisations in Pakistan (Table 1). Together with Lashkar-e-Toiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed has emerged as the most brutal and ruthless organisation active in Kashmir, often relying on suicide squads for attacking Indian security forces and civilians.

The Kargil crisis in spring 1999 was a new example of more direct intervention in the Kashmir conflict, a strategy that eventually backfired and led to a humiliating defeat and political fiasco. In early spring battle-hardened fighters crossed the cease-fire line (LoC) and took up positions in the mountains near Kargil. The mountains overlooked the strategic supply route that connected Srinagar, the summer capital of Kashmir, with the winter capital Jammu. According to some reports, the majority of the fighters belonged to Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed. Despite Pakistan's claim to the contrary, there was little doubt that the fighters had been helped by the Pakistani army in taking up these positions. The Kargil attack soon developed into a major crisis that brought India and Pakistan close to war. Following weeks of intense diplomatic effort, a war was averted by the direct intervention of the United States, which convinced then prime minister Sharif to withdraw the troops and restore the Line of Control (Riedel 2002). In retrospect the responsibility for the Kargil disaster has been blamed on general Musharraf. Pakistan has only admitted to extending moral support to the Kashmiris, and has consistently denied India's charges of sponsoring "cross-border terrorism" and being engaged in a proxy war in Kashmir and hiding behind a curtain of "plausible deniability". The Kargil disaster ended the credibility of "plausible deniability" and made it clear to everyone that Pakistan covertly supported militant groups and was engaged in a proxy war in Kashmir. The Kargil crisis also had severe political repercussions in Pakistan and led to the ousting of prime minister Nawaz Sharif (Box 2).

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<sup>14</sup> The organisation changed its name after being designated a foreign terrorist organization by the US Department of State in October 1996.

Box 2

**India and Pakistan relations 1998–2001**

Pakistan's relations with India reached a low point in May 1998 following India's nuclear tests, followed shortly after by Pakistan's nuclear tests in the Baluchistan desert, despite intense US diplomatic efforts to prevent this very outcome. A year later relations warmed, not least because of a deliberate policy of engagement by the prime minister, Nawaz Sharif. The warming of relations with India reached a high point in February 1999 when Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, leader of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), came to Lahore in the heart of Punjab. This was a significant symbolic gesture towards Pakistan. The Lahore Declaration aimed to continue dialogue on the Kashmir issue in the spirit of the Simla Agreement (1972) and to keep diplomatic contacts at the foreign minister level. At the meeting the foreign ministers also met and worked out a memorandum of understanding that included a series of confidence-building measures, some of them explicitly aimed at reducing the risk of accidental war.

Only months later, the Kargil crisis plunged Indo-Pakistan relations to new depths and brought the two countries to the brink of war (see main text). The humiliating defeat was the beginning of the end for Nawaz Sharif. Shortly after, in September 1999, a power struggle between Sharif and his hand-picked leader of the Armed Forces, General Pervez Musharraf, sealed Sharif's fate. He was brought down in a bloodless coup led by Musharraf. By July 2001 the relations between India and Pakistan had improved enough for another high-level meeting, this time in Agra in India. Shortly before leaving, Musharraf took the title of president, presumably because this would enhance his bargaining position vis-à-vis the Indian prime minister Vajpayee. The meeting was a setback for those that hoped for a settlement of hostilities between the two countries. The talks ended without an agreement, with the long-running dispute over Kashmir seen as the main reason for the deadlock. Musharraf also held a controversial, closed-door meeting with Kashmiri separatist leaders, something that angered his Indian hosts.

Source: (Knudsen 2001a, Thornton 2000)

In a televised address delivered in Urdu to the Pakistani people in early January 2002, president Musharraf renounced support of militants and stated his commitment to building a moderate Islamic state (Musharraf 2002). Despite renouncing terrorism and

the support of militants, Musharraf reaffirmed the country's principal stand on Kashmir and the continuation of moral, political and diplomatic support of the Kashmiri people and the UN resolution of 1948. This notwithstanding, the question which is still unanswered is how much control does Pakistan wield over these groups? The problem facing president Musharraf, as well as civilian governments for the past decade, is that a too radical crackdown on Kashmiri militants can backfire and cause domestic unrest. Moreover, the country cannot afford to sever links with the militants and thereby weaken the Kashmiri cause. Nonetheless, if Pakistan has nurtured and financed these groups, how can it claim *not* to be able to control them? While it is clear that Pakistan is able to control some of these groups, and has frozen their assets and jailed many of their members, it is likely that it lacks the resources to control all the at least 18 militant groups waging a "holy war" in Kashmir (see, Herald 2000). The more resourceful of the Islamist parties, especially the JUI and JI, have built up Kashmiri "cells" which receive most of the *zakat* funds collected by these parties (Herald 1994a). All the important militant groups active in Kashmir operate from Pakistan and have close ties either with Pakistan-based parties or sectarian groups (Table 1). Some of them also have ties with the intelligence wing of the Pakistan army, the ISI. The ISI and the militants have a common interest in keeping the Kashmir issue high on the agenda and perhaps even unresolved. Some of the groups have close links with the Taliban and, possibly, the Al Qaeda (see TERRORISTS).

The bigger and better organised among the groups are complex operations with their own funding sources. Some of them also solicit donations from the families of slain martyrs or collect money from various business ventures in Pakistan (*ibid.*). This makes it extremely difficult to penetrate these organisations and even more difficult to prevent them from recruiting, training and arming young freedom fighters. There is a constant stream of Pakistani youths willing to lay down their lives as martyrs (Ar. *Shahîd*) for the Kashmiri cause. Most of the recruits come from middle-class or lower middle-class backgrounds and are therefore not, as is often claimed, from the poorer segments of society. Both the martyrs and their families are accorded much respect and often helped economically by the recruiting "cells" to bear the financial hardships the loss incurs (see, Herald 1994a). In Pakistan there has always been much more popular support for

Kashmir and the Kashmiris than there ever was for Afghanistan and the Taliban. These sentiments have been nourished by national propaganda claiming that the Kashmiri people are pining to join their brethren in Pakistan. In fact, the majority of the Muslim Kashmiris would prefer independence or extensive political autonomy to accession to Pakistan (Blank 1999).

Table 1  
Examples of links between Kashmiri militants and Pakistani organisations

Name	Linked to	
	Party	Sectarian organisation
Harakat ul-Mujaheddin (HUM)	Jamiat-e-Ulema Islam (JUI)	
Hizbul Mujaheddin (HM)	Jamaat-e-Islam (JI)	
Jaish-e-Mohammed (JM)		Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP)
Source: (Herald 2000)		

Although there is now much focus on Pakistan’s role in “sponsoring cross-border terrorism” in Kashmir, the Kashmiri cause has tended to move out of focus. There is a failure to acknowledge that the Kashmiri Muslims are fighting for their right to self-determination, a campaign that has been brutally stamped out by heavy-handed Indian army and police forces. Depending on the state of security relations with Pakistan, India deploys between 300–700,000 soldiers in Kashmir, who keep an iron grip on the Muslim population. It was also this situation that initially served to sharpen the conflict from the mid-1990s and accounted for the growth of a “jihadist” type of conflict. Unable to match India’s military might in conventional arms, Pakistan is forced to resort to low-level warfare.

During the past year there have been series of incidents that have brought India and Pakistan at the brink of war. It began on 1 October 2001 when two suicide assailants set off a car bomb in the State Assembly in Srinagar. The death toll eventually reached 40 people. On 13 December 2001 the Indian parliament building in New Delhi was attacked by suicide bombers presumably belonging to a Kashmiri militant group and fourteen people (including five militants) were killed. The two Kashmiri militant groups, Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad, were charged with the crime (see

APPENDIX II). The symbolic importance of the strike against the parliament ensured that the political fallout was severe. In a short time, the two countries were again brought to the brink of war with increasingly militant rhetoric, especially from India. India, which usually had played the more level-headed of the two countries, had gone from “cautious to combative” (Goswami 2001). Following strong Indian and international pressure on Pakistan to rein in the militant groups, president Musharraf announced in mid-January 2002 a ban on Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashkar-e-Toiba and rounded up close to 2,000 militants. However, Pakistan refused India’s demand to hand over more than 20 Pakistani militants accused of fomenting terrorism. In late March, the majority of the detained militants were set free.

In May 2002, the attack on an army base in Kashmir (30 persons killed), as well as the killing of Abdul Ghani Lone, the prominent leader of the All-Party Hurriyat Conference, again brought the two countries closer to war, including nuclear war, than at any time since 1971. In both cases, the Indian government blamed Kashmir militants operating from Pakistan for the misdeeds. Pakistan, as usual, claimed that they had done all they could to prevent cross-border terrorism and only extended moral support to the Kashmiris’ struggle. As both countries moved their army battalions towards the Kashmiri border, there were also increased fears of a nuclear attack, especially because Pakistan at that point had not ruled out a “first use” nuclear attack on India.<sup>15</sup> Following intense diplomatic pressure, both countries reduced their militant rhetoric and made efforts to restore the fragile security balance along the Line of Control. Although the fears of a major war have subsided, the threat of new attacks, especially from suicide squads, might again move the countries to the brink of war. At the moment, the unresolved Kashmir conflict remains the biggest security threat on the subcontinent.

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<sup>15</sup> The details of the prospect for a nuclearised conflict between Pakistan and India falls beyond the scope of this report. (but see, Ahmed 2000, Heisbourg 1998, Quinlan 2000, Talbott 1999) It is worth noting, however, that neither country has signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty nor the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

## 4. Terrorism

### Taliban

The Taliban movement takes its name from the Arabic term “talib” meaning “student”. The name indicates that the Taliban movement was born in the religious seminaries that since the outbreak of the Afghan war had multiplied along Pakistan’s border with Afghanistan. The seminaries, many of them funded by overseas sources (in particular Saudi Arabian money), were closely associated with the Wahabism found in Saudi Arabia. The schools therefore created a new breed of Islamic radicals espousing a radical “neo-fundamentalist” creed of Islam (details below). From their bases in the border regions of Pakistan, the Taliban took up the fight in Afghanistan and soon, helped by Pakistan with weapons and training, quickly took control of Kabul. By December 1996 the Taliban had captured most of Afghanistan with the exception of the northeast, which was held by the so-called Northern Alliance led by the Uzbek warlord General Abdur Rashid Dostum. Following the capture of Kabul, Pakistan was the first country to recognise the “Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan”, one of only three countries in the world to do so (Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates). There are many reasons why the new regime was never more widely acknowledged as the country’s legitimate rulers. The regime’s repressive policies, in particular against women, angered the international community. The destruction of the Buddha statues in the Bamyan province in March 2001 further underlined the ruthless ideology of the Taliban regime. As we will see below, this policy was a direct outgrowth of the Taliban regime’s adherence to a strict neo-fundamentalist Islam.

The political ideology of the Taliban is also reflected in the political organisation of the country. The country was run by a small group of leaders, in particular the reclusive Mullah Mohammed Omar, who served as the movement’s ideological leader and was referred to as the Commander of the Faithful (“Amir-ul Momineen”). At no point did the Taliban attempt to build a semblance of a state but instead ran the country like a large fiefdom. The country was run by a Supreme Shura based in Kandahar. The core of

the Shura consisted of ten members, mainly close associates of Mullah Omar, and a less influential group of about 50 persons made up of army commanders and tribal elders. Two other Shuras concerned with civil (the Kabul Shura) and defence matters (the Military Shura) reported to the Kandahar Shura. The Shuras were dominated by Pashtuns with only a few non-Pashtun members (Rashid 2000: p. 98). The system of Shuras was also extended to the countryside where a system of local-level Shuras was formed, giving the regime considerable control of the populace (see, Strand et al. 2001). The Taliban state model hence closely resembled the Islamist ideal of a leader (amir) and an advisory council (shura) (see, Roy 1994: p. 43ff). Furthermore, the Taliban leadership never took steps to draft a constitution, but relied exclusively on the Quran and the Sharia implemented through the malignant “Ministry of Vice and Virtue”.

The Taliban espouse what Olivier Roy has termed a “neo-fundamentalist” Islam (See ISLAM). Many of the Taliban’s top leaders were educated in the Dar-ul-Uloom Haqqania, located in Akhora Khattok (NWFP) and led by Samiul Haq. He is also a former member of the National Assembly and Senate of Pakistan and the current leader of one of the fractions of the Jamiat-e-Ulema Islam (JUI) (See PARTIES). The JUI and the Taliban share a common Deobandi base that has influenced their religious outlook. The Taliban’s “Ambassador at large” Rahmatullah Hashemi has said that “Every Afghan is a Deobandi” (quoted in, Metcalf Online)

The economic base of the Taliban was always weak, reflecting both the international boycott of the regime and the result of twenty years of war and civil war. The regime therefore relied primarily on an informal economy based on siphoning the profits from the country’s massive illegal drug production.<sup>16</sup> The Taliban also relied on illegal exports, smuggling and cross-border trade along the Pakistan-Afghan border, which resulted in enormous amounts of lost revenues that negatively affected Pakistan’s economy (Rashid 2000: p. 192). At a later stage, the Taliban leadership formed an alliance with Osama bin Laden, who contributed money and fighters to the regime (see TERRORISTS). In 1998, when the US request to extradite bin Laden failed, it launched a cruise missile attack (over Pakistani airspace) a couple of weeks later that failed to

dislodge bin Laden. This was followed by an Executive Order freezing all Taliban assets in the US and, a year later, the UN Security Council imposed further sanctions on Afghanistan (Resolution 1267). Nonetheless, the Taliban regime was mostly left to its own devices and apart from being considered a “rogue state” that sponsored terrorism nothing was done to dislodge the Taliban leadership or to intervene in Afghanistan. This changed dramatically in October 2001 when the United States decided to take military action aimed at toppling Afghanistan’s Taliban regime.

Pakistan was deeply involved in creating, nurturing and sustaining the regime. In particular, the Pakistani intelligence agency, the Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI), was in charge of Pakistan’s foreign policy vis-à-vis Afghanistan with minimal interference from elected governments and public servants. Support of the Taliban became a cornerstone in Pakistan’s foreign policy, mainly because a friendly government in Kabul was a key to the military doctrine known as “strategic depth”. In short, this meant that in the event of an attack from India, Pakistan could extend its reach westwards. During peacetime, it would allow the Pakistan army to devote more of its military personnel and armoury towards its eastern border with India, and especially the disputed boundary (the Line of Control) along the Jammu and Kashmir province. In this respect, there was a direct link between Pakistan’s Afghan policy and its strategic engagement in Kashmir. Support of the Taliban also made it possible to utilise camps inside Afghanistan for training recruits for the fight in Kashmir. Following the demise of the Taliban regime, the “strategic depth” doctrine has been abandoned altogether. The army and the ISI deplores this change, fearing that the new leadership in Afghanistan may become a “strategic threat” to Pakistan. It has been argued that Pakistan’s Afghan policy did not provide strategic depth to Pakistan, but that it was rather Pakistan which was providing strategic depth to the Taliban regime (Rashid 2000: p. 187).

The Taliban movement is, despite an increasing number of books on the subject, not well understood by Western analysts (see, Harpviken 1999). Originally the Taliban set out to be an Islamic reform movement. Although the movement has been a source of admiration and inspiration for Islamists elsewhere, the movement itself was not pan-

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<sup>16</sup> It is worth noting, however, that the Taliban regime successfully curbed drug production following



Islamic. There is little evidence that the movement aspired to export its particular brand of Islam. The Taliban issued neither political manifestos nor policy statements. What little there is of documentation of its political philosophy, however, suggests that the Taliban combined Pashtun cultural tenets with a dogmatic scripturalist Islam.

The collapse of the Taliban regime has led to the question of possible scenarios for a “post-Taliban” Afghanistan (see, Ayoob 2002). While the political make-up of the new regime in Afghanistan falls beyond the scope of this study, the future role of the Taliban movement is an important question. The military campaign against the Taliban has shown that most of the rank-and-file members simply disappeared or changed sides. A substantial number also left for Pakistan, hiding in the North-West Frontier Province or moving into Pakistani cities, where they went underground (see *TERRORISTS*). It has been claimed that the Taliban had spurred the growth of Taliban sympathisers in Pakistan and promoted the growth of radical Islamic groups. In particular, the Taliban enjoyed close ties with the JUI, which subscribed to the same neo-fundamentalist doctrine as the Taliban. This phenomenon has been referred to as “Talibanisation” and although not confined to Pakistan (but also used with reference to China, Central Asian States, Kashmir) the term has been pinned especially on Pakistan (Knudsen 2001b). It has also been speculated that the Taliban was a major reason for the intensification of the Kashmir conflict from the mid-1990s and that the insurgency was spurred by the Taliban (see *KASHMIR*).

Ahmed Rashid (1999) has argued that the Taliban exported militant extremism to neighbouring countries. However, the aspects just mentioned suggest that Afghanistan and the Taliban regime were primarily a safe haven for groups of differing ethnic affiliations and Islamic persuasions (Uzbek rebels, Iranian dissidents, Uighur militants etc.) but which the Taliban saw it as advantageous to support. The main point was hence not so much to export extremism as to provide a safe haven for groups that served the interests of the regime itself. Following the same line of argument, the Al Qaeda provided money and dedicated personnel that complemented the goals of the Taliban. It might be argued, then, that Talibanisation was less an export of a purely Taliban-style

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sanctions (Resolution 1333) imposed by the UN Security Council in December 2000.

Islam, and more about providing a safe haven for different groups to operate from Afghanistan. An important question for this study is the extent to which Taliban regime in Afghanistan also fomented the militant Islamic insurgency in Kashmir.

## **Terrorists**

In 1992 Pakistan was put on the US State Department “watch list” of countries sponsoring terrorism. The reason was that the US believed that the Army’s intelligence agency (ISI) obstructed plans to buy back the unused Stinger missiles from the Afghan mujahedin. Following the removal of ISI officers named by the US, Pakistan was removed from the list in July 1993 (Rizvi 1998). Since then, the charge of sponsoring terrorism was first of all linked to the activity of Muslim militants in Kashmir, in particular those targeting foreign nationals. In 1996, Harakat ul-Mujahideen (HUM) (a.k.a. Harakat ul-Ansar, HUA, Al-Hadid, Al-Hadith, Al-Faran) was put on the US Department of State’s list of Foreign Terrorist Organisations (FTOs) following its involvement in killing foreign tourists in Kashmir such as the Norwegian Per Christian Osterø (see APPENDIX II). He was kidnapped in Kashmir in July 1995 and later killed by the “Al-Faran”, a subsidiary group of the HUM. No reason was ever given for killing Osterø as well as the four other Western hostages (including one American) presumed killed later the same year. Most likely they were killed because the Indian government declined to give in to the demand for the release of 21 jailed members of the organisation. Until now, this has been the only incident of its kind in Kashmir.

While militancy has been a clear trend during the past decade, terrorism is new. Although it is difficult to separate the two, one could say that militancy involves parties to the conflict in an armed struggle against each other, while terrorism uses a third party not directly involved in the conflict. Thus militancy is primarily dyadic (aggressor and victim), but terrorism is triadic (aggressor, victim, witness), where the killing is politically motivated and therefore tends to target innocents. A very high number of civilians have been killed in the Kashmir conflict during the past decade, but the international community has in general considered them “casualties of war” rather than

victims of terrorism (see KASHMIR). Following the 11 September attacks and the US-led coalition against terrorism, India's claim that Pakistan is covertly engaged in "cross-border terrorism" has gained wider support. There is now credible evidence that most of the militant "outfits" operate from bases in Pakistani or the nominal free state of Azad Kashmir controlled by Pakistan (see KASHMIR). Moreover, a considerable number of the militants, especially the "guest militants", have been trained and outfitted in Afghanistan. This has been possible by virtue of the close links between the ISI and the Afghan authorities that predated the Taliban regime. Some of the members of the older Kashmiri liberation groups such as HUM also had close personal links with the Afghan mujaheddin groups and fought alongside them during the Afghan war. After the Taliban takeover they continued to enjoy close relations with the Taliban, and possibly also the Al Qaeda (Herald 2000).

The Al Qaeda ("the base") and its leader Osama bin Laden have been under intense media scrutiny since the attack on the United States on 11 September 2001. Synthesising this material is beyond the scope of this report, which is limited to the organisation's operations in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Already in 1999, the Al Qaeda was added to the FTO list for its involvement in several terrorist attacks, including the August 1998 bombings of the US embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The ideology of the Al Qaeda has already been touched upon (see JIHAD), and involves armed struggle against the United States, its citizens and allies as well as cleansing Muslim countries of their corrupt leadership (in particular Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Algeria). A secondary goal of the Al Qaeda is to support (or form) radical Islamic groups and support Muslim militants in selected countries, including Afghanistan and Pakistan.

From its inception in 1988, the Al Qaeda had over the years evolved into a huge and complex organisation spanning many Middle Eastern countries with a number of associates and members drawn principally from the Arab countries (see, Alexander and Swetnam 2001). The details of the organisation's membership are beyond the scope of this report, but the nature of the organisation, especially the concept of "network", deserves special mention. Much in the same way as the Taliban regime, the Al Qaeda

was loosely organised around an inner circle of about 10 persons forming an executive council (Shura Majlis), followed by executive committees covering amongst other things military training and religious education. Already in 1979, bin Laden had left his native Saudi Arabia for Afghanistan, where he joined the Afghan mujahedin (1978–88). He returned to Afghanistan in 1996 after being forced to leave Sudan as well as having his Saudi Arabian citizenship revoked (in 1994). In Afghanistan he developed close ties with the Taliban leadership. The details of these ties are presently not known (but see, Rashid 2000). What we do know is that despite intense pressure on the Taliban regime to extradite bin Laden, they never did. Neither US cruise missiles attacks (1998), diplomatic pressure, repeated UN sanctions, Pakistani mediation (2001), nor the threat of full-scale war (2001) was able to dislodge bin Laden and create a rift between the Taliban proper and the Al Qaeda. This is indicative of the extent to which the Taliban leadership had become dependent on bin Laden and the Al Qaeda. The nature of Pakistan's relations with Al Qaeda is not well known. However, it is known that for a brief period (1989–91), the organisation was headquartered in Pakistan (Alexander and Swetnam 2001: p. 4). However, there is no evidence that the Pakistan authorities at any point enjoyed close relations with the Al Qaeda in the manner that they did with the Taliban regime. It is clear, however, that the Al Qaeda did develop close relations with some of the militant groups and parties in Pakistan as well as those in Kashmir (see KASHMIR)

The most striking feature of the Al Qaeda is its organisational structure, which has been characterised as a “network”. Networks have a long and distinguished history in binding together the people and faiths of the Islamic world. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the main religious networks were those of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, serving as a centre for the Arab countries, and the Jamaat-e-Islami on the Indian subcontinent (Roy 1994: p. 110). The network of the Al Qaeda, however, is not primarily religious but motivated by a pragmatic concern with evading control and frustrating surveillance. To accomplish this, the organisation is loosely structured around a number of independent terrorist “cells” spanning many countries, which makes it very difficult to target. The Al Qaeda is not only a terrorist network but also a business conglomerate. An estimated US\$ 43 million of the Al Qaeda's bank assets have been frozen (Time 2001), but much

of the organisation's economic transactions have not been banked and instead have utilised an informal Islamic exchange system known as *hawala* (Hindi meaning "trust" or "exchange"). More concretely, this is an unofficial remittance and money exchange system that allows money to be moved between independent "brokers" or "operators" (*hawaladars*) without leaving a paper or electronic "trail". The Al Qaeda's use of the *hawala* system has made it difficult to trace its economic transactions and therefore to target the organisation.

As seen above, evading control is key to the formation of an Al Qaeda type of organisation. It has therefore been argued that in order to prosper, terrorists and their network need what is labelled "failed states" (Takeyh and Gvosdev 2002). The authors point to four reasons why this is the case. First, they can broker a place for themselves by offering to partake in local wars. Examples of this include Bosnia, Kosovo, Chechnya, Sudan and, appropriately, Afghanistan. Secondly, failed states have weak law-enforcement capabilities and thereby allowing terrorists to engage in smuggling and drug trafficking to fund their operations. Third, failed states provide a large pool of potential recruits and supporters for terrorist groups. Finally, failed states are shielded from intervention from another sovereign state through the UN Charter. Under normal circumstances this prevents direct intervention aimed at dislodging the regime, thereby providing terrorists with a safe haven. This, therefore, explains why Afghanistan was so well suited to the needs of the Al Qaeda.

Following the collapse of the Taliban regime, it has been claimed that some of the Al Qaeda soldiers relocated to Kashmir. This claim was recently reiterated by US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld (BBC News 2002c). However, keeping in mind the points made above, it is possible to understand why Kashmir is not a "safe heaven" for the Al Qaeda. First, the Vale of Kashmir is heavily policed and guarded by a government hostile to the organisation. There are about 3,500 militants in Kashmir. They are up against approximately 300,000 Indian security forces (currently close to 700,000 troops are stationed in Kashmir). This makes Kashmir – despite its rugged landscape – less suited as a base for terrorist activity. In addition, it should be remembered that Osama bin Laden did not take any special interest in Kashmir. His main agenda was the fight

against the USA and its allies. An area that would fit some of the criteria for a “safe haven” for the Al Qaeda fighters (and possibly, its leaders) is the “tribal areas” along the border separating Pakistan and Afghanistan (see FRONTIER). There are many reasons why this is a viable option: the area is remote, politically autonomous and ruled by strong tribal chiefs. The Pakistani authorities have only a limited jurisdiction of the area. There is a general sympathy with the Taliban on ethnic and religious grounds. A recent news bulletin suggests that Al Qaeda fighters have sought refuge in the tribal areas of Pakistan (BBC News 2002b). According to this report, Pakistani troops killed 10 Al Qaeda fighters near the garrison town Wana, located in the South Waziristan Agency, one of the remotest and least hospitable of the tribal agencies (Figure 2).

With the exception of a series of assassinations of Iranians by Sunni militants during the past decade, there have been very few attacks targeting foreigners in Pakistan (excluding Kashmir). In 1998 four Americans employed by a Houston oil company were gunned down in Karachi. The culprits were never found. Following the American attack on the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, terrorist attacks have multiplied. They include: the killing of the American Wall Street journalist Daniel Pearl by a group led by the British-born militant Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh (a.k.a. Sheikh Omar); a bomb attack in an Islamabad church killing 5 people; a bomb killing 11 French engineers; and finally, a bomb attack on the United States Consulate in Karachi killing at least 11 Pakistanis (14 June 2002), blamed on Laskar-e-Jhangvi. It is probably no coincidence that with one exception, all these attacks took place in Karachi, Pakistan’s most lawless city. This makes Karachi a suitable hideout for militants as well as a temporary base for members of the Al Qaeda (Herald 2001a, Time 2002a).<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> In September 2002 Ramzi Binalshibh, a senior Al Qaeda member accused of having planned the 11 September attacks was arrested in Karachi. In March the police arrested Abu Zubaidah, a senior bin Laden deputy, in Faisalabad. (New York Times 2002)

## **Conclusion: Whither political Islam?**

As Stephen Cohen, a long-time Pakistan analyst has noted, Pakistan is not a trivial state (Cohen 2002). The country is large, populous, geostrategically important and armed with nuclear weapons. It is also central to the growth of political Islam on the subcontinent, and some argue, under siege from Islamic militants. While the imminent collapse of Pakistan is often predicted (ICPI 2002), the fact is that Pakistan is too important to be allowed to disintegrate. “The survival of Pakistan in its existing form is a vital U.S. security interest”, notes Anatol Lieven (2002). This does not mean that Pakistan is not under pressure or that the threat from political Islam amounts to little. Still, it is important not to lose perspective: Pakistan is an Islamic country with a militant Islamic lobby, it is not a country of Islamists. This said, the radical Islamic groups have made brutal violence against enemies their hallmark.

The ban on all extremist groups in Pakistan from early 2002 has been a major setback for the militants but they are far from beaten. No decisive action has been taken to end the role of the militants either in Pakistan or in Kashmir. This is the result both of a general inability to control or suppress groups that are organisationally complex and of a fear of alienating forces that have been (and still are) important for advancing foreign policy goals in Afghanistan and in Kashmir. The current upsurge of terrorist strikes in Pakistan could indicate that Pakistan is now experiencing a backlash from its leniency in coming to terms with these groups. An additional reason for this leniency is that many of the most important militant groups enjoy official (army) patronage: they are not enemies of the state but immanent to the state.

While the militant groups pose a danger to foreigners, they do not represent a serious challenge to the army and the current government. The claim of a “fundamentalist takeover” in Pakistan is both unlikely and farfetched. What does pose a security threat to Pakistan, its leadership and citizens is the Kashmir conflict. India and Pakistan’s dangerous war-games in Kashmir have repeatedly brought the two countries to the brink of war. On every occasion the crisis has been precipitated not by advancing armies, but

by calculated attacks by Islamic militants at times aided by the Pakistan army. The failed Kargil offensive in 1999 shows that the Pakistani army is willing to take great security risks in order to force a military solution to the Kashmir problem. In this respect the democratically elected governments have charted a much more conciliatory course, as exemplified by the Lahore Declaration signed under former prime minister Nawaz Sharif.

The return to “true” democracy in Pakistan at the moment looks bleak. The mainstream parties PPP and PML are both weakened at the same time as president Pervez Musharraf has taken steps to increase his powers under the presidency, giving him the right to dismiss a new parliament and prime minister and set up a shadow government in the form of a national security council that he controls. It is therefore likely that any democratically elected government will be short-lived and sure not to survive its full term in office, as in fact no elected government in Pakistan ever has. All of them have been deposed by the military or dismissed by presidential fiat. The Islamic parties Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) and Jamiat-e-Ulema Islam (JUI) will also this time win few votes, although they may have won a few hearts for their principled stand against the American attack on the Taliban regime.

They are also close allies in Pakistan of the former Taliban regime. Although the Taliban has been defeated militarily, it can still present a long-term challenge to a future government in Afghanistan. The presence of Taliban fighters in Pakistan’s tribal areas and possibly also in some of the major cities might pose a security threat, especially if they ally themselves with the country’s most militant groups. In this sense the Taliban will not go away, but continue to represent a security challenge to Pakistan and the new government of Afghanistan. It will therefore be important to continue to monitor the situation in the North-West Frontier Province where age-old ethnic, cultural and religious ties between Pashtuns in Pakistan and Afghanistan die hard. Nonetheless, it is unlikely that the tribal areas will become a hotbed for an extremist political Islam. The Pashtun tribesmen in the tribal areas are devout Muslims but they are neither extremists nor terrorists. Nor is it likely that a “limited number of Pakistani tribal and religious volunteers slipping over the border [will] ... revive the Taliban. Outright support for the



Taliban from a radicalized Pakistani state, however, could do just that” (Lieven 2002: p. 107).

The government of Pakistan has tried to rein in the Islamic seminaries but only half-heartedly. The latest “madrassa strategy” is sure to be opposed by the seminaries and their allies in the religious parties (JI, JUI). Having successfully evaded government control for so long, better control of the seminaries’ funding and curricula will be hard to accomplish without the use of force. In all likelihood the present situation will continue unless the seminaries can be persuaded willingly to accede to more government control. However, a carrot and stick approach might not work because many seminaries consider government patronage a political bribe. There is a consensus that the seminaries have been crucial to the growth of political Islam and launched the Taliban movement, but blaming the seminaries for all the country’s problems is nevertheless unwarranted and suggests that the seminaries may serve as a convenient scapegoat. In a country that has ignored formal education, the seminaries have promoted basic literacy (and, no doubt, militancy) otherwise inaccessible to Pakistan’s poor. This is also an argument in favour of international support for Pakistan’s attempt to reform the education sector, which until now has been overlooked.

It is commonly assumed that “poverty breeds extremism”. This report shows that there is limited support for this assumption in the case of Pakistan. It is not poverty that has bred extremism, but rather a series of contingent factors ranging from foreign policy and military objectives (“strategic depth”, “proxy war”), historical trajectories (the Afghan war, the Kashmir conflict) as well as years of military rule, not the least the Islamisation programme under Zia ul-Haq (1977–88). These factors contributed to a groundswell of political Islam. Democracy’s failure also contributed to the growth of Islamic extremism and helped it flourish. The growth of sectarian violence has been staggering and with few serious attempts to control it. The most recent attacks in Karachi suggest that the most virulent of the sectarian groups have become terrorist outfits.

Nonetheless, during the past decade there have been few examples of outright terrorist attacks in Pakistan. The presence of members of the Al Qaeda as well as Taliban

soldiers suggests that in the near future there will be more terrorist attacks aimed at foreigners and political opponents. The current government has so far been able neither to prevent these attacks nor to catch those responsible. This is not only for lack of will, but because the attackers are ruthless and well organised. This report has pointed to the “enlargement” of the concept of jihad, which is now used to justify murderous attacks on religious (“Shia infidels”, “American Crusaders”) and political opponents (“Indian oppressors”). Invoking jihad has been done in order to clothe political violence with an aura of religious legitimacy. Attempts to delimit the use of jihad, as tried by president Musharraf, will no doubt be ignored by those who espouse jihad (in the sense of “holy war”) as a religious duty for every Muslim.

This report has tried to chart some of the elements that contribute to growth of political Islam in Pakistan. Influential scholars such as Gilles Kepel (2002) and Olivier Roy (1994) have predicted the demise of political Islam. It is still too early to say whether Pakistan is not only a country where we can see the growth of political Islam, but also one where we can learn of its demise.

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## Appendix I: List of interviews

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Appendix II  
Overview of Islamic groups and parties in Pakistan

	Name	English name	Leader	Denomination	Status
<b>Parties</b>	Jamiat-e-Ulema Islam (JUI)	Association of Ulemas of Islam	Maulana Fazlur Rehman, Maulana Samiul Haq	Sunni	leader detained, later released
	Jamaat-e-Islami (JI)	Party of Islam	Qazi Hussein Ahmed (Liaquat Baluch)	Sunni	Leader detained, later released
<b>Militants</b>	Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LJ)	Army of Jhangvi	Akram Lahori	Sunni	banned 14 August 2001
	Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP)	Society for the Soldiers of the Companions of the Prophet	Maulana Azam Tariq	Sunni	banned 12 January 2002
	Sipah-e-Mohammed Pakistan (SMP)	Soldiers of Prophet Mohammad in Pakistan	<i>unknown</i>	Shia	banned 14 August 2001
	Tehrik-e-Jafria Pakistan (TJP)	Movement of the Jafari Shia Pakistan	Allama Arif Hussain al-Hussaini	Shia	banned 12 January 2002
	Tehrik Nifaz Shari'a-e-Mohammadi (TSNM)	The Movement of Enforcing the Sharia of Mohammad	Sufi Mohammed	Sunni	banned 12 January 2002
<b>Insurgents</b>	Lashkar-e-Toiba (LT)	Army of the Pure	Mohammed Latif	Sunni	banned 12 January 2002
	Jaish-e-Mohammad (JM)	Army of Mohammed	Maulana Masood Azar	Sunni	banned 12 January 2002
	Harakat ul Mujaheddin (HUM)	Movement of Religious Fighters	Farooq Kashmiri	Sunni	declared terrorist org, US. State Dept., 1996
	Hizbul Mujaheddin (HM)	Group of Sacred Warriors	Syed Salahuddin	Sunni	
<b>Others</b>	Afghan Defence Council		Maulana Samiul Haq	Sunni	leader detained, later released

Appendix III  
Religious seminaries in the Punjab, 1975–2001

<b>Division</b>	<b>1975</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1985</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>2001</b>
Bahawalpur	278	417	598	795	883	971
D. G. Khan	153	217	297	363	411	397
Multan	45	102	179	212	325	363
Lahore	75	120	170	219	323	356
Rawalpindi	58	85	119	157	169	186
Sargodha	75	98	130	148	149	164
Gujranwala	52	66	96	131	140	154
Faisalabad	?	?	?	?	112	124
<b>Total</b>	<b>736</b>	<b>1105</b>	<b>1589</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2512</b>	<b>2715</b>

Sources: Zaman (1998: p. 710), Herald (2001d)



# Summary

This report analyses the growth of political Islam in South Asia (Pakistan, Afghanistan and India's Jammu and Kashmir Province). In Pakistan the failure of parliamentary democracy and the weakening of civil society have spurred the growth of social protest in the form of a political Islam. Pakistan is still a moderate Islamic country, but with a growing and increasingly violent Islamic militant lobby. The army is still firmly in charge but because of its patronage of the key militant groups, cannot take decisive action against them.

The Kashmir conflict has for half a century marred relations between India and Pakistan and is currently the biggest security threat in the region. The intensification of the conflict since 1989 in the form of an insurgency against Indian rule was in large measure due to growth of political Islam.

The Taliban movement was created and nurtured by Pakistan and support for its regime in Afghanistan was a cornerstone of Pakistan's foreign policy. Although the Taliban regime has been defeated militarily, it can still present a long-term challenge to a future government in Afghanistan. The presence of the Al Qaeda "cells" in Pakistan's tribal areas and in some of the major cities pose a security threat, especially if they ally themselves with the country's most militant groups.

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