

# Pakistan: Inter Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI) An Analytical Overview

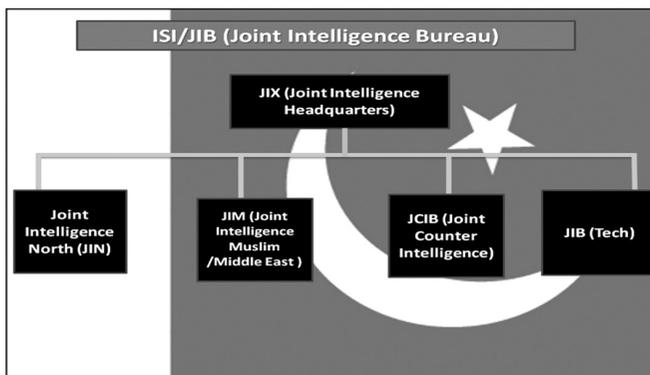
Rana Banerji \*

## Background & History

### Initial Years<sup>1</sup>

The ISI was set up in 1948, shortly after the first war with India, to strengthen sharing of intelligence between the army, navy and air force. It was headed first by Maj Gen R. Cawthorne, one of the last British officers to leave Pakistan. He continued at the helm of ISI till 1956. Thereafter, for almost three years, it remained headless as Pakistan faced constitutional turmoil leading finally to Ayub Khan's first martial law take-over. Ayub appointed Brig Riaz Hussain as ISI chief and he continued up to 1966. He was replaced by Brigadier, later Maj Gen Mohd Akbar Khan, who continued as head of ISI till the calamitous break up of the country in 1971.

During this period, about 80 per cent of ISI personnel were on deputation from the three defence services along with a small cadre of civilian deputationists from the police. There are no accurate figures about its overall strength but present estimates assess that its total personnel strength ranges, between 7,000 and 10,000. Its organisation and existence was designed as an adjunct of the army. The location of its field offices was near the Field Intelligence Units (FIU) of the army in border areas, thus sharing the army's obsession about the threat from India. The earliest known organisational format of ISI was structured in 'Joint Intelligence' terms, along with Military Intelligence (MI), as shown below:



\* Rana Banerji is a retired Special Secretary, Cabinet Secretariat, Government of India.

The ISI Headquarters was referred to as JIX, whereas field deployments could be in JIN (North- commonly known to Kashmiri and other militants operating against India – Ironically speaking, ‘Jin’ – in local Urdu parlance denotes equivalent of ‘demon’ or ‘a genie’, which ISI/army leadership has been reluctant to, or finds it difficult today, to put back in the bottle). There were also other sections designated as-JIM (Middle East/ Muslim countries, JCIB (Joint Counter Intelligence Bureau) and JIB (Joint Int – Technical-which included also the technical and signals intelligence wings). These have now been modernised and several specialised wings or units have been added.

This close identification of ISI with MI also perhaps saw the genesis of a personnel location policy or convention followed even now, wherein officers serving in the MI or as the chief of military intelligence at a lower rank (Major General) were later invested with higher responsibility ( in rank of Lieutenant General) in ISI.(Hamid Gul, Asad Durrani, Ehsan ul Haq). In one of the major India-related operational initiatives undertaken by ISI during this period was when contacts were first established, in London with Naga National Council leader, Phizo. He was later taken to Karachi.

The ISI also had a foretaste of dabbling in internal political affairs during the Ahmediya community’s persecution in the early fifties, and then again, in Gen Yahya Khan’s time, when the state signally failed to tackle emerging Bengali dissent which soon boiled over into a separatist irridenta. ISI spawned Razakar, Al Badr outfits in East Pakistan in an effort to scuttle the Awami League’s agitation for a separate Bengali nation. Despite these moves, the ISI’s inability to anticipate events leading to this break up of the country signified a major failure in its track record, which left a deep scar in the mind set of officers and ranks of its personnel in the years to come.

## **Changes between 1971-1979**

### **The Bhutto Years**

Even as he struggled to contain the negative impact of Chief Justice Hamoodur Rehman’s report on the Dhaka debacle, the initial period of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto’s prime ministership was plagued by an uneasy relationship with the services top brass, including the new army chief, Gen Gul Hassan. The latter was seen as obstructionist and soon replaced by the overly obsequious Tikka Khan.

In domestic politics too, Bhutto’s penchant for not relying too long on chosen favourites and pick up new ‘blue eyed boys’ only to dump them soon enough did

not auger well for institutions to develop or prosper. Though a 'Political Cell' was set up within ISI at this time, Bhutto did not trust middle level army officers and preferred to rely more on the civilian set up under the Intelligence Bureau. The way he dealt with the Baluchistan situation indirectly helped to bring the army back into the political arena, a development that would haunt Bhutto later.

### **Attock Conspiracy Case**

Younger army officers, in particular were alienated by Bhutto's dictatorial style. Military intelligence and ISI were able to penetrate one such group of disgruntled army officers of the rank of major, and lieutenant colonel. This was the Attock Conspiracy trial which was headed by then Major General Zia ul Haq. Though harsh sentences were given to the conspirators, they became heroes in the eyes of their younger colleagues. The army's unhappiness against Bhutto was heightened.

However, the Attock process helped consolidate Zia's rise to power, despite an adverse army record. He came closer to Bhutto. In March, 1976 Bhutto made him army chief superseding six generals senior to him. Bhutto created new security organisations personally loyal to him – like the Federal Security Force (FSF) which was headed by police officers of dubious record like Haq Nawaz Tiwana and Masood Mehmud, the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and the Airport Security Force (ASF). He brought in police officers who were loyal to him- such as former IGPs, Saeed Ahmed Khan and Rao Rashid in advisory capacity at various levels. In effect, Bhutto tried to set up a system of intelligence gathering and control parallel to that of the Pakistan army and ISI. This system of personalised reporting did not help him much during in the aftermath of the rigging allegations in the 1977 elections

### **Zia Years**

Lt Gen Ghulam Jilani Khan was appointed ISI chief by Gen Yahya Khan in 1971 but continued under three masters- Bhutto. He remained at the helm of ISI till 1978. It is believed, Jilani kept Zia informed of Bhutto's moves in the fateful days after the July 1977 elections. Zia rewarded him by first making him defence secretary and later Punjab governor. (March,1980-Dec1985). He was credited with involving the ISI more directly in internal affairs, which helped Zia to curb initial dissent against his martial Law take-over, and later in helping select amenable politicians like Junejo, and the Sharif family (whose iron foundry nationalised by Bhutto in 1973 was de-nationalised by Zia and given back to them), including a young Nawaz (more a cricketer then!) to sugar coat Zia's gradual revival of political activities in the mid/late 1980s. Nawaz was first made finance minister, later chief minister of Punjab.

Defence services officers in this early phase, did not particularly aspire to a career in the ISI. The general view among services was to regard it as a 'backwater' for sidelined officers who were posted on rotation or deemed unfit for operational action or duty, or on health or some other grounds. Most of the officers posted on rotation were reluctant to go there and tried to finish their stints early and move back to the regular stream. Even those who returned were seen as 'unreliable' by their military colleagues and shunned by peers in the services' social network, which was so strong.

## **1979-1988**

All this changed rather dramatically after the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. The ISI was used as the main conduit for organising Afghan resistance and for distribution of arms and financial largesse provided by the Americans and Saudi intelligence.

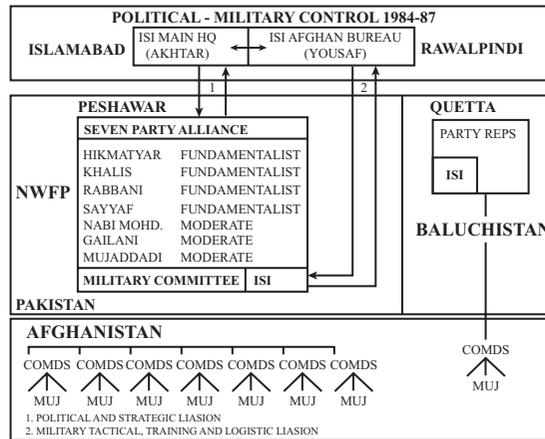
### **Afghan Operations**

The chart below shows how the ISI organised the fund flows and intensified its political control over the seven main Afghan Islamist resistance groups fighting against the Russians. This was done by the then ISI chief Lt. Gen Akhtar Abdul Rehman, after some initial setbacks in which three Pakistani army officers were found guilty of misappropriating funds along with a few Mujahideen commanders (the so-called 'Quetta incident' after which the first brigadier in charge of the ISI's Afghan bureau was replaced). They were sacked and the responsibility of organizing this chain was given to Brig Mohd Yousaf.

Later, these arrangements were overseen both by CIA director Casey and the Saudi Intelligence chief, Prince Turki bin Faisal. The Saudi intelligence's link up with the ISI was a significant landmark as hitherto, their contacts had remained confined to the Pakistani civilian intelligence organization, the Intelligence Bureau (IB). This link was established before the CIA came in, in full earnest, to back the Afghan resistance effort from Pakistan.

As this chart shows, the main distribution points for arms and cash flows to the Afghan Mujahideen were the ISI's field bureaus at Peshawar and Quetta. This was the time when the Afghan resistance leaders were able to build luxurious homes for themselves, mainly in the University Town area of Peshawar. Under the ISI's stewardship, they also recruited Afghan refugees and Pashtuns from selected

mosques and madrassas in the NWFP, notably the Akora Khattak madrassa of Maulana Samiul Haq and the Pashtunabad madrassa on the outskirts of Quetta. These madrassas would later (1994-95) be used to nurture the Taliban.



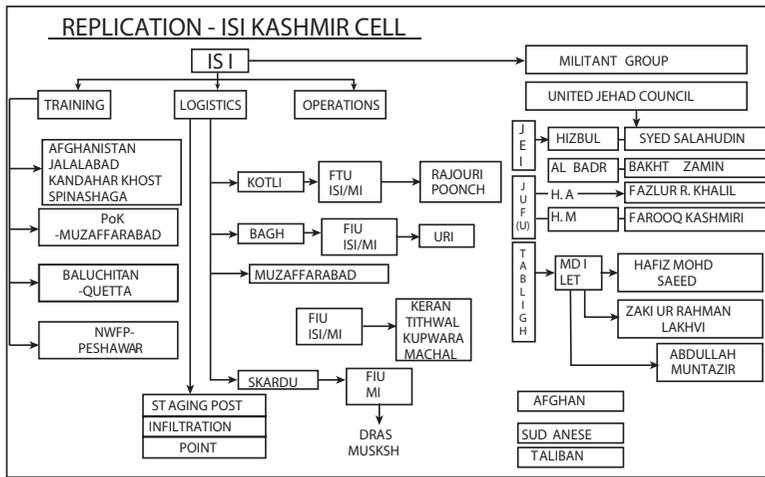
[Cited from *The Bear Trap*, by Mark Adkin & Brig (retd) Mohd Yousuf]

By 1987, the four main Islamic fundamentalist Afghan mujahideen outfits — Hizb-e-Islami headed by Gulbadin Hikmatyar, Jamiat-e-Islami headed by Burhanuddin Rabbani (Ahmed Shah Massoud was then a follower of Rabbani), Ittehad-e Islami of Abdul Rasool Sayyaf and Hizb-e-Islami of Yunus Khalis were getting almost 70 per cent of all the aid. Whenever complaints of misappropriation of aid were received the ISI instituted a pattern of directly contacting the field commanders to close these loopholes. Several bases were opened along the major border routes between Pakistan and Afghanistan across the two provinces of NWFP and Baluchistan which were closely supervised by ISI officers. This experience and exposure was to stand the ISI in good stead during the resurgence of the Taliban resistance in the next decades.

## Replication in Kashmir

After the successful image fillip brought about by its Afghan operations, this same pattern of organisation could be replicated by the ISI to aid and abet Kashmiri resistance fighters from late 1989 onwards, till well into the 1990s. The alienation in the state had been brewing and the Jamaat-e-Islami, Hind, inside Kashmir was getting help from its Pakistani ideological counterpart, Jamaat-e-Islami to fund mosques and Islamic teachings of aggressive, fundamentalist intent far removed from the ethos of a more tolerant Islam and 'Kashmiriyat' prevalent inside Jammu & Kashmir. The allegations of rigging in the state elections of 1987 compounded these

errors. Activists like Syed Salahuddin were till then seeking political platforms but he went across to Pakistan Occupied Kashmir at this stage.



The JIN (Joint Intelligence North) played a crucial role in co-ordinating these operations in the decade of the 1990s, acquiring almost ‘mystical’ salience as handlers of Kashmiri militants, both of indigenous and trans-border origin. The word ‘JIN’ was frequently bandied in code communications intercepted by Indian security agencies- it seemed to indicate super human powers akin to the ‘genie’ of Alladin’s lamp , which ironically grew larger than life in later years of the Tehrik e Taliban militancy

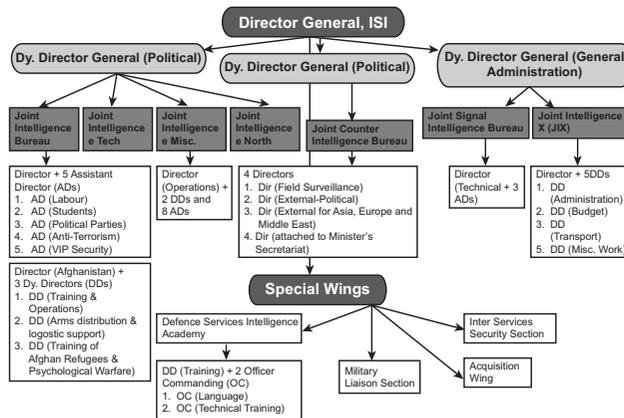
Pakistan started assisting Amanullah Khan’s Jammu & Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) at first but not finding all its mass based supporters totally amenable to political and military dictation, soon switched its support to more obscurantist forces. The Jamaat–e-Islami’s Indian counterpart in J&K and its militant front organisation, Hizbul Mujahideen was used . Other outfits also joined later, to form the United Jihad Council.

**ISI’s Involvement in Sikh Militancy**

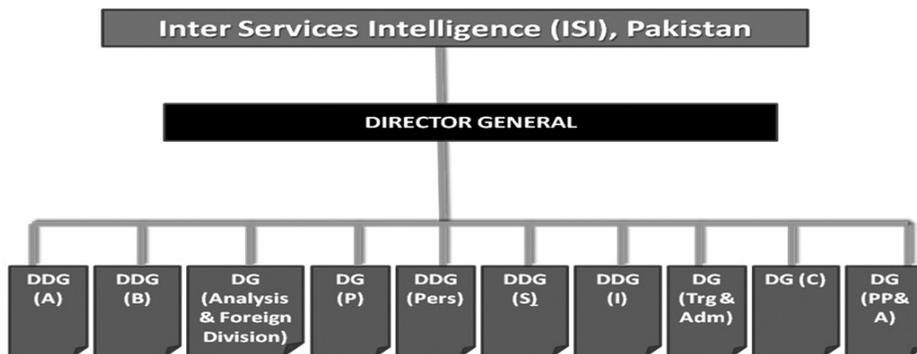
Even before shifting its focus to Jammu & Kashmir, the ISI started supporting the post‘Blue Star’ (1984) Sikh insurgency in India.This was accomplished by taking advantage of the visits of prominent Sikh diaspora leaders to the holy shrines located inside Pakistan. Ganga Singh Dhillon was patronised by Zia acolyte, Chaudhry Zahoor Elahi and his protege (Ch.Shujaat Hussain and Pervez Elahi) during his annual visits to Lahore during the early 80s. The ISI then took over logistic arrangements for their stay and monitored their activities, interaction with visiting Sikh jathas from India.

Hard core Sikh militants like Wassan Singh Zafarwal, Daljit Singh Bitto and Paramjit Panjwar were provided refuge in safe houses near the Dera Saheb Gurudwara in Lahore. The International Sikh Youth Federation (ISYF) and Babbar Khalsa units in UK, Germany and other parts of Europe as also their branches in USA and Canada started receiving generous financial assistance for anti-Indian activities abroad. Their cadres were instigated to undertake de-stabilising militant actions inside India, including attempted assassinations of political leaders. Over the years, the organisational functions of ISI have developed or diversified according to the need of the hour. The recent organisational evolution of the ISI are given below:

## ISI: Organizational Chart



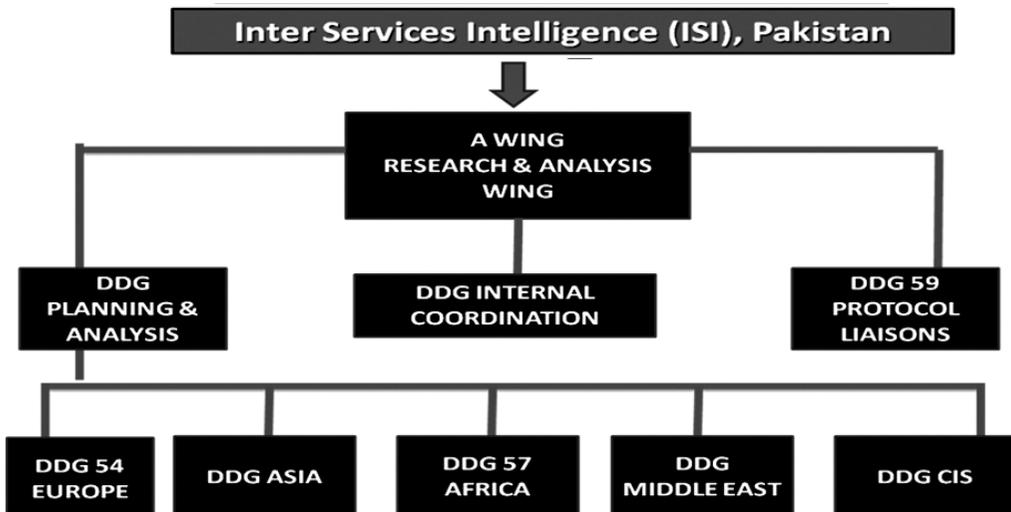
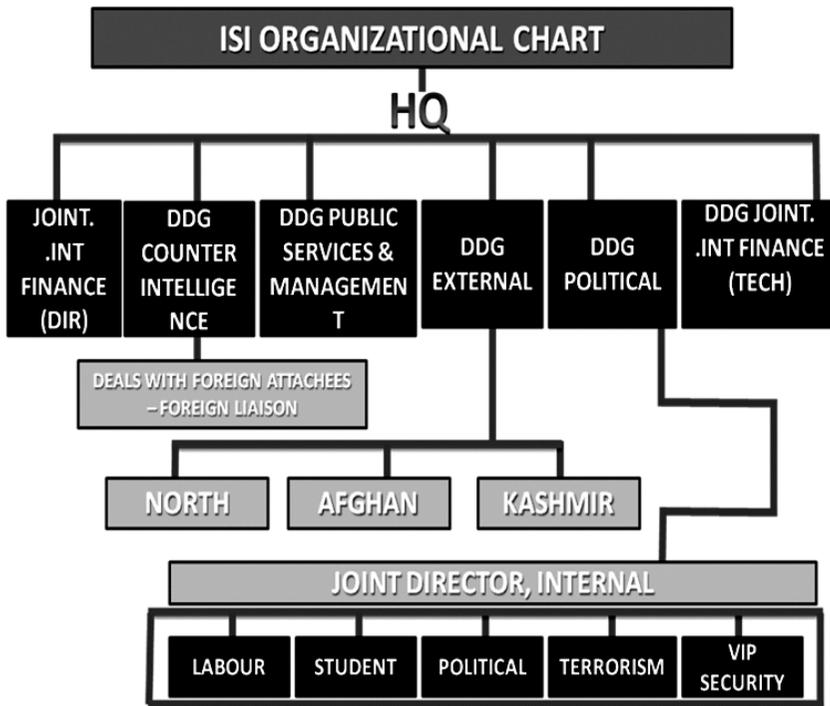
**Comment:** Latest known - vintage 2009; the main wings, under Deputy Directors General are:



**Comment:** Vintage: 2008-2009

Not all the posts of Deputy Directors General (DDG) appear to be filled up all the time. In the past ISI made do with two or three DDGs, offering one of the posts to either the air force or navy, according to appropriate rank – air vice marshal/vice admiral – who would usually be entrusted with the liaison assignment dealing with foreign military attaches. More important operational assignments remained under army

officers. The post of DDG, Strategic Analysis has emerged as vital. He is sometimes used as the ISI's interface with the West, to project its 'moderate Islamic' face.



**Comment:** Break up of DDG Analysis units: Vintage 2009;

**Protocol:** Usually entrusted to equivalent rank officers from the navy or air force  
internal coordination: Euphemism for domestic political intelligence;



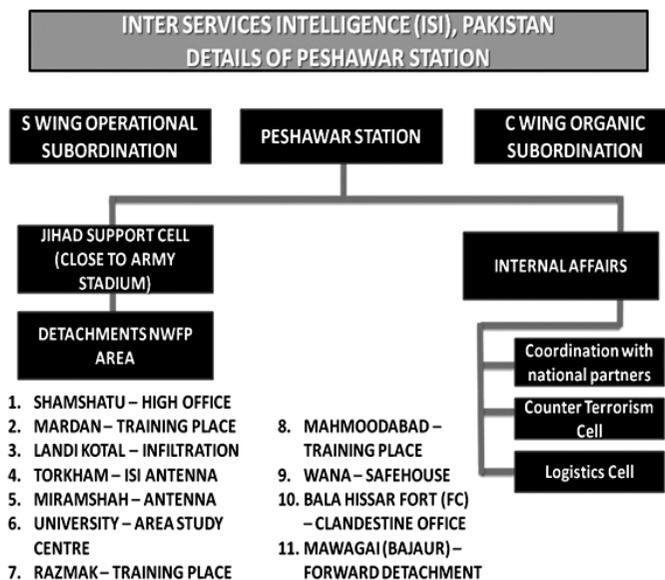
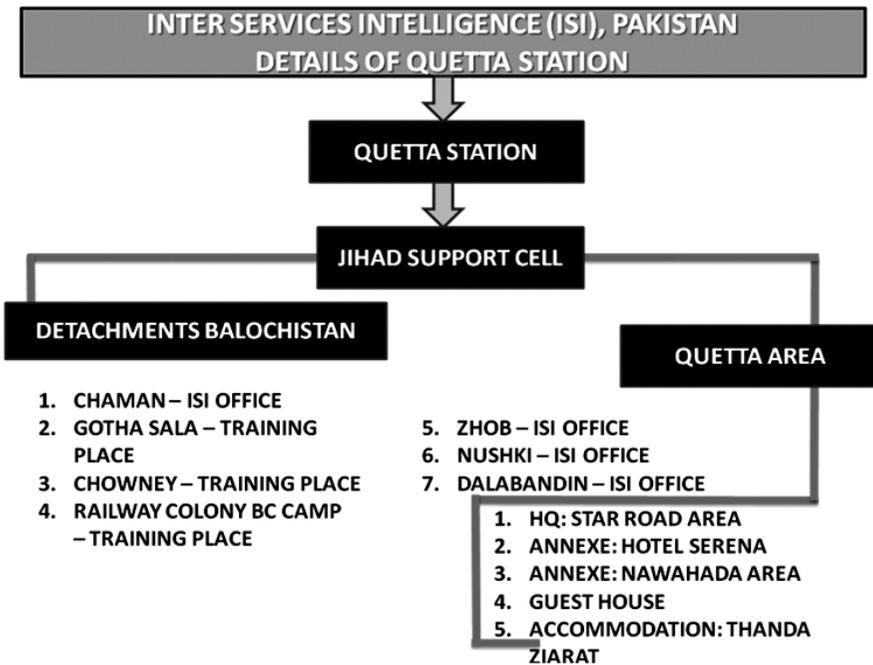
**Comment:** Vintage: 2009-2010;

Encircled portions represent operational units, not all of which are located in ISI Hqrs., Islamabad;

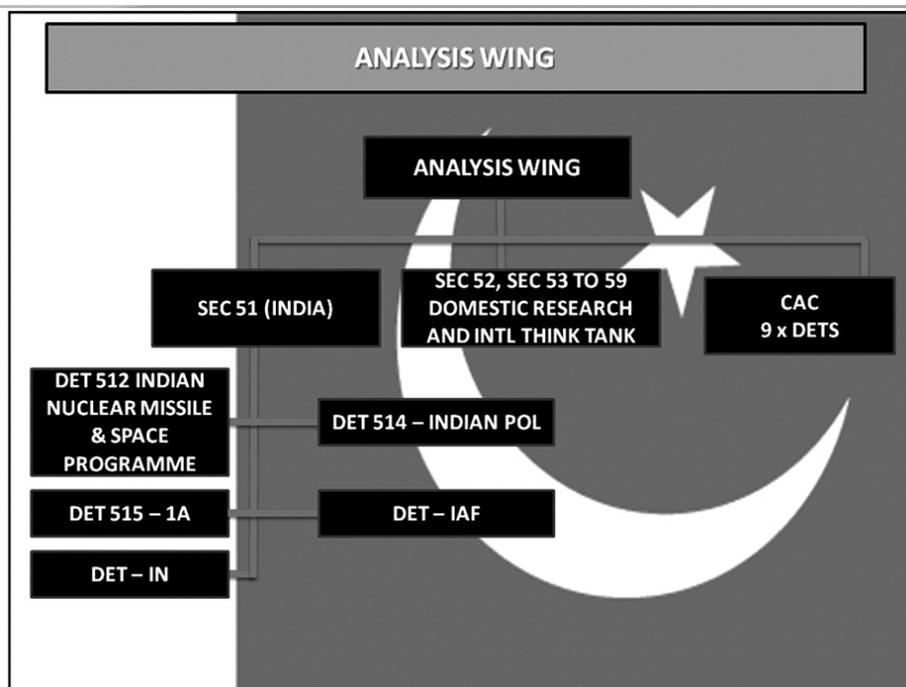
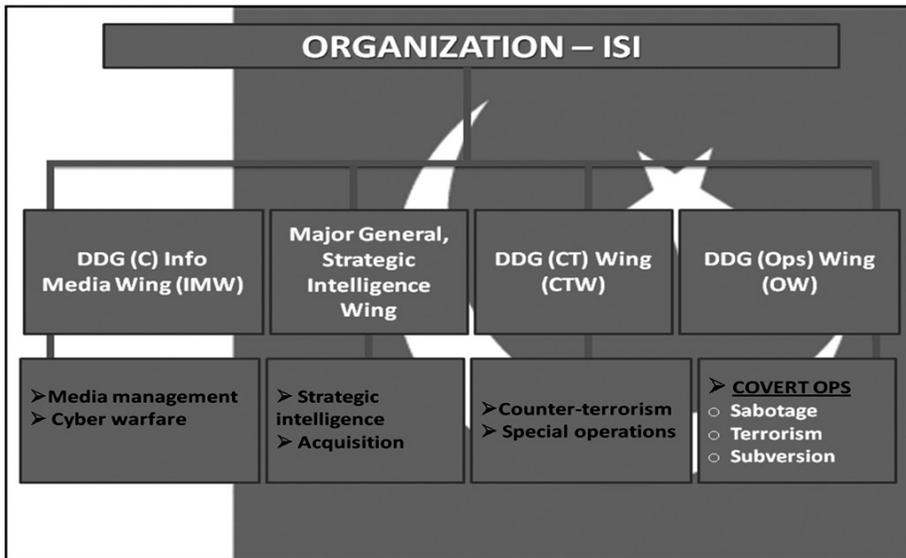
**Section 28:** Parts of Sec 28 or even Sec 21 – which has covert action tasks against India are located in Karachi; **Sec 25:** May have offices in Muzaffarabad, PoK.

Till recently, the Kashmir operations of the ISI were headed by Brig (retd.) Javed Aziz Khan, an artillery regiment officer commissioned in the 40th Long Course (968)( he retired from army in 2003), who had served as defence attache in India (Oct 98 - Oct 02). He was originally from the Rajput Sisodia clan of Udaipur, (India). His father was from Ludhiana and mother from Pakistani Punjab. He liked to use the nom de plume of 'Rathore'. He was replaced by Brig Sohail.

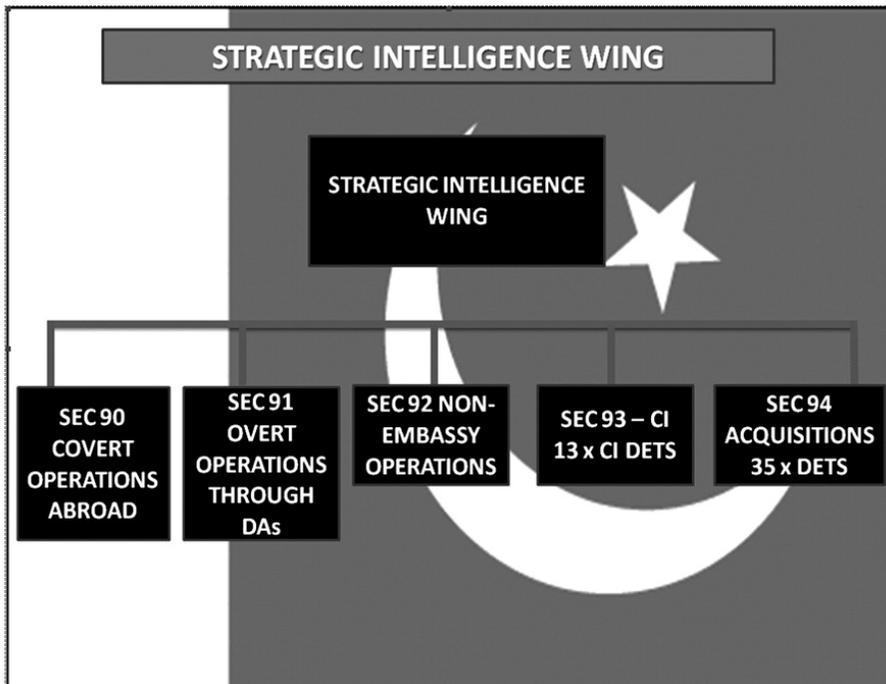
Some details of ISI's outstation operational units in Quetta & Peshawar are given below:



**Comment:** Vintage 2009-2010;



- **SEC 52: Interface with domestic research and international think tank**
- **SEC 53: USA and Canada**
- **SEC 54: France UK, Switzerland, Germany, Spain, Italy, Russia, Ukraine and Romania**
- **SEC 55: Australia, Bangladesh, Brunei, China, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, South Korea and Thailand**
- **SEC 56 & 57: Afghanistan, the Middle East and Africa**
- **SEC 58: Publicity, Media, HR, and UN matters**



**Comment:** Vintage 2010

New Sections: 90 – for Covert Operations abroad; 92 – For non- embassy operations; 94- Defence acquisitions: used to be clandestine – in Beijing and some West European missions: Germany, France, Belgium & UK;

ISI has specialized detachments in sensitive Capital towns:

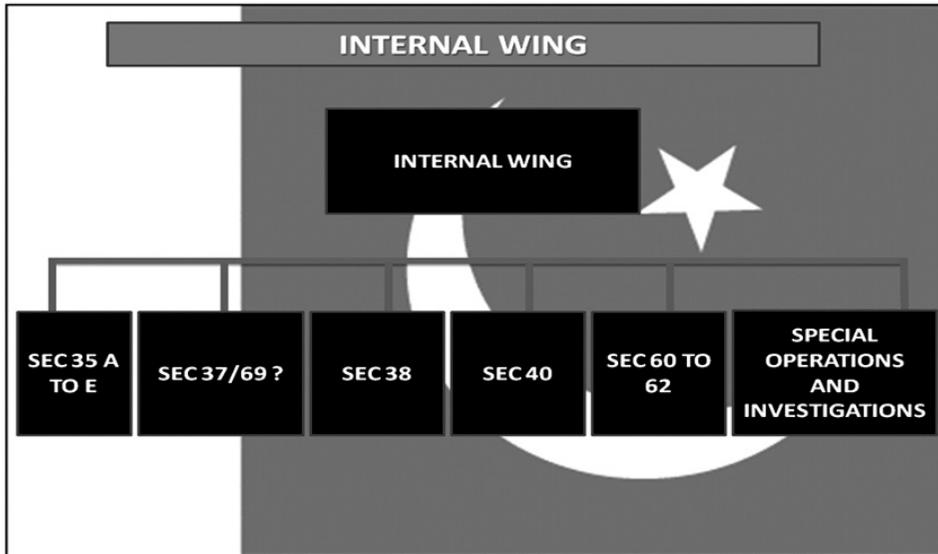
**SEC 93**

- **DET 9311 (ISLAMABAD): RAWALPINDI, MUZAFFARABAD, GILGIT**
- **DET 9321 (LAHORE): BAHAWAL NAGAR, BAHAWALPUR**
- **DET 9331 (KARACHI): CHOR, SUKKUR**
- **DET 9341 (QUETTA): GWADAR**
- **DET 9351 (PESHAWAR)**

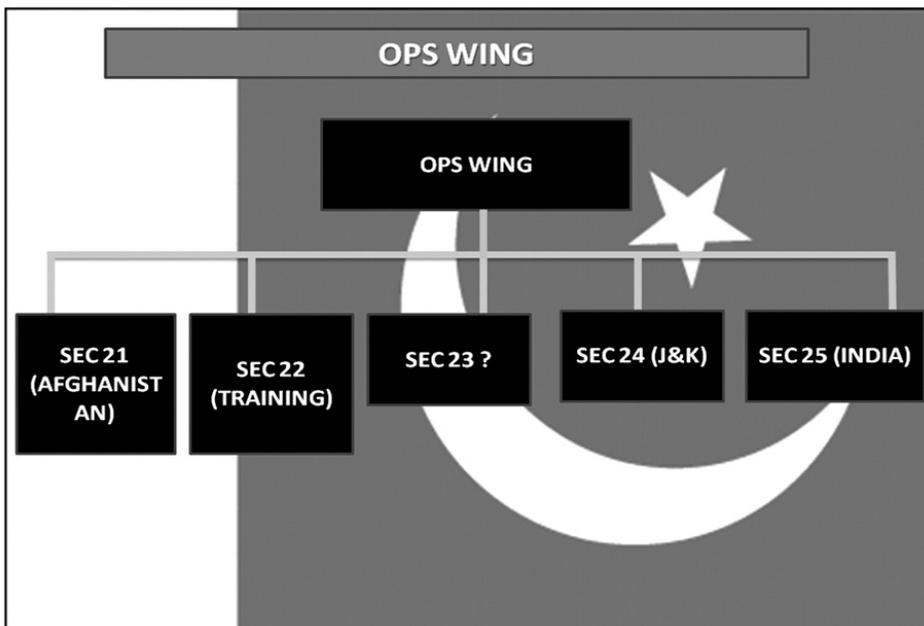
**SEC 94**

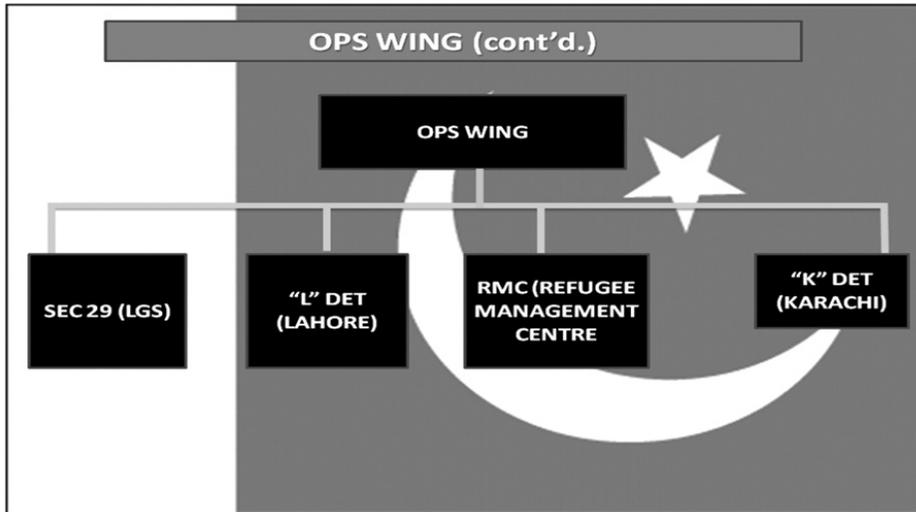
- **DET 941 (ISLAMABAD): ISBD, MUZAFFARABAD, RAWALKOT, KOTLI, MIRPUR**
- **DET 942 (LAHORE): WAGAH, LAHORE, SIALKOT, KASUR, SULE MANKE, BAHAWAL NAGAR**
- **DET 943 (KARACHI): KARACHI, BADIN, MIRPUR KHAS, CHOR, SUKKUR**
- **DET 944 (QUETTA): QUETTA, TAFTAN, TURBAT, CHAMAN, ZHOB**
- **DET 945 (PESHAWAR): PESHAWAR, BANNU, PARA CHINAR, LANDI KOTAL**

Details of its Internal Task wings are given below:



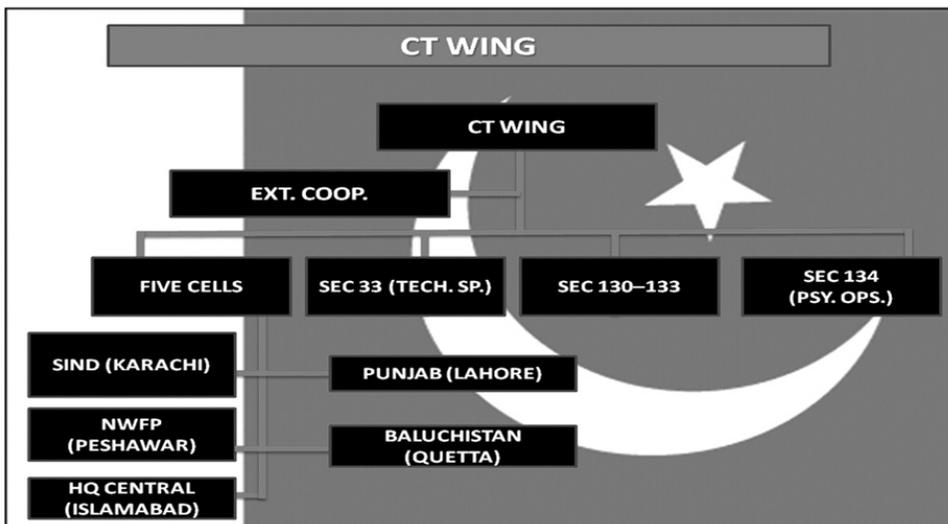
Details of other operational units known:





**Comment:** Vintage 2010;

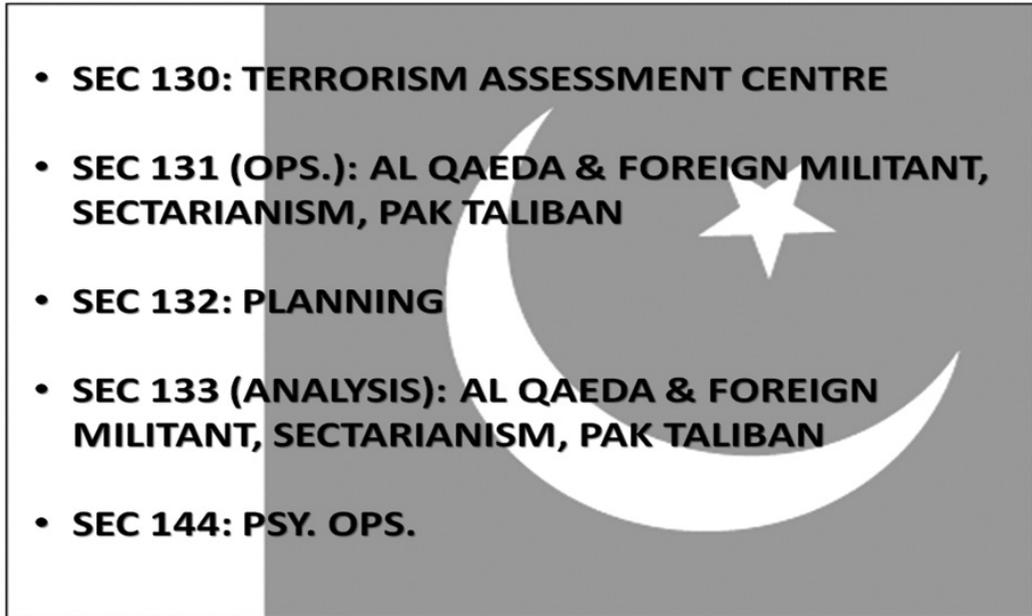
Sec 29: Could be exclusively dealing with India directed Militant Groups;  
L Det: Lashkar e Toiba related? Or could be Lahore located operations;  
K Det: Kashmir related operations? Or could be Karachi located operations;



**Comment:** Vintage 2010;

CT: Counter Terrorism & International Liaison related work.

Some specialised units for analysis/psy operations appear to have been set up in recent years:



### ISI Chiefs — A Chronology

Though remaining at all times under the hierarchical authority of the chief of army staff (COAS), the ISI evolved through the personality traits of its various directors from time to time, some of whom enjoyed a special personal rapport with the army chief/ dictatorial head of the government at the time.

#### **Akhtar Abdul Rehman (1980 –March 87)**

Lt. Gen Akhtar Abdul Rehman was one of the most formidable ISI chiefs. After his stint in the ISI, Rehman was promoted as a four star general and appointed chairman, joint chiefs of staff committee in March 1987. He was regarded as a no-nonsense officer with a singular vision of fighting the Soviets and driving them out of Afghanistan. He brooked little interference – even from the Americans- in the internal operations of the ISI's Afghan cell.

Large sums of money were handled by the ISI at that time and audit controls were virtually non-existent. Though no allegations of financial impropriety were voiced openly against Rehman and then, as the halo of martyrdom attached to the manner of his demise, soon after he had been put on a lofty pedestal as a national hero, it is generally known that his sons inherited vast properties in Punjab, including a nascent industrial empire which seems to have prospered overnight. His elder son, Humayun Akhtar Rehman became a Member of the National Assembly, joining Nawaz Sharif's Muslim League. In 1999, he hitched his bandwagon with Gen Musharraf and became commerce minister in the cabinet of Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz.

### **Hamid Gul (Mar 1987 – Mar 1989)**

Lt.Gen Hamid Gul is credited with establishing a better system of financial controls and audit within the ISI that accounted for the weapons and cash in the pipeline from the Saudis and Americans. He too did not welcome undue interference from the Americans on the conduct of operations in Afghanistan.

Once the financial and supply networks were set up it was the ISI, and not the army that took on the role of executing covert operations against the Soviets. This gave the ISI an autonomy and financial strength it had not possessed before. It has remained a powerful force ever since, so much so that some analysts sometimes posit the hypothesis that the ISI's "typical intelligence mentality" dominates over a more professional or military mindset within the army.

The Ojhri ammunition dump explosion in April, 1988 was a setback to the ISI's image but Prime Minister Junejo was dumped by Zia before he could fix the blame for mismanagement there on any army general or the ISI. In the domestic context, Hamid Gul was to acquire notoriety for implementing the army high command's plan to drum up political opposition against Benazir Bhutto's People's Party of Pakistan (PPP) in the November 1988 elections after Zia's death. The Islami Jamhoori Ittehad (IJI) was cobbled together, under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif.

### **Midnight Jackals**

Another intelligence officer, Hamid Gul's deputy, Brig Imtiaz Ahmed 'Billa' (so called because of his cat's eyes!) came into prominence during this period for trying to subvert PPP MNAs loyal to Benazir. He was helped in these nefarious doings by another army officer, Major Amir. Both these officers were later rewarded by Nawaz Sharif when he became prime minister.

## **ISI Versus Political Executive**

This was the first time the ISI, and by default, the army leadership openly came into conflict with the political leadership. Despite having agreed to take on a retired general to steward the foreign ministry, Lt.Gen (retd) Sahibzada Yaqub Khan (who had, ironically, been a 'conscientious objector' against the army's brutal repression in Bangladesh in 1971), Benazir decided to replace Hamid Gul as DG, ISI and bring in retired Lt.Gen Shamsur Rehman Kallue, as the new DG, ISI -May,1989.

It was rumoured that Gen Aslam Beg, who became army chief by default after the Zia plane crash in August 1988 never really liked the idea of Akhtar Abdul Rehman and Hamid Gul wielding such immense powers. After the Jalalabad fiasco in May 1989, he supported Benazir's move to oust Hamid Gul from ISI by offering Gul, an armoured corps officer, the sop of a posting him to the prestigious II Corps, Multan-Pakistan's second strike formation, traditionally entrusted with a defensive role in the south eastern front against India.

Baig never really liked Benazir Bhutto. Though he went along with the move to induct Kallue, as army chief he subsequently began manipulation of ISI's internal political oversight wing, and its operations, mainly in Sindh - where the PPP's fragile alliance with the Muhajir Quami Movement (MQM) was destabilised from the very outset. Kallue did not have a clue about these moves. He could barely last till August 1990. Soon thereafter, Benazir herself was dismissed as PM by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, using his extra-ordinary powers under Art. 58(2)(b) of the Constitution, brought in by Zia's 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment in 1985.

## **Mehrangate**

Aslam Baig also got adverse notices, for channelising the money paid by a businessman (Yunus Habib) for starting the IJI (Opposition common political front against Benazir's PPP) into his own private 'Think Tank' account (FRIENDS-exposed in 'Mehrangate' scandal).

## **Asad Durrani (Aug '90- Mar '92)**

The next ISI chief was Lt Gen Asad Durrani. He had been director general, military intelligence immediately prior to this posting and though he had not particularly distinguished himself professionally, he was able to develop good relations with Benazir Bhutto even though she was in the opposition by now. This earned him the disapproval of subsequent army chiefs such as Gen Waheed Kakar but Asad Durrani was rewarded during the second Benazir administration with ambassadorship to

Germany, and also by Musharraf, who sent him as ambassador to Saudi Arabia. His deployment to ISI in August 1990 when a caretaker administration was in-charge was because of the army chief's approval rather than that of the political executive. It also confirmed the convention of the DGMI moving to the ISI slot.

Asad Durrani remained as DG, ISI till March, 1992 - when a politically resurgent Nawaz Sharif brought in his father's Tablighi Jamaat acolyte, Lt. Gen Javed Nasir as his replacement. Once again, this was a political appointment with which the army and the new army chief (Gen Asif Nawaz) were not fully happy. It sowed seeds of the army leadership's dislike of Nawaz Sharif, despite the latter enjoying the support of the predominantly Punjabi middle level officers and other ranks.

### **Javed Nasir (Mar '92- May '93)**

Nasir's strong, almost fanatical pro-Islamic leanings were rather well known. He was the first ISI chief from the corps of engineers .He had no background in intelligence work. A course-mate of Hamid Gul, he had become a devout Muslim in 1986. He wore a flowing beard and did not look at women in public! He would turn his face away if a woman entered the room. He is known to have given militarily unsound advice on the repercussions of 'body bags' policies in Iraq, when Americans were seeking the support of Muslim countries against the Iraqi invasion in Kuwait. While travelling with the Saudi Intelligence chief, Prince Turki on a Pakistani plane to Kabul after the fall of Najibullah's government, he uncharacteristically shouted an Islamic war cry to signal their 'triumphant entry' to Afghanistan!

As ISI chief, Javed Nasir was keen to find ways of supporting Islamic causes worldwide. He set up arrangements to arm and support Bosnian Muslims, in collaboration with Iran. He saw opportunities to hurt India, not only in Kashmir but in other regions as well. He is reported to have established contact with Tamil extremists (LTTE) and set up a gun running operation with links to LTTE in Bangkok. He funded Arakenese Muslims (Rohingiyas)-who inhabit the area bordering Myanmar's frontier with Bangladesh, to help them in their struggle for an independent enclave.

A strange, almost non-military atmosphere developed at the ISI office during Javed Nasir's tenure. Bearded officers in 'shalwar kameez', many of them hitched up to their ankles (a signature practice of the Tablighi Jamaat) strolling about in office corridors. The 'strong room', which had currency stacked to the roof during the heyday of Afghan operations was now empty as 'adventurist' ISI officers had been allowed to take away suitcases filled with cash to the field, ostensibly for operations even in Central Asian countries. There were neither any accounts nor

any receipts for these money transfers. Most officers remained absent from office for long periods, especially during prayer hours and neither the government nor the ISI had any record of properties acquired or transactions conducted in its name. There was lack of command and control with a lot of junior officers directly interacting with the DG, violating the chain of command.

The Americans were aware of some of these hair brained operational initiatives and complained about the same to Nawaz Sharif but he initially disregarded these reports. A US TV channel investigated the ISI's links, in the funding activities of the Jamaat ul Fuqra, a militant islamic outfit based in the US. One of its operatives, Mubarak Shah Gilani, was later found to be involved in the Daniel Pearl kidnapping (and subsequent murder). Information about these dangerous and extensive activities of ISI was again conveyed to the Pakistani leaders through US back channels. Ultimately in May 1993, the new army chief , Gen Waheed (after Asif Nawaz's demise in office) was able to persuade Nawaz to remove Javed Nasir and replace him with Lt Gen Javed Ashraf Qazi, once again a former DG, Military Intelligence.

### **Javed Ashraf Qazi (May 93-95)**

Qazi was a quintessential army prototype. He would normally have had a shot at the chief's post but for an early detected heart condition, which made him accept the ISI charge. One of his first tasks was to restore military discipline and ethos in ISI. Serving army personnel were asked to wear military uniforms of appropriate rank while in office. The long absences for prayers were also gradually reduced.

Maverick operations in South East Asia (including the Bangkok gun running) were wound up and he began the process, of repatriating extremist elements from ISI, including Afghan war veterans back to the army or police, where, hopefully, they would not be able to spread their militant gospel as easily. (Hopes now seen to be belied!)

To open up the ISI, Qazi started the practice of inviting foreign military attaches to visit forward operational areas, either on the Afghan front or on the eastern border with Kashmir. Even in supporting the Kashmiri operations, a distinction started being made, of giving preference to outfits consisting of genuine Kashmiris like the Hizbul Mujahideen ( this policy now stands reversed). He also reduced ISI's role in domestic politics.

Javed Ashraf Qazi's critics accuse him of eviscerating the operational heart of the ISI but both he and the army chief, Waheed understood the importance of avoiding disapproval of the United States. Qazi remained ISI chief till 1995 and later became minister for railways under Gen Musharraf.

## **Naseem Rana (1995- Oct '99)**

Maj Gen Naseem Rana was ISI head between 1995 till October, 99. He was also the army chief's (Gen Karamat) appointee. He tried his best to play a mediatory role during PM Nawaz Sharif's confrontation with the higher judiciary under a Sindhi chief justice, Sajjad Ali Shah.

He is reported to have worked closely with the Americans in building up a joint commando force to search for Osama bin Laden. He went with Saudi intelligence chief, Prince Turki to meet Mullah Omar for the initial parleys on the possibility of giving up Osama.

## **Khwaja Ziauddin Butt (Oct '98 – Oct '99)**

Ziauddin's appointment as ISI chief is one more example of a political decision, in October 1998, not supported by the then army chief (Karamat – who himself quit a month later, following differences with Nawaz Sharif). Ziauddin had earlier served on Aslam Baig's and Asif Nawaz's (while latter was a major general) personal staff. He was from the Engineers but had always been highly ambitious. A Kashmiri by biradari (sub caste) affiliation, he was qualified enough to ultimately aim for the chief's slot having already done a brief stint in Corps Command. However, he was junior to other generals in the queue for the army chief's post.

Ziauddin claims he met Mullah Omar twice and was almost able to persuade him to give up Osama bin Laden. Nawaz Sharif selected a new army chief after Karamat resigned, violating the army's seniority norms. Musharraf, a 'Mohajir' (originally a refugee who came from India) was chosen over two of his seniors – Ali Kuli Khan Khattak (a Pathan) and Khalid Nawaz (a Punjabi). One argument that weighed with Nawaz Sharif in making this choice was that Musharraf, not being a Punjabi would remain beholden to a Punjabi PM, popular with army Other Ranks (ORs). (This hope was belied). Musharraf was uncomfortable with Ziauddin as ISI chief from the outset and kept him out of the loop while planning the December 98-May99 Kargil offensive.

## **The October 1999 Coup**

Musharraf was unhappy with Nawaz Sharif's choice of Ziauddin as DG, ISI and countered by bringing Lt Gen Mohd Aziz Khan, who was Deputy DG in ISI as Chief of General Staff (CGS), usually regarded as the next most important post in the army, after the COAS. As differences between Musharraf and Nawaz Sharif widened and with the international disclosure of Pak Army's direct complicity in the Kargil

misadventure, through the Musharraf- Gen Aziz (his Chief of General Staff then) tapes, a strange spectacle was witnessed – that of the Director General, Military Intelligence (Maj. Gen Nadeem Ejaz – Musharraf’s man) taping conversations between the DG, ISI and the prime minister. This led to the unprecedented sacking of Lt Gen Tariq Pervaiz, GOC XII Corps, Quetta by Musharraf, on grounds of openly airing his dissent on the merits of the Kargil operation and alleged leaking of minutes of a Corps Commanders’ meeting to the prime minister. Matters soon came to a head, with Nawaz appointing Ziauddin as his new army chief while Musharraf was on a tour abroad (Sri Lanka, Maldives), the Army Chief requisitioning assistance from his Corps Commanders in Rawalpindi (Lt Gen Mehmud Ahmed) and Karachi (Lt Gen Usmani), to dishonor these orders and help effect yet another coup against an elected Political Executive (Oct 12, 1999)

Since then, all subsequent ISI chiefs have been appointees of the army chief. These include Lt. Gen Mehmud Ahmed (Oct ’99-Oct-2001), Lt. Gen Ehsan ul Haq (Oct’01-Oct’04), Lt. Gen Ashfaq Pervez Kayani (Oct’04-Oct’07), Lt Gen Nadeem Taj (Oct’07-Oct’08) and Lt. Gen Ahmed Shuja Pasha (Oct’08 -till date, on extension till March 2012).

### **Mehmud Ahmed (Oct ’99- Oct 2001)**

Educated at the prestigious Lawrence College, Murree, Mehmud Ahmed considered himself an intellectual. As a Brigadier in the War Staff College, he undertook a magnum opus study of the ‘ failed Akhnoor offensive’ against India. ( History of Indo-Pak War, 1965 – which the Pakistan army initially did not allow to be published, but it was released much later,in 2006 ).He too had served as DGMI in the mid-’90s, during Benazir Bhutto’s second stint as PM - just before she fell out with her own presidential appointee, late Farooq Leghari. Some suspicion attached to rather indiscreet comments made by Mehmood Ahmed about Benazir’s corruption but the latter’s complaint to Karamat in this regard was apparently disregarded.

Mehmood Ahmed played a crucial role during the October 99 coup of Musharraf as Corps Commander of the Rawalpindi X Corps, ordering tanks out of the 111 Brigade ( then commanded by Brig Salahuddin Satti) to surround the PM’s house and the TV station where the new army chief Ziauddin was holed up.

Ironically enough, Mehmood Ahmed later fell out with Musharraf, shortly after 9/11. Musharraf has recently claimed, that Mehmud Ahmed wanted to be made army chief after Musharraf overthrew Nawaz Sharif.

Mehmud Ahmed is alleged to have given contrary advice to Mullah Omar during one of his mediation visits to Kabul just after 9/11, to stand up to the Americans. Unconfirmed rumours link him also to the terrorist, Omar Sheikh, -one of the hostages released from the IC 814 plane hijacking who was later implicated in the Daniel Pearl murder. Other rumours allege that Mehmud Ahmed was aware of Omar Sheikh's role in sending money to the 9/11 plotters in Europe.

After the Americans complained to Musharraf, Mehmud Ahmed was sacked as ISI chief and kept under house confinement in Lahore, before being rehabilitated in a Fauji Foundation assignment. By this time, he had turned religious, joined the Tablighi Jamaat as a full-fledged member and grown a flowing beard.

### **Ehsan ul Haq (Oct'01- Oct'04)**

Ehsan ul Haq was commissioned in the Air Defence Corps in 1969 and is the only officer to have risen so high from this unit. He was not generally considered to have any special ability but his meteoric rise is ascribed more to obsequious conduct and opportunism. A Pathan from Mardan, NWFP, he had done stints as DGMI and corps commander of XI corps, Peshawar (briefly, for 6 months only). He had experience in staff assignments — Brigade Major, GSO-1 in Infantry Div Hqrs & in the Military Operations Directorate. He was considered anti- jehadi, liberal and pro- United States in views and remained loyal to Musharraf during his stint in the ISI. However, he was a hardliner with traditional Pak army views on the Kashmir issue. He was elevated to four star rank in the largely ceremonial post of chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee before he retired.

### **Ashfaq Pervez Kayani (Oct 04-Oct 07)**

Commissioned in the Baloch Regiment on August 29, 1971, 59-year-old Kayani is from a traditional Punjabi army family. Kayani's father was a naib subedar (JCO) in the army. As major general, he was GOC, 12 Div Murree (Jan,99 – Oct,01) when Musharraf was corps commander, 1 Corps, Mangla. He became director general, Military Operations (Oct-01- Sept-03), and then was GOC, X Corps, Rawalpindi for a year, before being appointed DG,ISI by Musharraf.

As DG, ISI he was involved in Musharraf's parleys with Benazir Bhutto while the latter was in exile in UAE. He was privy to the American link of these confabulations. He came to be well regarded by his Western interlocutors, notably Admiral Mullen. He remained loyal to Musharraf but underplayed this loyalty when the latter had to be eased out as president after restoration of Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry.

Some of his peers in neighbouring countries considered him an introvert, a nervous chain smoker, who could buckle under pressure. However, as army chief, Kayani seems to have outgrown this image, at least till the Osama bin Laden debacle, when some of these traits re-surfaced! Kayani is considered typically hardline and anti Indian, on the Kashmir issue and most other matters concerning India, including abetment of terrorist groups like the Lashkar- e-Toiba.

### **Nadeem Taj (Oct 07-Oct 08)**

A Musharraf appointee to the DG, ISI's post after Kayani was elevated as army chief, Nadeem Taj is a Punjabi Arain (an influential sub caste in Punjabi politics). He was commissioned in the 11 Punjab Regiment in July 1972. He was military attache in Iraq in the early 90s and then in USA (1996-97). He is believed to have become anti-Shia while in Iraq.

Taj was military secretary to Musharraf at the time of the Oct 99 coup against Nawaz Sharif. He became DGMI in Dec 3. Later, he was sent to head the Pakistan Military Academy in Kakul. As DG, ISI he is known to have developed links with pro-Wahhabi Islamic fanatic elements. He became corps commander, 30 Corps, Gujranwala before his retirement in April, 2011.

### **Ahmad Shuja Pasha (Oct 08 - till date)**

Commissioned in the Frontier Force Regiment (Fiffers) in April 1974 Pasha is a Pathan with a Punjabi wife. He is 58 years old (D.O.B- 19.03.'52). He belongs to a prominent Quereshi family from Attock now settled in Wah. His father was the headmaster of a school in Wah (the Pak Ordnance Factory township). His elder brother was a brigadier. Pasha suffered a tragedy in personal life, when he lost his son in a car accident in Multan several years ago. He was chief of staff to GoC, 30 Corps, Gujranwala. As a major general he held charge of an Infantry Division in Sialkot, was an instructor in the Command & Staff College, Quetta before proceeding on an international peace-keeping assignment with the UN. He came back to become director general, Military Operations (April 06-Sept 08), holding this post during the Musharraf- Kayani transition before taking over as DG, ISI.

### **ISI's Role in Drug Smuggling and Pushing in of Counterfeit Currency**

The ISI has often been suspected of being involved in drug trafficking or of using drug trafficking networks of Afghan warlords or the Pashtun ' truck mafias' in Karachi to fill its coffers or divert unaccounted funds for operations but there is little specific evidence to substantiate these allegations.

The ISI has pushed counterfeit currency into India either through the Nepal route or by using the Indian or Pakistani diaspora residing in countries like Malaysia, who are part of the criminal underworld with links to Dawood Ibrahim, long sheltered by the ISI in safe havens inside Pakistan.

## **ISI & Tribal Areas**

Army officers in ISI believe they can selectively build bridges with some elements within the Tehrik e Taliban (TTP) by using traditional rivalries such as those between the Wazirs & Mehsuds, and the Shias and Sunni in Parachinar.

## **ISI & 'Rogue Elements' / Retired Officers**

The ISI still employs retired army officers. Other 'rogue' elements also continue to assist in varying degrees and in operational roles. This recently became evident when two of its emissaries, both former employees- Squadron Leader Khalid Khwaja and Col Sultan Amir Tarar were killed, at different times, by the Punjab Allah Tigers and Hakimullah Mehsud with whom they were trying to negotiate for the release of a British journalist Asad Quereshi. While the journalist was released after payment of ransom, a ransom demand for the release of Col Imam could not be paid by his relatives. The ISI appears to have washed its hands off this operation mid-way, for reasons not well known so far.

There are other well known instances of re-employment of army officers in ISI. Brig Moslehuddin was entrusted with important psy-operations work in ISI after his stint as defence attache in Bangladesh, where he played a crucial role in activating anti-India terror modules using Pakistani LeT activists or Indian Muslims trained in Pakistan. Brig Javeed Khan 'Rathore' continued to deal with Kashmir operations in ISI, after his stint in India as a defence attache.

## **Headley Interrogations**

Evidence emerging from the David Coleman Headley and Dawood Gilani interrogations in the US to which an Indian team from NIA was given access revealed the role of ISI rogue elements which the ISI and the army leadership must have been fully aware of. The interrogation reports have also brought out how LeT used ex-service personnel with more than a passing familiarity and contacts within ISI, to provide specialised training in surveillance, photography and communication techniques before Headley was sent into India on several reconnaissance missions. LeT members were in regular touch with serving ISI officers to whom Headley handed over photographed material – tapes and cell

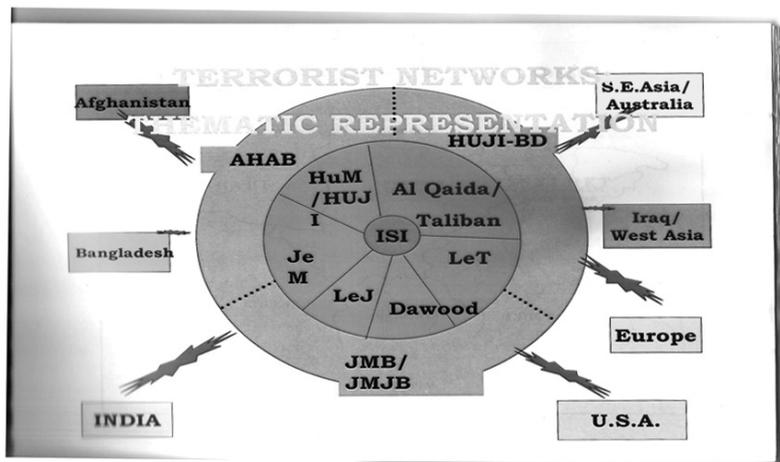
phone pictures etc. Though confronted with this evidence in the Indian dossiers handed over to Pakistan, DG.ISI, Pasha has only acknowledged involvement of 'rogue elements', but not serving ISI personnel.

In recent times, ISI has supported the LeT's expansion into the provision of social services like flood relief. It is unlikely to abandon its reliance on such groups though greater care is being taken to camouflage such links by progressive involvement of indigenous outfits like Indian mujahideen in terror modules directed against India.

### ISI & Fomenting of Global Terror

In the post 9/11 decade, ISI's involvement in fomenting terror modules in different parts of the world, using proxy outfits like the LeT or the HUJI has been exposed, be it through the arrest of Virgil Brigitte in Australia (2003) or the failed terror plots in the UK and the US in more recent times.

This global terrorist networks with linkages to ISI is shown in the diagram that follows. Outfits inside Pakistan which have had links with or were spawned by the ISI include the LeT, the Jaish e Mohd (JeM), Lashkar e Jhangvi (LeJ - more into sectarian terrorism), Harkat ul Mujahideen (HuM) which morphed into HUJI, and the Dawood underworld mafia. On the periphery ring are outfits with presence in countries like Bangladesh- the Ahle Hadis al Bangladesh (AHAB), HuJi-BD, Jamiyatul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB). In recent years though, security agencies of the new government in Bangladesh have done much to dismantle these outfits. Nevertheless, linkages persist between ISI and Pakistan based religious or ideologically motivated terrorism outfits like LeT, Jaish and Huji in countries like Afghanistan. Modules have also been found in Europe or USA.



Decision makers in army / views and orientation of senior officers in Army/ISI on matters of geo-strategic import.

A career or a posting in the ISI has now emerged as a desirable option, with young officers of the rank of captain, major or colonel enjoying far greater power, perks and privileges in the ISI than many of their peers in more routine army field assignments. At any given time, the decision makers in the ISI are the army chief and the DG, ISI. At the second rung of ISI are major generals, one or the other of them could be personally close to the COAS, in which case they may be able to influence policy decisions but this may be the exception rather than the rule. As in the army itself, a collegiate or consensus decision making pattern is usually the norm and prevails in decision making and operational initiatives undertaken by ISI.

### **Army/ISI & Politicization**

With regard to military-civilian interaction, all ISI officers believe in the primacy of the army and its status as the vanguard institution of state. There is a general contempt for all manner of politicians and political parties. This is compounded by the fact that there are no politicians of individually high popularity or charisma in Pakistan at present.

Though the lustre attaching to ISI was somewhat tarnished by the US seals mission to take out Osama bin Laden in Abbotabad in May, 2011, as well as the opprobrium following the Saleem Shehzad murder post the attack on the Mehran Naval Base. But by and large, all army officers, especially those in ISI, even at middle or relatively junior levels believe that the army's dominant role in taking vital foreign policy decisions has only been good for the country and cannot be questioned. They would not readily countenance any erosion in this dominance, unless the army chief himself and the collegiate leadership group of Corps Commanders acquiesce in such a role re-definition. This is not likely to happen in the foreseeable future.



---

Notes:

- 1 *Crossed Swords – Pakistan, Its Army, and the Wars Within*, by Shuja Nawaz and inputs published by a Pakistani scholar based in USA, Dr. Hamid Hussain have contributed significantly to this paper.