

# Islamist Extremism: Challenge to Security in South Asia\*

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## Abstract

*Emergence of radical and extremist Islamist movements has proved to be a major source of instability in South and Central Asia. Radical Islamist groups emphasise that political power is indispensable to the establishment of an Islamic state. Though Muslims like non-Muslims have multiple identities – religious, ethnic, tribal, linguistic or territorial, the emphasis by the Islamists on the Islamic communal identity puts them in collision course with the state and other communities. The practice of pan-Islamism, which is based on the concept of Ummah transcending national boundaries, has led to violence and turmoil in parts of South and Central Asia and elsewhere. Islamist extremists pose a challenge to the pluralistic social order and inter-religious harmony and the efforts to construct secular and democratic polity in the region. This is clear from the recent experiences of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Jammu & Kashmir state of India.*

The emergence of radical and extremist Islamist movements has proved to be the principal source of instability in South Asia since the late 1970s. The rise of radical Islamist groups has been influenced by the leading ideologues of Islamic fundamentalist thought, Jamal-ud-Din Afghani (1839-1897), Maulana Abul Ali Mawdoodi (1903-79) the first Amir of the Jamaat-e-Islami, Ayatollah Khomeini (1909-89) leader of the Islamic Revolutionary Party of Iran, Hassan-al-Banna and Syed Qutb (1906-66) of the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt. These ideologues advocated jihad against non-Islamic societies and states and emphasised that political power is indispensable to the establishment of an Islamic state. The concepts of Dar-el-Islam and Dar-el-Harb and jihad as advocated by the Islamists

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envisage a perpetual state of confrontation between Islamic and non-Islamic states. Though Muslims, like any other non-Muslim, have multiple identities – religious, ethnic, tribal, linguistic or territorial, the emphasis by the Islamists on the Islamic identity puts them in collision course with the state and other groups. Islamist intellectuals, ulema and activists have been seeking to blur the distinction between Islam as a religion and nationalism. They prop up the Islamic political consciousness by politicising already existing religious traditions and practices and by resisting change and modernisation. The concept of Ummah or Millat is being invoked to abet, support and legitimise the secessionist movements of Muslims living in non-Muslim states. A booklet by Lashkar-e-Toiba declares, “the US, Israel and India as existential enemies of Islam” and advocates global jihad for restoring “Islamic sovereignty to all lands where Muslims were once ascendant, including Spain, Bulgaria, Hungary, Cyprus, Sicily, Ehiopia, Russian Turkestan, Chinese Turkestan, etc.”<sup>1</sup>

If one goes by the strict definition of the term ‘Islamic fundamentalism’, it stands for a return to the doctrines of Islam in their original form as were practised in the medieval times. It could also mean idealising the historical past of Islam and calling for a return to ‘pure and original Islam’, which can be achieved through peaceful, lawful, cultural and spiritual means. But in practice, the focus of Islamists has been Islamisation of the state rather than reform of the individuals. It has generated conflict as the Islamic fundamentalists seek to impose their will through coercion, violence and terror. Islamist extremists pose a challenge to the secular and democratic polity, pluristic social order and inter-religious harmony.

### **Afghanistan and Central Asia**

With the rise of Taliban to power, Afghanistan became the breeding ground of Islamist terrorism. The Taliban enforced their extremist religious and socio-political agenda and turned Afghanistan into the hub of arms, drugs trafficking and international terrorism with Osama bin Laden using it as a base of Al Qaida and other Islamist terrorist outfits. The threat posed by Laden and the Taliban to world peace and security was universally recognised and UN sanctions were imposed against the Taliban. Undaunted by international criticism, the Taliban unleashed atrocities against women, children, ethnic-religious minorities and political opponents, thereby deepening the internal divide in Afghanistan, besides violating the basic human rights of Afghans. The UN and other international

peace initiatives made no headway in the face of determined Taliban opposition to share power with rival Afghan groups. Afghanistan remained fractured and turbulent posing great challenge to peace and security in the region. The Taliban rebuffing all international appeals and ignoring widespread international condemnation, not only went ahead with the destruction of the colossal Buddhas of Bamiyan, but even made a public demonstration of their savage acts. By destroying the rich and composite historical cultural heritage of Afghanistan, the Taliban sought to reaffirm Afghanistan's lead role as a puritan Islamist state in South and Central Asia and also to set an agenda for radical Islamist forces.

Osama bin Laden and his network played a key role in the terrorist attacks in South Asia, Central Asia, Southeast Asia and also in the West. However, it was only after the 9/11 terrorist strikes on World Trade Centre and Pentagon that the United States and its Western allies recognised the severity of the challenge posed by Al Qaida and the Taliban. The US garnered sufficient political will to lead the global war against terrorism. The US-led forces have severely mauled the Taliban and the Al Qaida, destroyed much of their military machine and bases. However, both the Taliban and elements of the Al Qaida network still exist and according to recent reports are again growing within Afghanistan and neighbouring Pakistan. Leaders and thousands of supporters of Al Qaida and the Taliban militia have shifted to Pakistan. In March 2002, 65 Al Qaida terrorists were arrested in Faisalabad and Lahore during the joint operations conducted by Pakistani and US security agencies. Over two-thirds of the 2000 activists belonging to Lashkar-e-Toiba, Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, Jaish-e-Mohammad, Hizb-ul-Mujahideen and others who were arrested after Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf's January 12, 2002 address against terrorism and the use of Islam for the purpose, have since been released. Attacks by the Al Qaida and Taliban fighters on the US and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) continue intermittently in various parts of Afghanistan. Recently in early October 2005, the Taliban ambushed a convoy of 150 police personnel in Helmand province of southern Afghanistan and killed 19 Afghan police officers.<sup>2</sup> A former regional Taliban governor, Maulvi Mohammad Islam Mohammadi who oversaw the destruction of giant Buddha statues in Bamiyan, has won the recent Parliamentary elections.<sup>3</sup> That the Islamists and Mujahideen including 4 former Taliban commanders, make up at least half of the 249 seats in the *Wolesi Jirga* – the lower house of Parliament in Afghanistan,<sup>4</sup> points to the increasing influence of the

Taliban in Afghanistan. The murder of humanitarian and development personnel including that of an Indian driver, Raman Kutty recently by the Taliban not only illustrates the escalation in violence in Afghanistan but also points to the continuing threat posed by the Taliban and Al Qaida. So ensuring sustainable security and stability in Afghanistan is a great challenge facing the international community. This can be achieved only by total elimination of the Al Qaida network, their supporters, financiers, safe havens and training camps in various parts of the world.

Beyond Afghanistan the wider Central Asia too is experiencing turbulence, though the present governments have managed to control the Islamist extremist eruptions. Islam Karimov, the President of Uzbekistan in his prognosis of the situation in Central Asia, dilated upon the 'deceptive attraction'<sup>5</sup> of Wahabi ideology to a section of Muslims in Central Asia ascribing it to its populist ideas of justice, rejection of luxury, greed and corruption. He opposed the ideas of 'politicisation of Islam and Islamisation of politics,' drawing a clear distinction between the cultural and spiritual values of Islam and its misuse for gaining and exercising political power. Karimov views Islamic fundamentalism as a threat to Uzbekistan as it would disrupt peace and stability, civil and inter-ethnic harmony, and also discredit the secular polity. In an interview to a Russian journal, President Karimov recognised that Islamic fundamentalism and the extremism being represented by Hizb-ut-Tehrir, Al Qaida, Muslim Brotherhood, etc., are getting stronger.<sup>6</sup> He stressed the need to promote traditional Islam in order to neutralise the threat of Islamic fundamentalists and extremism. Central Asian states face a significant challenge in combining necessary democratisation with the struggle to undermine the influence of Islamic extremism that has spread among segments of the population.

## **Pakistan**

That the Islamist ideology and terrorists have been used as tools by Pakistan to expand its strategic, ideological and even economic frontiers in South and Central Asia, is a major cause of conflict and instability in this region. In the words of a well known Pakistani scholar:

The reason so many Islamic radicals from all over the world congregated or passed through Pakistan was the strategic decision by Pakistan rulers to use *jihad* as an instrument of influence in Afghanistan and Kashmir.<sup>7</sup>

The extremist Islamist groups have now begun to devour Pakistan itself. The *jihadi* groups defy government in Pakistan and pose serious threat to its law and order and social equilibrium. The Pak-US campaign against terrorism in Afghanistan and on the Pak-Afghan border in the aftermath of 9/11 did not deter the Taliban or its sympathisers in Pakistan. Notwithstanding President Musharraf's stated policy against terrorism, Islamists are a formidable force in Pakistan and enjoy power in two provinces – North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Baluchistan. The Muttahida-Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) – a conglomerate of pro-Taliban parties which came into existence weeks before the October 2002 general elections in Pakistan, participated for the first time in these elections and emerged as a credible political force. It took NWFP with a two-thirds majority and also formed a coalition government in Baluchistan along with a military backed Muslim League. Local religious extremists groups like Sipah-e-Saheba (SSP) and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), both of which are rabidly anti-Shia, are notorious for killing Shias in Karachi and elsewhere. A large number of Al Qaida and Taliban terrorists, while fleeing from Afghanistan following the US-led campaign, have not only returned to *madrassas* in Pakistan but have merged with the above-mentioned local extremist groups. This makes the situation even more dreadful. Testifying before the US Senate Committee on Intelligence on February 11, 2003, Defense Intelligence Agency Director Vice-Admiral Lowell Jacoby said, "Al Qaeda appears to maintain an operational presence in Pakistan. The Government of Pakistan has been a key partner in Operation Enduring Freedom and in our global war on terrorism, but despite its best efforts Al Qaeda continues to use Pakistan for transit, haven and as a staging area for attacks." Recent reports from Pakistan suggest that the training of Islamist terrorists continues in Mansehra and other camps in Pakistan. Zulfikar Ali who did field survey/interviews in Mansehra writes, "All the major militant organisations – Hizbul Mujahideen, Al-Badr Mujahideen, Harkat-ul Mujahideen and others began regrouping in April 2005. At least 13 major camps in the Mansehra region were revived in May 2005."<sup>8</sup> He also reports about a 13 year-old Mohd. Akbar of Peshawar, who got killed in action. "Hundreds of young boys between the age of 13 and 15 years make ready cannon for violent militant campaigns."<sup>9</sup> A newspaper report listed 55 training camps for the jihadis spread all over Pakistan with 29 such camps located in Pak-occupied Kashmir, 15 in NWFP, three in Northern Areas, seven in Punjab and one in Sindh.<sup>10</sup> These training camps send out jihadis not only to Kashmir and other parts of India but worldwide. One of the

London suicide bombers, Shehzad Tanveer was reported to have got his training at a camp in Muridke near Lahore.<sup>11</sup>

### **Jammu and Kashmir**

The Jammu and Kashmir province of India has been reeling under Islamic extremists, terrorists and foreign mercenaries, all trained from across the border in Pakistan, since 1989. These terrorist acts and secessionist moves were preceded by the dissemination of fundamentalist Wahabi ideology through a well-funded network of Jamaat-e-Islami institutions, madrasas, mosques and black-board literature hung in mohallas and streets throughout the valley. This fundamentalist ideology branded the Indian system of multi-ethnic secular democracy and development efforts as un-Islamic. The Wahabi and Jamaat-e-Islami ideologues and their foreign mentors thus built up an aura of egalitarianism and quick justice based on summary trials in the Shariat courts and unity based on Islamic solidarity (Ummah). They ridiculed the affluence and economic benefits generated by development initiatives in Kashmir over the years, by highlighting the corrupt practices of Kashmiri Muslim bureaucracy-politician-contractor-business class. It is the Jamaat-e-Islami ideology which prepared the ground for open intervention by Pakistan in the form of cross-border terrorism and ethno-religious cleansing of minorities from the Kashmir valley. As a result, the pluralist and democratic order received a death blow in Kashmir.

Syed Ali Shah Gilani of the Jamaat-e-Islami of Kashmir and a prominent secessionist leader, has in no uncertain terms stated, "The Muslims (of Kashmir) were part of Millat.... This very feeling of being part of Millat attracts Mujahideen from Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, etc. to Kashmir."<sup>12</sup> Gilani's practice of pan-Islamism, which is based on the concept of Millat/Ummah transcending national boundaries, is at the root of ongoing violence and turmoil in Kashmir. Gilani and his group are invoking the suzerainty of Muslim Millat in repudiation of lawful democratic and secular polity and liberal and composite cultural tradition of *Kashmiriyat* based on indigenous history, culture and ethos of Kashmir.

Two important developments that have shaped the course of events in Kashmir during the past two decades are the 1979 revolution in Iran and the 1979 Soviet armed intervention in Afghanistan. Whereas the success of the revolution in Iran and the dissemination of the ideology of Islamic

revolution did influence the Muslim people in Asia, the Soviet armed intervention in Afghanistan brought home to them the threats still looming over the Islamic countries. It was in these circumstances of Islamic despair and victory that the Jamaat-e-Islami and other Muslim fundamentalist groups of Kashmir like the Students Islamic Federation, Islami Jamiat Tulba, Muslim United Front, through their sustained efforts of indoctrination and preaching in mosques, madrassas, Friday congregations and social and political assemblies ignited the Islamic passions among the majority of Kashmiri Muslims and built "youth cadres to achieve the objective of Islamicisation of Kashmiri society".<sup>13</sup> Flushed with foreign funds mainly from Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, the Jamaat-e-Islami expanded its reach in the Valley. By 1986, it had 10,000 hardcore members, 25,000 ordinary members and about 50,000 persons in its ideological influence.<sup>14</sup> The Islamic fundamentalist indoctrination of Kashmiri Muslims was channelised against India and anything that symbolised Indian culture, society and polity. Now the slogans of jihad and for the establishment of Nizam-e-Mustafa (system based on Islamic Shariah) were openly raised in Kashmir. In mid-1988, Allahwale (the Islamic fundamentalist group based in northern India) alongwith Jamaat-e-Islami held a conference in Srinagar in which Muslim delegates from various parts of India and also from some West Asian countries participated. The delegates while highlighting the doctrinal purity of Islam stressed the need to carry out jihad. Soon thereafter hundreds of Imams from the fundamentalist Allahwale group were inducted into various mosques in Kashmir for tabligh (religious indoctrination),<sup>15</sup> displacing the local Kashmiri Muslim Imams who still believed in indigenous culture and tolerant view of Islam. In this manner the wide network of mosques was taken over by the Islamic extremists and subsequently used to galvanise Kashmiri Muslims for jihad.

The Islamist transformation of the Kashmir insurgency has been well elucidated in a report of the Task Force on Terrorism & Unconventional Warfare set up by the US House Republican Research Committee. A relevant excerpt from the report titled "The New Islamist International" dated February 1, 1993 says:

Kashmir was the only area in India where, as of the mid-1980s, Islamic revivalism had taken a radical political stance and where the slogans of the Islamic state have been publicly raised and had been received with growing popularity. The population was increasingly adopting the

leadership of *Jamaat-i-Islami* of Pakistan and Khomeynists. Consequently, by 1984 an Islamic radicalisation had developed that saw the rise of such movements as the *Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front*, *Mahaz-i-Azadi* and the *Liberation League*.

Later, by 1985, both the *Jamaat-i-Islami* and *Al Jihad* movements, the latter a clandestine organisation influenced by the ideology of the Iranian revolution, were becoming highly influential in Kashmiri politics. Indeed, the *Al Jihad* movement publicly raised the issue of an Islamic Revolution as the only way to liberate Kashmir in the mid-1980s. Thus, in the space of a few short years, there was a marked erosion of the secular Kashmiri personality and a Muslim identity with fundamentalist overtones started emerging rapidly.

This transformation was assisted and reinforced by an active ISI programme. Initially, the emphasis of this programme was on using the Afghan-support infrastructure in Pakistan to support Kashmiri militants. Indeed, during the main escalation of Islamist violence in Indian Kashmir in mid-1988, Pakistan provided assistance in the training and arming of Kashmiri terrorists, as well as sanctuaries to Kashmiri insurgents across the border. At times, the ISI's assistance to Kashmiri militants was even funnelled through Afghan rebel leader Gulbadin Hikmatyar's *Hizb-e-Islami* group, thus providing Islamabad with deniability.

In 1986, with growing experience in training, organising and running the Afghan *mujahideen*, and with military supplies available (through US, Saudi and other foreign assistance), Pakistan began expanding its operation to sponsor and promote separatism and terrorism, primarily in Kashmir, as a strategic long term program... Thus the rise of Islamist ideology to predominance throughout Indian Kashmir facilitated the emergence of a tight link between the Kashmiri insurgents, their supporters and Islamabad... Furthermore, in the increase of support for terrorism in India, Islamabad has been able to find a task for the Pakistani and Afghan cadres that Islamabad had developed during the Afghan war and must now keep meddling in Pakistani domestic politics.

The ISI established and runs its own Kashmiri organisation. The most important among these are the *Hizb-e-Islami*, which is comprised of former Kashmiri *mujahideen* who were trained by the ISI and then fought with Gulbadin Hikmatyar's organisation in Afghanistan. Also, there is *Harkat-ul-Jihad*, which is made up of veteran Afghans from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Kashmir.... *Jamaat-i-Islami* (Pakistan), *Hizb-e-Islami* and *Jamiat-i-Islami* (Afghanistan) and *Hizbul Mujahideen* (Kashmir) had all become members of the Turabi-led Popular International Organisation (PIO).<sup>16</sup>

During the first phase of militancy in Kashmir which started in 1989, the Islamist militant groups strived to "bring structural changes at cultural

levels of Kashmir society",<sup>17</sup> seeking to Islamicise the socio-political set up in the valley. Though militancy in Kashmir was launched initially by the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) ostensibly to achieve *azadi* (independence), within a few months, a number of militant groups emerged advocating Nizam-e-Mustafa as the objective of their struggle. The term *azadi* gave way to jihad. Various Islamist groups like Jamaat-e-Islami and its militant wing, Hizbul Mujahideen, the radical women's wing, Dukhtaran-i-Millat, Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen, Allah Tigers, Jamiat-ul-Ulemma Islam, Al Badr, Al Jihad Force, Al Umar Mujahideen, Muslim Mujahideen, Islamic Students League, Zia Tigers, and many such organisations proclaimed the objective of their struggle as Islamicisation of the socio-political and economic set-up, merger of Kashmir with Pakistan, unification of Ummah and establishment of an Islamic Caliphate. Dukhtaran-i-Millat, announced at a press conference in November 1992: "The merger of Kashmir with Pakistan was the first step towards the unification of Ummah. Any other solution to Kashmir problem would be un-Islamic. Since we wanted to establish an Islamic Caliphate world over, the unity of Ummah was pre-requisite for that."<sup>18</sup> *Hizbul Mujahideen* asserted that its aim "is the establishment of Islamic Caliphate world over. We do not believe in ideological or geographical boundaries."<sup>19</sup> Another group, Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen stressed that "the demand for self-determination was distorting the image of the ongoing movement. It is a struggle for the establishment of Caliphate."<sup>20</sup> The Allah Tigers asserted that, "the present struggle would continue until the goal of establishing an Islamic Caliphate was achieved."<sup>21</sup>

Open calls for establishment of an Islamic Order were followed by the liquidation of central government officials, Kashmiri Pandits, liberal and nationalist intellectuals, social and cultural activists which was described necessary to cleanse the valley of its un-Islamic elements. Simultaneously, all cinema houses, beauty parlours, wine shops, bars, video centres, use of cosmetics etc., were banned by the militant groups. Al Barq issued a ban order on selling of cigarettes.<sup>22</sup> The Peoples League asked Kashmiri girls not to take part in any cultural programmes outside the valley.<sup>23</sup> The Allah Tigers threatened to throw bombs on houses where women would refuse to wear veils.<sup>24</sup> The militants through terror coerced the local newspapers to highlight their activities. The Hizbul Mujahideen imposed a ban on the circulation of national and Jammu newspapers in Kashmir valley. The Wahdat-e-Islami even banned the entry of Mark Tully, the former New Delhi Bureau Chief of the BBC into the valley, asking the people to "stop

listening to the BBC".<sup>25</sup> Offices of daily local newspapers like *Aftab*, *Alsafa* and *Srinagar Times* were attacked with bombs and even set on fire. Several prominent media persons including Mohammed Shaban Wakil, editor of *Alsafa*, Lassa Kaul, Station Director of Doordarshan, Srinagar were gunned down for not towing the militant line. The militant groups used both terror tactics and Islamist ideology to control the local press, which thereafter projected the Islamist viewpoint on society, politics, governance and laws, as superior to the so-called corrupt and anarchic practices of democracy and secularism.

The Islamist orientation of insurgency in Kashmir became more pronounced after the extremist organisations like the Hizbul Mujahideen, Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen, Harkat-ul-Ansar, Lashkar-e-Toiba, Markaz Dawaul-Irshad launched a religious crusade against the non-Muslim minorities, and publicly prided themselves for killing Hindus in the name of jihad. The Muslim extremists launched a malicious campaign against the Kashmiri Hindus through periodic write-ups in local newspapers and through sermons in mosques. And final ultimatum was given to this minority community through a press release on April 14, 1990 asking them to leave the valley within two days or face retribution and death.<sup>26</sup> About 1,000 Hindus were brutally murdered and the entire community of about 350,000 were forced out of their homes. This minority Hindu community that was scattered to government camps in Jammu, Delhi and other parts of India, is in its fifteenth year of displacement from its homeland in Kashmir. Clearly, terrorism and religious extremism has had a devastating consequence for the displaced persons. More than 30,000 houses belonging to Kashmiri Pandits, hundreds of their business establishments, educational, cultural and religious institutions have been destroyed or burnt down with the object of decimating all traces of the 5,000 year old history and culture of this non-Muslim minority in Kashmir.<sup>27</sup> This displaced community is a victim of a sinister design unleashed by Islamist terrorists to deprive the ancient and indigenous Kashmiri Pandits of their right to the territorial locus in Jammu & Kashmir, so that its social and political order is altered to a mono-ethnic Islamist extremist agenda.

The forced displacement of almost the entire Kashmiri Pandit indigenous minority presents a classic case of ethnic-religious cleansing with long-term implications for the composite socio-cultural set-up and secular polity in Kashmir. The Islamist ideologues and mercenaries even

resorted to targeted killings of the few remnants of Kashmiri Pandits who could not move out of the valley due to various constraints. On March 21, 1997 seven such Kashmiri Pandits were forcibly taken out of their homes in Sangrampura village of Budgam district and gunned down. Twenty-three members of this minuscule minority including 10 men, nine women and two infants were huddled together in dark cold night of January 25, 1998, at Wandhama village in Ganderbal and mowed down by the Islamist terrorists sponsored by Pakistan, with a clear objective of ensuring that Jammu & Kashmir is cleansed of non-Muslim minorities.

Having cleared Kashmir of the Hindus, the Islamists brought the media to heel and crippled the administrative and political structures, the terrorists now started bringing the local Muslims under their control. Thousands of young Kashmiri Muslims were coerced to cross the LAC (Line of Actual Control) to undergo training in arms and sabotage in various training camps set up in Pak-occupied Kashmir, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Select groups of such recruits were taken for advanced training to camps on the Pak-Afghan border and inside Afghanistan. Thousands of local youth who resisted, were tortured and even killed. In this phase of militancy, the local Muslims bore the brunt of atrocities by the Islamist terrorists and mercenaries. Thousands were killed in this process. A series of assassinations and bomb attacks on social and political activists belonging to nationalist and liberal sections of Muslim society in Kashmir were carried out in a bid to destroy the established political structures and to thwart the process of restoration of democracy in the state. The Amir of Lashkar-e-Toiba, Hafiz Mohammad Khan went on record saying: "Democracy is among the menaces we inherited ... These are all useless practices and part of the system we are fighting against. If God gives us a chance, we will try to bring in the pure concept of an Islamic Caliphate."<sup>28</sup>

The brutal practices by the Islamist terrorists caused revulsion among the common masses in Kashmir. This was more so because the Islamist groups like Jamaat-e-Islami and Jamiat Ahl-e-Hadith directed their efforts to eliminate the traditional social and religious practices prevalent among the Kashmiri Muslims. These Islamist groups exhorted the Kashmiri Muslims to banish such un-Islamic practices as visiting ancient holy shrines of Sufis and Rishis. The people of Srinagar even resisted the attempts by some militant groups to stop the celebration of the annual *Urs* at Batmol Rishi.<sup>29</sup> It was followed by the burning down of a part of Baba Rishi shrine near Tangmarg. In Aish Muqam, there was a bloody clash in which a few

people got killed, when “militants tried to prevent the local villagers from celebrating the *Urs* of Baba Zainuddin Rishi”.<sup>30</sup> On May 11, 1995 the Islamist mercenaries from Afghanistan and Pakistan led by Mast Gul, destroyed the ancient holy shrine of Sheikh Nooruddin Rishi at Charar-e-Sharif, 35 kilometres from Srinagar.<sup>31</sup> This shrine had been a centre of pilgrimage for hundreds of thousands of devotees, both Hindus and Muslims, over the past six hundred years. In early July 1998 the terrorists made an abortive attempt to blow up the nearly 700 year-old shrine of Naqshband Sahib in Srinagar.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, Hizbul Mujahideen and other such outfits have been holding out public threats against participation by Hindus in the annual pilgrimage to the holy Amarnath cave. They even resorted to mine blasts and firing on the Hindu pilgrims on numerous occasions.

The possibility of establishing a new Islamic Caliphate running from Kashmir to Pakistan through Afghanistan and Central Asia was being discussed by the Islamist extremist groups in Kashmir at a time when the Soviet troops had withdrawn from Afghanistan and the Muslim Central Asian Republics had emerged as independent states following the disintegration of Soviet Union. They were echoing the ideas of the Amir (Chief) of Jamaat-e-Islami, Pakistan, Qazi Hussain Ahmed, who on the Kashmir Solidarity day in Rawalpindi in February 1992 declared that, “a great Islamic state, spreading from Kashmir to Central Asia would emerge after the independence of Kashmir.”<sup>33</sup> Soon after new groups like Tehrik-i-Ahyay-e-Khilafat (the movement for revival of Caliphate) and Tehrik-e-Khilafat-e-Islamia (the movement for Islamic Caliphate) announced their presence in Kashmir.<sup>34</sup> They propounded the ideology of trans-national Islam and the Caliphate. The Tehrik-e-Khilafat-e-Islamia asserted that, “Islam did not recognize nationalism or territorial patriotism. The slogans based on ethnicity, race, gender or nationalism were false... The real Islamic ideology was the ideology of Caliphate... The slogan that future of Kashmir would be decided by Kashmiris has given rise to an evil, which was distorting the Islamic identity of present movement, and reducing it to a mere democratic movement”.<sup>35</sup> It is against this backdrop that there emerged close links between the Islamist insurgents from Kashmir and the Afghan Mujahideen, with the pan-Islamic ideology binding them together. Thousands of such Kashmiri militants were taken to Pakistan and Afghanistan to undergo training in arms and guerrilla warfare, with some of them later fighting alongside the Afghan Mujahideen. The war

cry of jihad brought about the ideological unity between the Afghan Mujahideen and Kashmiri militants. The insurgency in Kashmir not only lost its indigenous character, but was also simultaneously taken over by the Islamist radicals and Afghan and Pakistani mercenaries as part of the new Pakistani strategy.

The marginalisation of Kashmiri militant outfits like the JKLF was deftly brought about by Pakistan after failing to sustain the euphoria among Kashmiri Muslims about their movement against India. This was achieved by propping up radical Islamist terrorist groups like Hizbul Mujahideen, Harkat ul Ansar, Markaz Dawa-ul-Irshad and its militant wing Lashkar-e-Toiba in Kashmir. Their cadres were drawn from heavily armed and battle-hardened Afghan, Pakistani and other Islamist mercenaries, all maintaining close linkages with the Jamaat-i-Islami in Pakistan and Kashmir. To quote a Pakistani analyst Ishtiaq Ahmed, "Most of the Islamist militant groups that are now fighting in Kashmir, including Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, are products of the Afghan war. The Taliban are an important external agent fuelling the fire of Islamic militancy in Kashmir".<sup>36</sup>

## **Bangladesh**

Bangladesh emerged as an independent country in December 1971 on the strength of Bengali nationalism and as a secular country. However, after the assassination of Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rahman in 1975, Bengali nationalism of the pre and post-liberation period was replaced by Bangladeshi nationalism. The secular principle of the Constitution of 1972 was dropped and the Islamic orientation of the polity became pronounced under the military rulers who seized power. A new political-bureaucratic-military elite started using Islam to legitimize its leadership. Bangladesh sought to emphasise its links with the Islamic Ummah and stressed the need to maintain special relations with the Islamic countries. This shift in its foreign policy brought Bangladesh certain economic benefits in terms of liberal assistance by some of the West Asian countries and consequent easing of pressure on its oil import bill. The country also witnessed the resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism, as Jamaat-e-Islami and other Islamic outfits such as Islamic Chatro Shibir, Jagrata Muslim Janata, Bangladesh and Islami Oikyo Jote consolidated and expanded their institutional network fully utilising the Islamic petro dollars. The Islamists have not only been targeting the opposition but have been after judges and lawyers because they view judiciary as a roadblock in their march for establishing

Islamic rule. They have been demanding the scrapping of secular jurisprudence and its replacement by Shariah or Islamic law. In October 2005 a courthouse was blown up and in November 2005 two judges were killed. The existence of Islamist militant groups such as Harkat-ul-Jihad-e-Islami (HUJI), Hizbul Mujahideen, Lashkar-e-Toiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad in Bangladesh poses a major threat to security in the region. On August 16, 2005, the terrorists carried out 400 serial bomb blasts in all but one of the 64 districts of Bangladesh, obviously to convey the outreach of the Islamist infrastructure. And on November 29, 2005, the Islamists used the deadly weapon of mass terror with suicide bombers blowing themselves up at the district courts of Ghazipur and Chittagong, killing nine persons and injuring 50 more. These terrorist acts indicate the growing clout and presence of a jihadi network, which has been facilitated by the Jamaat-e-Islami's participation in the present government of Bangladesh. Given Bangladesh's official commitment to the global campaign against terrorism, it would be in Dhaka's interest to curb the rise of Islamist extremism and terrorism. Bangladesh needs to remain a moderate, pluralistic society committed to regional peace, democratic and secular values and practices, if it has to address its acute problems of development, sustain internal stability, and maintain friendly ties with India in the coming years.

## **Conclusion**

Terrorism when blended with jihad is a deadly mix and a major challenge to security in South and Central Asia. One can imagine the situation that would have been created by the Taliban, Al Qaida and other jihadi organisations in the region had there been no 9/11 and the consequent US-led global campaign against terrorism. As Masood Khalili, the Ambassador of Afghanistan in India stated in a recent interview to a Delhi newspaper: "By end-2001, entire Afghanistan would have been captured by Taliban. By now, most of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan would have been run over by Al Qaida. Afghanistan would have become a *Khilafat* (Caliphate), training and exporting 50,000 terrorists. The people of Pakistan would have been in jeopardy. The world would have had to recognise the Taliban, welcoming them to the OIC and the UN. With Al Qaida at India's doorstep, what would have happened to J&K can only be imagined."<sup>37</sup>

It is time that the academics, media, civic society, states and the international community begin to distinguish between traditional Islam

and the Islam propounded by the jihadis and their mentors. The international community should not repeat its earlier error of judgement when in the period 2000 till mid-2001, concerted efforts were made by some Western countries, including the United States (besides Pakistan and Saudi Arabia which had already recognised the Taliban), to view the Taliban as the legitimate authority in Afghanistan. They also made efforts to persuade the Central Asian Republics to recognise the Taliban regime. Needless to say, the jihadis by their acts of terror bring into disrepute the religion they claim to profess. The UN Special Rapporteur, Abdelfatteh Amor in his report has acknowledged "the danger represented by the extremism of groups claiming allegiance to Islam".<sup>38</sup> The silent majority of traditional, moderate and liberal Muslims who practice Islam in accordance with the principles of tolerance and non-discrimination need to assert and even organise themselves against the extremists. On their part, the governments in secular societies need to help in preserving, restoring and emphasising the indigenous and traditional Islamic practices and institutions, as have been prevalent in different parts of the world.

#### References/End Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Cited in Husain Haqqani, "Jihad and Jihadism", *Indian Express*, August 3, 2005, p.9.
- <sup>2</sup> *Hindustan Times*, October 11, 2005.
- <sup>3</sup> *Hindustan Times*, October 20, 2005.
- <sup>4</sup> *Indian Express*, October 25, 2005.
- <sup>5</sup> Islam Karimov, *Uzbekistan on the Threshold of Twenty First Century*, Tashkent, 1997, p.61.
- <sup>6</sup> *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, January 14, 2005.
- <sup>7</sup> Husain Haqqani, no.1.
- <sup>8</sup> *The Herald*, Karachi, July 2005.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>10</sup> *The Times of India*, July 31, 2005.
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>12</sup> See *Indian Express*, January 4, 2001.
- <sup>13</sup> Riyaz Punjabi, "The Concept of an Islamic Caliphate: The Religious and Ethnic pulls of Kashmir Militant Movement," *Journal of Peace Studies*, 1 (1), November-December 1993, p. 42.
- <sup>14</sup> Anil Maheshwari, *Crescent Over Kashmir*, New Delhi, 1993, p.104.
- <sup>15</sup> D.N. Dhar, *Dynamics of Political Change in Kashmir*, New Delhi, 2001, p.204.

- <sup>16</sup> Task Force on Terrorism & Unconventional Warfare, US House Republican Research Committee, "The New Islamist International", February 1, 1993.
- <sup>17</sup> Riyaz Punjabi, no.13, p.43.
- <sup>18</sup> Daily *Afaq*, Srinagar, November 16, 1992.
- <sup>19</sup> Daily *Nida-e-Mashriq*, Srinagar, January 30, 1993.
- <sup>20</sup> *Daily Srinagar Times*, June 23, 1993.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, May 6, 1993.
- <sup>22</sup> D.P. Kumar, *Kashmir: Pakistan's Proxy War*. Har Anand, New Delhi, n.d. pp. 149-50.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>25</sup> *Srinagar Times*, September 23, 1992.
- <sup>26</sup> See *Alsafa*, Srinagar, April 14, 1990.
- <sup>27</sup> Ghulam Mohammad Sofi, a renowned Kashmiri journalist and editor of *Daily Srinagar Times* confirmed in a press interview that about 32,000 Kashmiri Pandit houses have been burnt since 1990. See *The Times of India*, November 19, 1997.
- <sup>28</sup> *The Herald Annual*, Karachi, January 1998.
- <sup>29</sup> Riyaz Punjabi, "Charar-e-Sharif Tragedy: The Ideological Complicities", *Bulletin of Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation*, Spring 1996, pp.16-18.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>31</sup> A Pakistan mercenary, Abdul Rahman, confirmed in an article in *Urdu Digest of Lahore* that the shrine of Charar-e-Sharif was destroyed by Pakistani mercenaries led by Mast Gul. Cited in *The Hindu* and *Indian Express*, March 2, 1998.
- <sup>32</sup> *The Hindu*, July 12, 1998.
- <sup>33</sup> Riyaz Punjabi, no.13, p.46.
- <sup>34</sup> *Daily Alsafa*, Srinagar, March 13, 1993.
- <sup>35</sup> *Daily Srinagar Times*, July 18, 1993 cited in Riyaz Punjabi, no.13, p.45.
- <sup>36</sup> Ishtiaq Ahmed, "Containing the Taliban: Path to Peace in Afghanistan", *Perceptions*, Ankara, 5 (4), December 2000-February 2001, pp.70-71.
- <sup>37</sup> See his interview to *The Times of India*, New Delhi, November 22, 2005.
- <sup>38</sup> E/CN.4/2000/65 dated February 15, 2000, p.29.

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