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ISLAMIC RADICALISM IN AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN

By Olivier Roy

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United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
CP 2500, CH-1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland

Web Site: <http://www.unher.org>

1 Introduction

We will define Islamic radicalism as a combination of two elements: firstly, a call for the return of all Muslims to the true tenets of Islam (or what is perceived as such): this trend is usually called “salafism” (“the path of the ancestors”) by its supporters, or “fundamentalism” by Western analysts, but one should note that there could be peaceful fundamentalist movements (like the Jama’at ut-Tabligh, based in Pakistan); secondly, a political militancy going as far as advocating *jihad*, in the sense of “holy war”, against the foes of Islam, who could include existing Muslim rulers. The movements under study nevertheless differ in stressing one of the two elements more or less. The term *jihadi* is currently used in Pakistani media to refer to the movements that stress the priority of armed struggle.

Afghan and Pakistani Islamic Sunni radical movements have always been closely linked, while Shi’a radicals of both countries were more tied with Iran (in both countries the Sunnis make up around 85 per cent of the population). But the influence has always worked from abroad to inside Afghanistan. Since the development of the Afghan Islamist Sunni movement (the so-called *ikhwani* or “Brotherhoods”) from the end of the 1970s to the fall of the Taliban in December 2001, Pakistani movements have been playing a paternalistic role in supporting their Afghan offspring or counterparts. The Pakistani military intelligence (the ISI or Inter-Services Intelligence) provided occasional support to radical Islamists of both countries, used them as a tool of regional policy, or at least kept a benevolent attitude toward their activities. Because of this close connection between Pakistani and Afghan movements we will here treat them not by country but by affiliation: the Islamists on the one hand and the neo-fundamentalists on the other.

In parallel with this close relationship between Pakistani and Afghan movements, thousands of Middle Eastern volunteers were dispatched to Afghanistan during and after the Afghan war of resistance against the Soviet army, mainly through Arab Muslim Brotherhood networks, and with the support of the Saudi and Pakistani intelligence services. This Middle Eastern connection gave birth around 1990 to the Al Qaeda movement, headed by Osama Bin Laden, who used the Afghan territory and his connections with the Taliban to train young radical activists who were sent to the West to perpetrate terrorist actions. Foreign influence on Afghanistan has thus backfired, a fact that triggered the American military campaign in Afghanistan (October-December 2001), whose effect was to eliminate the last significant elements of radical political Islam inside Afghanistan and to put the Pakistani government at odds with its own religious radicals.

From the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (27 December 1979) to the fall of the Taliban regime (December 2001), all the radical Islamic movements in both countries underwent considerable changes: some that were among the most active and radical during the 1970s and 1980s (like the Afghan Hizb-i Islami or the Pakistani Jama’at-i Islami) have undergone a slow decline; others have given up any precise ideological agenda in favour of a nationalist or ethnic identity (like the Afghan Jami’at-i Islami); some former conservative parties have turned radical in the course of the last 20 years (as the Pakistani Jami’at-i Ulama-i Islam - JUI); finally other movements, which today are among the most radical, appeared only in the 1990s (the Afghan Taliban or the Pakistani Lashkar-i Tayyeba).

To understand the evolution of Islamic radicalism in the area we can therefore not rely on a mere classification of the parties and movements as if they had been unchanged since the

beginning. We have to address the issue in terms of networks, political trajectories, time-span and ideological families. A relevant intellectual framework can be found in the distinction between Islamists and neo-fundamentalists.¹ “Islamism” is the brand of modern political Islamic fundamentalism which claims to recreate a true Islamic society, not simply by imposing *sharia*, or Islamic law, but by first establishing an Islamic state through political action. Islamists see Islam not as a mere religion, but as a political ideology which should be integrated into all aspects of society (politics, law, economy, social justice, foreign policy, etc.). The traditional idea of Islam as an all-encompassing religion is extended to the complexity of modern society. In fact they acknowledge the modernity of the society in terms of education, technology, politics and so forth. They are modern by comparison with traditional *ulama* (the “learned” or traditional religious scholars). The movement’s founding fathers are the Egyptian Hassan Al Banna (1906–1949), founder of the Muslim Brothers, the Pakistani Abul Ala Maududi (died in 1979), and, among the Shi’as, Baqer al Sadr, Ali Shariati and Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeyni. They have had great influence on educated youth with a secular background, including women. The leading Islamist party in South Asia is the Jama’at-i Islami, founded by Abul Ala Maududi in the then Empire of India in 1941.

Neo-fundamentalist groups, by contrast, insist on implementing the *sharia* (in a strict and literal interpretation). They are not concerned with state-building nor with social problems, and might support a variety of political leaders. Typically neo-fundamentalist are the networks of religious schools (*madrassa*), which have been active in Afghanistan and Pakistan for decades in their present shape, and whose archetype is the Deobandi school of South Asia. Usually conservative and legalist, these networks, during the 1980s, in the wake of the Afghan and Kashmir wars and of increasing tension between Shi’as and Sunnis in the aftermath of the Iranian revolution of 1979, gave birth to a radicalization of until recently conservative religious forces (the Afghan Taliban). These neo-fundamentalist groups have superseded the Islamist movements as the proponents of *jihad* against the Western world: most of the Arab volunteers going to Afghanistan and Pakistan during the 1990s went through these networks (while ten years ago, they went through the Islamist networks). This shift from Islamism to neo-fundamentalism has been boosted by the growing influence of Saudi religious authorities on the curriculum of the religious educational networks in Afghanistan and Pakistan (through subsidies and scholarships), entailing “wahhabization” of South Asian Islam (i.e. incorporation of the main tenets of the official Saudi *wahhabi* form of Islam).

But one cannot understand the evolution of the radical Islamic movements if one does not take into account the ethnic, national and social factors. Although they all claim to avoid any kind of segmentation and national or local identities in favour of the *ummah*, or community of all believers, they have all rooted themselves or split from each other according to traditional patterns of segmentation. This underlying logic of segmentation, added to personal rivalries and different strategic choices, has been the main obstacle to the emergence of a united Islamic movement, although this is the avowed goal of all the radical movements.

2 The Islamist Movements

The Islamist movements involved in Afghanistan and Pakistan are the Pakistani Jama’at-i Islami, and the Afghan Hizb-i Islami and Jami’at-i Islami. Most of the founders of the Al Qaeda movement were also Islamist, as Abdullah Azzam (died in 1989), who was a Jordanian Muslim Brother. An important point is that the evolution of the different Islamist parties has

¹ Roy, O., *The Failure of Political Islam*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1994

little do to with their fundamental ideology, which was basically the same. The Afghan Jama'at-i Islami evolved as a nationalist party, with an ethnic basis, while the Arab volunteers adhere to a militant anti-western transnational pan-islamism.

2.1 The Pakistani Jama'at-i Islami.

This is the oldest militant Islamist party in the area.² Founded in 1941 by Abul Ala Maududi, the Jama'at criticized the concept of a secular Pakistan as early as the time of the partition of India. For the Jama'at, Pakistan, having been created as the state for all the Muslims, must therefore be an "Islamic state", in the sense that it should be based on *sharia* and Islamic institutions. Although opposing all the existing regimes until 1977, the Jama'at chose a legalist path; its strategy was to recruit among the elites in order to influence the government. This policy succeeded in 1977, when General Zia-ul Haqq took power: the influence of the Jama'at-i Islami now extended to the highest spheres of the state, although the General himself has never been a member of the party. Immediately after the communist coup in Afghanistan (27 April 1978) the Jama'at played a big role in determining the Government's policy towards Afghanistan, under its new leader or *amir*, Myan Tufayl (appointed 1972), assisted by Qazi Husseyn Ahmed (who was to become his successor in 1987). Husseyn Ahmad was himself a Pashtun who kept close personal connections with the Afghan Islamist parties, which were in exile in Peshawar. The idea was to channel the incoming US and Arab support to the Islamist parties of the Afghan resistance and particularly the Hizb-i Islami of Hekmatyar.³ The Jama'at thus came into close contact with the Pakistani military in charge of Afghanistan, especially the ISI. Although few if any high ranking military officers were Jama'at members, many were close to its ideas.

But the Jama'at has never been able to capitalize on its close connections with the ruling elites to gain more popular support. It never won more than six per cent of the vote in any national elections.⁴ On the contrary it lost most of its constituency among the Sindhis and the Muhajirs (the refugees from India who constituted its first membership base, like Maududi and Myan Tufa'yl), and ended up influential mainly in the Punjab and in the North-West Frontier Province, among Pashtuns. Under the leadership of Qazi Husseyn Ahmed (1987 onwards), the Jama'at took a stronger anti-US approach, especially during the Gulf War (1990-1991), organizing demonstrations in support of Iraq.⁵ But it lost support among grassroots militants in favour of neo-fundamentalist groups at the same time as its Afghan counterpart, the Hizb-i Islami, was superseded by the Afghan Taliban during their climb to power (1994-1996) and conclusively defeated by them in September 1995. In fact, after having supported the *jihad* in Afghanistan and Kashmir (in particular by inspiring a Hizb-ul Mujahedin, or Mujahedin Party), the Jama'at seems to be far less involved in armed struggle around Pakistan, especially if we compare with the neo-fundamentalist movements. The Jama'at has not been blamed for any terrorist action in Kashmir, and has not been put on the list of "terrorist groups" by the

² The best reference book on the Jama'at is Nasr, S. V., *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution: The Jama'at-i Islami of Pakistan*, Berkeley: California University Press, 1994

³ Nasr, p. 195

⁴ For a survey of the different elections since the creation of Pakistan see Talbot, I., *Pakistan: A Modern History*, London: Hurst, 1998; Nasr, p. 214

⁵ Nasr, p. 214

US Department of State in the aftermath of 11 September. According to some experts, the Jama'at should be regarded more as an "Islamic-nationalist" party than as a *jihadi* one.⁶

2.2 The Afghan Islamist Parties: From Militancy to Ethnic Polarization

Until the end of the 1980s, in Afghanistan, the various Islamist parties constituted the vanguard of radical Islam. The Afghan Islamist movement dates back to the end of the 1960s, when it recruited mainly among university students (Faculty of Engineering, Polytechnic Institute, or the newly created State University of Theology), under the influence of professors of Islamic sciences (Gholam Nyazi, Borhanuddin Rabbani), having returned from Al-Azhar in Cairo, where they came under the influence of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers. The fledgling movement was supported by the Pakistani Jama'at-i Islami, which sent Qazi Husseyn Ahmad to advise it. The youth branch (called Jawanan-i Muslimin, or Muslim Youth) was very active on the Kabul campuses from 1968 to 1973, when Prince Daud carried out a coup d'état against King Zahir. Many activists went to Peshawar in Pakistan, where they were protected by the Pakistani military services. They launched a failed insurrection in Afghanistan in the summer of 1975. Soon thereafter the movement split along a clear ethnic divide between the Jami'at-i Islami of Borhanuddin Rabbani and Ahmed Shah Masood, and the Hizb-i Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the latter being largely supported by the Jama'at and the Pakistani authorities.⁷ Despite many casualties through war, assassinations and internecine struggle, this generation continued to lead the main Mujahedin movement until 2001, when the death of Masood and the resignation of Rabbani as Head of State symbolized the shift to a new generation of political leaders.

Early in the war against the Soviet troops, the Jami'at lost most of its ideological motivations: its main military commander in Afghanistan, Ahmed Shah Masood, did not care about ideology and was only concerned about getting the support of local *ulama*, while one of his close advisers, Engineer Ishaq, issued a written statement saying "Islam does not present a blue-print for an Islamic government", which is a clear repudiation of the basic concept of Islamism.⁸ Jami'at has never been more than a loose association of local military commanders, most of them former university students, without any strong political apparatus. It recruited mainly among Sunni Persian-speakers (the so-called Tajiks), although it always had an Uzbek and Pashtun minority constituency. On the other hand, the Hizb remained a small, heavily centralized political party, where precedence was always given to the political leadership at the expense of more militarily able commanders. The Hizb was the principal beneficiary of the influx of Arab volunteers, together with some local Pashtun commanders, like Jallaluddin Haqqani in Paktya.

The war against the Soviets exacerbated the ethnic polarization that was always present. In April 1992 Kabul was taken by a loose coalition of non-Pashtuns (Tajiks with Masood, Uzbeks with the former communist General Dustom and Shi'a Hazaras under Sheykh Mazari). This was seen by many Pashtuns as a repetition of the take-over of the capital by the Tajik Bacha-ye Saqqao in 1928, the only example of non-Pashtun leadership since the creation of the Afghan state in 1747. During the bloody civil war that followed, the Hizb-i

⁶ Grare, F., The Jama'at-e-Islami and Pakistan's Foreign Policy, *Himalayan and Central Asian Studies* [New Delhi], Vol. 4, No 3-4, July-December 2000

⁷ On the history of the Islamist movement in Afghanistan see Roy, O., *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986

⁸ Islamic Government: Clarifying Some Confusions, *Afghannews* [Peshawar], 15 August 1987

Islami, despite Pakistani support, has been unable to retake Kabul, even if it succeeded in destroying the city through intense artillery and rocket fire. Masood, in charge of Kabul, did little to restore law and order, but did not impose any ideological agenda on the population: former female pro-communist civil servants, including TV anchorwomen and airline stewardesses, were allowed to keep their positions, if wearing a head scarf. In 1994, a crowd of Jami'at militants burnt the Pakistani embassy in Kabul in retaliation for the support provided by Islamabad to Hekmatyar. The Jami'at at that time became an Afghan nationalist party, with a narrower ethnic basis, made up essentially of Tajiks.

During the Gulf War of 1990 the Hizb was the only Afghan party to support Saddam Husseyn, following many Middle-Eastern Islamist movements, but this led to the withdrawal of Saudi support.⁹ Added to its inability to drive Masood out of Kabul this attitude generated growing disaffection among its external supporters. In 1994, when the Taliban movement rose around Kandahar, Pakistan shifted its support from the Hizb to this other Pashtun fundamentalist movement. In September 1995, the Hizb headquarters in the vicinity of Kabul were taken and destroyed by the Taliban. That was the end of the Hizb-i Islami: it had lost both its Pashtun constituency and its foreign support to the Taliban. From that time Hekmatyar has been spending more time in Iran than in Pakistan and maintains a strong anti-US attitude, condemning the US military campaign against the Taliban, although he was supposed to be part of the Northern Alliance.

Some small splinter groups are historically Islamists, but have moved closer to the neo-fundamentalist trend. Examples are the Hizb-i Islami (lead by Yunus Khales) and the Ittihad-i Islami, created in the early 1980s under the leadership of Abdul Rabb Sayyaf, who had been a student in Saudi Arabia, although he opposed the Taliban (but also the Shi'as).

2.3 The Shi'a Islamist Movements in Pakistan and Afghanistan

The Shi'a minority in both countries has been politicized through the impact of the Iranian Islamic revolution, leading to a decrease in the influence of traditional notables in favour of young mullahs trained in Iran, and generating increasing tension in relation to the Sunnis. But while in Afghanistan these tensions led first to civil war among Shi'as (1982-1984), in Pakistan they led to sectarian armed struggle between extremist Shi'as and extremist Sunnis. However, after the death of Imam Khomeyni in June 1989 Shi'a movements ceased to pursue any ideological goals and were solely committed to defend the Shi'a minority as a whole against Sunni radical Islamic militants, such as the Sepah-i Sahaba in Pakistan and the Taliban in Afghanistan. They turned into sectarian identity groups: in Pakistan, the Shi'as recruit among all ethnic groups (except Baluchis), but in Afghanistan the bulk of them (90 per cent) belong to the Hazara ethnic group. Although this defensive strategy regularly leads to armed clashes, the Shi'a movements are no longer a bridge head for Iranian influence, even if they still receive some political support or even military supplies (as in the case of the Afghan Hizb-i Wahdat). In fact Iran, together with the Afghan and the Pakistani Shi'as are the targets of Sunni militancy, as illustrated by the killings of Iranian diplomats in Mazar-i Sharif (August 1998) and in Lahore (the killing of Sadiq Ganji, the head of the Iranian Cultural Centre in December 1990).¹⁰ But Iran has always been careful to avoid an open confrontation with the ruling Sunni powers in Kabul and Islamabad, even to protect the Shi'a minority.

⁹ On the presence of a Hizb delegation in Baghdad headed by the son-in law of Hekmatyar see *The Nation* [Lahore], 24 December 1990 and *Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Report*, 7 January 1991

¹⁰ *Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Report*, 20 December 1990

In Afghanistan, two Shi'a Islamist parties appeared in the early 1980s: the Harakat-i Islami of Sheykh Mohseni, recruiting among urban Shi'as, and the Nasr party, based on young ethnic Hazaras living in Iran. From the beginning the divide was ethnic (the bulk of the Afghan Shi'as are ethnic Hazaras, while the remaining 10 per cent are urban dwellers, either Persian or Pashtu speakers). The Nasr fought for two years to eliminate a moderate and conservative organization named Shura from Hazarajat.¹¹ A dozen different Shi'a militant groups sprang up in Hazarajat and around the city of Herat, most of them being the tool of an Iranian faction. But in 1989, in the wake of the Soviet withdrawal, Iran decided to unite all the Shi'a components: it succeeded in Hazarajat by creating and supporting the Hizb-i Wahdat (Party of Unity), whose cadres overwhelmingly came from the Nasr. Headed by Sheykh Mazari (killed by the Taliban in September 1996, and replaced by Karim Khallili), the Hizb-i Wahdat gave up all ideological claims and became the defenders of the Shi'a community, or more precisely of the ethnic Hazaras. It joined the Northern Alliance in 1992, but in Kabul from time to time it had to fight the Ittihad-i Islami movement of Abdul Rabb Sayyaf, also a member of the Alliance, but who shared the anti-Shi'a bias of his Saudi sponsors. The worst fighting came in 1997 and 1998, when the Taliban took Mazar-i Sharif twice. In August 1998 thousands of Hazaras living in Mazar as well as ten Iranian diplomats were killed there. The Hizb-i Wahdat had to withdraw to Hazarajat, but came under attack from the Taliban, who used some former members of the Shura (although traditionalist and secular minded) to drive the Wahdat from the town of Yakaolang in 2000.¹² In this fighting the main issue was sectarian hatred (Sunnis versus Shi'as) added to local settling of accounts, with no ideological dimension on the side of the Shi'as.

In Pakistan, militant Shi'as initially joined the Tehrik-i Nihfaz-i Fiqh-i Jaafrya (Movement for the Preservation of the Shi'a Legal System), whose avowed aim was to gain recognition of Shi'a religious law in the official process of implementation of *sharia*, given the fact that for the Government as well as for the Sunni religious movements *sharia* is understood in its Sunni interpretation. The Tehrik was founded in 1979, by Allama Syed Jaafar Husseyn, a cleric educated in Iraq. Considering the timing, this was obviously connected with the growing political assertiveness of the Shi'as in the wake of the Iranian revolution, but it drove the Government and Sunni conservative milieux to regard the Shi'as as an Iranian fifth column. In 1984 a split occurred that gave birth to the more radical Tehrik-i Fiqh-i Jaafrya, under the leadership of Allama Syed Arif Hussain al Hussaini, who was assassinated in 1988, and replaced by Allama Syed Sajjid Ali Naqvi.¹³ This party was the only one to be recognized by Iran. It is clear that in Afghanistan as well as in Pakistan (and Lebanon), the radicalization of the Iranian revolution led to the same kind of radicalization and subsequent splits among the Shi'a communities.

An undercover armed branch appeared at the end of the 1980s, Sipah-i Muhammed or "Mohammed's Army", to fight its Sunni counterpart, the Sipah-i Sahaba. Attempts to bring together Sunni and Shi'a Islamists have been a failure, such as the call for a common umbrella organization, the Milli yekjehti Council ("Council of National Unity"), issued in 1994 by Qazi Husseyn Ahmad. According to a survey carried out by the Pakistani newspaper *The*

¹¹ See Esposito, J. (ed.), *Iranian Revolution, Its Global Impact*, Miami: Florida International University Press, 1990, pp. 179ff

¹² Western aid workers, Dushanbe, Personal interviews, September 2001

¹³ Rashid, A., Islam, the Great Divide, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 9 March 1995

News, in the worst year (1997), 118 Shi'as and 77 Sunnis were killed in sectarian violence, which clearly shows that the Shi'as have suffered more, both in absolute and proportional terms.¹⁴

It is important to note that Shi'a militancy in Pakistan arose against an official policy of islamization which was seen (rightly) as anti-Shi'a.¹⁵ The consequence is that the Shi'a militants have not been involved in anti-Western activities, although they regularly use Iranian-style rhetoric and stick to the official Iranian views concerning international relations. They are waging a defensive struggle to protect a minority, without any revolutionary dimension, although it led to some very bloody fighting between Shi'a and Sunni radicals, the main battlefields being the mosques of both communities.

It is clear that the Islamist ideology in both Pakistan and Afghanistan, both among the Sunnis and the Shi'as, has been drastically weakened in favour of ethnic, sectarian or national identities. The Jama'at-i Islami is the only Islamist party to remain active as such, but its actions have been put in the shadow by the neo-fundamentalist *jihadi* movements.

3 The Neo-fundamentalist Movements

3.1 The Madrasa Networks: The Deobandi School

Afghanistan and Pakistan are among the few countries in the contemporary Muslim world where an active development of rural *madrassa* took place during the twentieth century. These *madrassa* were not organized into a hierarchical teaching system. Their importance often depended on their director and on the money he could attract. These networks ignore national borders and refer to a common origin in British India. Some of these *madrassa* were linked with small fundamentalist groups, like the Ahl-i Hadith (People of the Hadith) movement, but the majority are linked with the Deobandi school of thought, which is dominant in northern Pakistan. This school of thought goes back to a Muslim reformist movement of the eighteenth century, whose figure-head was Shah Waliullah (1703-1762), his sons and grand-sons. In 1867 a *madrassa* was opened near Delhi, in Deoband.¹⁶ The movement advocated the purification of Islam from all alien influences, but represented also an interesting synthesis between orthodox Islam and the classical Persian culture (the Deobandi do not oppose literature or poetry, nor even Sufism as such, although they condemn the "cult of the saints", i.e. addressing prayers to others than Allah). Teaching was at the centre of the strategy of this reformist movement. Their basic creed is Sunni Hanafism. They also became more and more opposed to Shi'ism, which one of their contemporary representatives sees as "conspiring to convert Pakistan into a Shi'a state".¹⁷

In Afghanistan the reason for the development of the *madrassa* was probably the reluctance of traditional milieus to send their sons to government schools. Historically Afghanistan never had high-level *madrassa*. The *ulama* used to go to Bukhara (this was true for the North and

¹⁴ *The News* [Karachi], 19 January 1999

¹⁵ On the avowed anti-Shi'ism of Sunni militants in Pakistan, see Ahmad, M., *Revivalism, Islamization, Sectarianism and Violence in Pakistan*, in C. Baxter and C. Kennedy (eds), *Pakistan 1997*, Boulder CO: Westview Press, 1998

¹⁶ See Metcalf, B., *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982

¹⁷ See the Deobandi monthly *Al-Haqq*, Vol. 14, No 3, December 1979

until 1917), but more often to India. The efforts of the Afghan state to build modern Islamic institutions around the Shari'at Faculty of Kabul University (established in 1951 and whose staff was trained in Egypt) drew suspicion from the *ulama*. They stopped sending their students to India, which, for them, became an "infidel" state after 1947, and preferred Pakistan. Linguistic ties between the Pashtuns on both sides of the border strengthened the links, although teaching took place in Persian, Urdu and Arabic as well as Pashtu. The largest *madrasa* are probably the Haqqanya *madrasa* near Peshawar in Akora Khattak, headed by Senator Sami-ul Haqq, the present leader of a branch of the Jami'at-i Ulama-i Islam, and the *madrasa* of Binori Town in Karachi, which has provided many radical leaders (e.g. Masood Azhar).

After years of studies, graduate students, known as *mawlawi* in Afghanistan or *mawlana* in Pakistan, used to come back to their place of origin, either joining an already existing *madrasa* or founding their own. In Afghanistan these *madrasa* networks were strong in the area between Ghazni and Kandahar, the cradle of the Taliban. Some were to be found in the northern area (Northern Badakhshan). Trans-frontier connections were increased by the influx of Afghan refugees into Pakistan after the Soviet invasion. These *madrasa* were able to provide not only education, but also boarding school and sometimes a small stipend to the sons of poor refugees. Tens of thousands of young uprooted Afghans, mainly Pashtuns, were enlisted in these *madrasa* inside Pakistan and did provide many rank and file Taliban. In Pakistan, the crisis of the government educational system also led to a considerable increase in attendance at religious schools.¹⁸

But the main reason for the politicization and radicalization of traditional clerical networks in both countries has been the resistance war against the Soviet troops in Afghanistan and the policy of islamization from above led by General Zia after his take-over in 1977. The two events fuelled each other: the *jihād* against the communists gave not only a religious legitimacy to the Zia regime but also entailed important support from the West and specially the Americans. On the other hand, the same *jihād* transformed the different Islamic movements in Pakistan into patrons and channels of support for their Afghan counterparts. The war strengthened the already existing connections and accentuated the ideological dimension of the trans-frontier solidarities, albeit that these were also favoured by other kinds of connections (ethnic ties, or even business connections).

3.1.1 The Politicization of the Pakistani Madrasa Networks

The political expression of the Deobandi school is the Jami'at-i Ulama Islam, created in 1945, which has been firmly entrenched in Pakistani political life since the partition of 1947. Its present leader is Mawlana Fazl-ur Rahman (there is a recent break-away faction headed by Senator Sami-ul Haqq). But, until the 1990s, this party was a rather centrist movement, which did not support the policy of re-islamization pushed by General Zia-ul Haqq and instead allied itself with the PPP (Pakistan People's Party) of Benazir Bhutto (a rather secular movement). In the national elections, its performance has progressively declined from winning seven seats in the parliament in 1988 to just two in 1997.¹⁹ The radicalization of the Deobandi movement is not to be found in its own ideology, which has always been rather conservative.

¹⁸ Hayes, L. D., *The Crisis of Education in Pakistan*, Lahore: Vanguard Books, 1987

¹⁹ Talbot, *passim*

In Pakistan, the politicization was firstly a consequence of the development of the *madrasa* networks. The Zia-ul Haqq regime encouraged the development of the *madrasa* by granting official recognition of their diplomas, which allowed their graduates to enter government service.²⁰ In 1975 there were 100,00 seminary students, or *taliban* in Pakistan, in 1997 the number stood between 540,000 and 570,000, half of them in the Punjab.²¹ The islamization of the state apparatus (creation of “shariat courts”) was not sufficient to provide enough jobs for the graduate students, exclusively trained in religious sciences. This led to competition and over-bidding for islamization.²²

The second reason is the exploitation of the Pakistani religious militant networks by the ISI.²³ At the beginning (mid 1980s), this policy was not aimed at Afghanistan, where the ISI was directly handling the support for the Mujahedin (with some assistance from the Jama’at-i Islami), but at Iran and Kashmir. The objective was first to thwart any Iranian influence in Pakistan by weakening the pro-Iranian Shi’a movements: the armed anti-Shi’a organizations like the Sepah-i Sahaba benefited from some benevolence on the part of the security services, as illustrated by the impunity for the rampaging Sepah-i Sahaba militants in the Gilgit area (a Shi’a and Ismaili stronghold).²⁴ Likewise, during the early 1990s, the ISI shifted its support for the anti-India forces in Kashmir from the genuine Kashmiri nationalist militants of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, to the more Islamic and Pakistan-based Harakat-ul Ansar (see below), in order to keep its grip on the movement and to thwart any possibility of direct negotiations between India and the Kashmiris. Harakat-ul Mujahedin (the other name for Harakat-ul Ansar) and Lashkar-i Tayyeba became the main fighting groups in Kashmir after 1995, with the full support of the Pakistani army (whose chief of staff was General Musharraf, now Head of State).²⁵ They provided the bulk of the “volunteers” infiltrated by the Pakistani army into Kashmir, triggering the battle of Kargil in the spring of 1998.²⁶

In the wake of the disappearance of General Zia-ul Haqq (August 1988), the different religious movements assumed a more openly militant attitude. The first cause of this radicalization is to be found in the two neighbouring *jihads*: Afghanistan and Kashmir. Many *madrasa* students, seeing *jihads* as a religious duty, went on an individual basis to fight inside these two countries (like Riaz Basra, the founder of the Lashkar-i Jhangvi). They progressively organized themselves, often with the support of the ISI, and acquired military training and experience. But the radicalization slowly grew to entail a strongly anti-American attitude, which was not in tune with the Government’s official policy. It is possible to distinguish three steps in the gradual increase of anti-Western feeling: firstly, the Gulf War (1990-1991), which followed the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and the collapse of the

²⁰ Malik, S.J., Dynamics among Traditional Religious Scholars and their Institutions in Contemporary South Asia, *The Muslim World*, Vol. 87, No 3-4, July-October 1997

²¹ Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, *Annual Report 1997*, Lahore, 1998, p. 222

²² Rashid, A., Schools for Soldiers: Islamic Schools Mix Religion and Politics, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 9 March 1995

²³ See Rashid, A., *Taliban*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2000; Nasr, S.V., Islam in Pakistan, paper presented at CERI Colloquium on Islam, the State and the Rise of Sectarian Militancy in Pakistan, Paris, 13 December 1999; Naqvi, M. B., Creating a Monster, *Newsline* [Karachi], Annual Issue, 1996, pp 115-16

²⁴ *Monthly Herald* [Karachi], September 1992, p. 34

²⁵ *Washington Post*, 16 May 1994, hinted at the decision to step up support for Pakistan-based groups fighting in Kashmir

²⁶ See Abou Zahab, M., *Le radicalisme Islamique au Pakistan*, Paris: CERI, fc

Soviet Union, allowed anti-Americanism to replace anti-communism: the arrival of “infidel” troops on the soil of Mecca and Medina hurt the religious feelings of the “jihadis”, at a time when they thought that they had defeated the “infidel” in the shape of the Soviet Union; secondly, the bombing of Afghanistan by the US (August 1998) in retaliation for the destruction of two American embassies in East Africa unleashed open and violent support for the Taliban and Bin Laden against the USA; thirdly, the US military campaign in Afghanistan (October-December 2001) exacerbated the hatred of the US but entailed also a Pakistani government backlash against the more radical movements, thus breaking the previous uneasy alliance.

There have been many statements made, from 1998 onwards, showing the blurring of the differences between radical militants and conservative clerics, in favour of political radicalization and an anti-US fighting spirit. In September 1998 a declaration issued by the Sepah-i Sahaba pledged to fight “under the leadership of Osama Bin Laden”.²⁷ Mufti Nizamuddin Shamzay, the head of the famous Binuri *madrasa* in Karachi, said in 1999 that the US was “waging war on Moslems and that it was the duty of all Moslems to retaliate”.²⁸ On 13 June 2000 Fazl-ur Rahman, the head of the JUI, was compelled to repel an edict calling for the killing of Americans (apparently under government pressure).²⁹

The Pakistani radical religious networks are not closely connected and coordinated, but they use the same rhetoric and regularly gather huge rallies in the country’s big *madrasa* (usually in Lahore or in Muridke, a small town close to Lahore, or at Akora Khattak, near Peshawar), trying to present a united appearance and inviting foreign militant groups. In fact informal relations between former students of the same *madrasa* played the main role in coordinating and organizing: formal relations between parties always remained elusive. Regularly, from 1995 onwards, *madrasa* closed in order to allow their students to go to *jihad* in Afghanistan in support of the Taliban on occasions when they needed manpower, such as in August 1998, during their offensive in Northern Afghanistan, following a huge gathering at the Haqqanya *madrasa* in July 1998, in the presence of a Taliban delegation.³⁰

If one looks at these meetings, one can see that moderate and main-stream movements were acting jointly with radical and sometimes underground organizations. During the decade, these meetings became more and more anti-American, and, although they never criticized the government of the day, they tried to act as a pressure group. For example in January 2000 Sami-ul Haqq invited the following movements and leaders to a meeting at Akora Khattak: the leader of Jami’at-ul Ulama Pakistan (Mawlana Shah Ahmed Noorani), the leader of Jama’at-e-Islami (Qazi Hussain Ahmed), the leader of the JUI (F) (Mawlana Fazl-ur Rahman), the President of Sipah-e-Sahaba (Mawlana Azam Tariq), the leader of Jami’at-e-Ahli Hadith (Moheenuddin Lakhvi), the leader of Al-Ikhwan (Mawlana Mohammad Akram), the leader of Tehrik-e-Islami (Dr. Israr Ahmed), Mawlana Sufi Mohammad of Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat, General Hamid Gul (former ISI chief), Ejazul Haq, Mawlana Mufti Nizamuddin Shamezai, Mawlana Masood Azhar of Jaish-e-Mohammad, the leader of Harakat-ul Jihad (Mohammad Saeed), the leader of Harakat-ul Mujahedin (Mawlana Fazl-ur Rahman Khalil), Bakhat Zamin of Al-Bader Mujahedin, General Aslam Beg, the former Chief

²⁷ *Dawn* [Karachi], 15 September 1998

²⁸ Reuters, T. Ikram, Pakistan Scholar Says Fighting America is Moslem Duty, 21 August 1999

²⁹ *Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Report*, quoting Agence France Presse, 16 June 2000

³⁰ *The News* [Karachi], 12 August 1998

of Staff, and the leader of Jami'at-ul Mujahedin (Mufti Bashir Ahmed Kashmiri).³¹ On 10 April 2001 there was a demonstration of 200,000 people in support of the Taliban called by the Jami'at-i Ulama Islam.³²

3.1.2 The Ambiguous Relationship Between Pakistan's Government Officials and Extremist Parties

The ambivalence of these parties towards any ruling government in Pakistan is striking. On the one hand, they distrust the political establishment. But on the other they share the same goals that have been officially expressed by every government since General Zia: they consider Kashmir and Afghanistan as legitimate *jihad* , which should be supported, and they strive to make *sharia* the sole law of the country, as expressed by the Shariat Bill (1986) and by the amendment approved by the National Assembly on 9 October 1998, which made *sharia* the supreme law of the country.³³ In a word, the religious parties claim to support the same idea of Pakistan that the Government pushes forward, but to be more coherent and dedicated in implementing this program.

The religious parties were also used as a tool for fighting in Afghanistan and in Kashmir while avoiding direct Pakistani military intervention. After armed militias crossed the line of control between Pakistan and India in Kashmir (April 1999), a crisis erupted between the two countries. Under US pressure Islamabad accepted the withdrawal of the militias, thus admitting the connection between them and the army.³⁴ In Afghanistan the support of the Pakistani Army for the Taliban and the *jihadi* Pakistani groups has been documented, while the issue of direct Pakistani military presence is not clear.³⁵

This explains the close connections between the religious parties and the ISI or the military establishment. These connections previously tended to be revealed only after active generals went into retirement and thus regained their freedom of speech: General Hamid Gul, who headed the ISI between 1988 and 1989 (and hence was in close contact with Bin Laden), became, after the Gulf War, a vocal proponent of islamization of Pakistan and an opponent of the USA; he supported the Taliban on many occasions, for example declaring at a Deobandi rally, in 2001, that one should not "allow the West to destroy the Taliban", as the West hated the religious militia "for enforcing an Islamic code of life in Afghanistan".³⁶ He added in June: "India, US, the European powers, Russia and others are combined on one thing - that the spirit of Jihad [among the Kashmiri Muslims] is killed. They are united on one point - that the Muslims must not have nuclear power and their spirit of Jihad is killed."³⁷ Gul has been striving to unite the different religious movements in a coherent coalition by creating, in 1995, the Tehrik-i Ittehad (Movement of Unity).³⁸

³¹ *Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Report*, 30 January 2000

³² *New York Times*, 11 April 2001

³³ *New York Times*, 8 October 1998

³⁴ Declaration by Pakistani Foreign Minister Aziz on 11 July 1999. See *New York Times*, 12 July 1999

³⁵ Davis, A. Foreign Fighters Step Up Activity in Afghan Civil War, *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 1 August 2001

³⁶ United Press International, A. Iqbal, Muslim Radicals Flex Muscles, 9 April 2001

³⁷ *Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Report*, 25 June 2001

³⁸ Rashid, A., March of the Militants, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 9 March 1995

To sum up, the radicalization of the Pakistani conservative fundamentalist movements could not be understood outside the framework of the Government's regional strategy, based on three elements: the development of nuclear weapons, support for the *jihad* in Kashmir, and support for the Afghan Taliban. Policy in Kashmir and Afghanistan was made through proxies (the militant Islamist groups in Kashmir and the Taliban in Afghanistan), while the nuclear issue was under the direct control of the Government. But there are some indications that there could have been some direct connections between Pakistani nuclear scientists, intelligence officers and militant Islamic groups, including Al Qaeda, as indicated by a recent article by Steve Levine, according to which an organization called Ummah Tameer-e-Nau (UTN), used an ex-military officer to pursue a large agricultural project near Kandahar, Afghanistan. The officer recently obtained a senior position in a regional commission tasked with combatting government corruption. Moreover, the former head of Pakistan's military intelligence service, General Hamid Gul, says he was UTN's "honorary patron" and encouraged Pakistani businessmen to invest in UTN. General Gul saw the nuclear scientist, Dr. Bashiruddin Mahmood, in Kabul, the Afghan capital, in August - the same month when Dr. Mahmood is alleged to have discussed nuclear weapons with Osama bin Laden.³⁹ A failed Islamic plot among high-ranking officers (September 1994), headed by General Z. Abbasi, revealed years ago the extent of the islamization of the officer corps.⁴⁰

3.1.3 The Radicalization of Afghanistan's Clerical Networks

In Afghanistan, prior to the war against the Soviet occupation, a movement of politicization arose among *madrassa* students and teachers in protest against the perceived leniency of the monarchy towards the rising communist movement. When, on 22 April 1970, the leftist newspaper *Parcham* printed a poem by Barak Shafei praising Lenin by using religious terminology (*dorud* or "benediction"), the religious networks mobilized their students to demonstrate against the leftists. The so-called "Pul-i Khishti" demonstration (so called after a bridge in Kabul) was seen by many traditional clerics in Afghanistan as the first political mobilization of *madrassa* students and teachers.⁴¹ They were later to join the mainstream Islamic parties in Afghanistan: the Harakat-i Inqelab-i Islami of Nabi Mohammedi and to a lesser extent the Hizb-i Islami of Yunus Khales (a splinter group from the Hizb-i Islami of Hekmatyar).

The war against the Soviets had three consequences: politicization, "wahhabization", and the enlisting of a second generation of refugees in Pakistani *madrassa*. Most of the *madrassa* situated in rural areas between Ghazni and Kandahar turned into military "fronts", often called *jebhe-ye tolaba* (Taliban front). They usually joined traditional Pashtun fundamentalist parties: Harakat-i Inqelab-i Islami of Mohammed Nabi Mohammedi and Hizb-i Islami of Yunus Khales. They sometimes moved to more remote areas to avoid Soviet ground offensives. The ties with their Pakistani counterparts were maintained for the sake of getting money and weapons. Usually the Pakistani intelligence services (ISI), who were in charge of dispatching weapons, used the "clerical" networks to identify recipients and to establish links with them. But the war also carried with it an influx of Arab money, and specifically Saudi. The Saudis were eager to help the Mujahedin for two reasons: to fight communism, but also to undercut the Iranian influence among fundamentalist circles, playing on the traditional anti-

³⁹ Pearl, D. and S. Levine, Aftermath of Terror, Pakistan Has Ties to Nuclear Group Military State Had Vowed to Curb, *Wall Street Journal*, 24 December 2001

⁴⁰ *Herald* [Karachi], Annual Issue, January 1996, p. 89

⁴¹ Personal interviews with traditional clerics who had joined the Mujahedin movements in the early 1980s

Shi'a Deobandi bias. The Saudis also introduced a stronger *salafi* (strict fundamentalism) attitude, by for example campaigning against local traditional Muslim customs (like the flags put on tombs of Mujahedin or saints), and finally they were able to offer scholarships to go to the Gulf.

This “wahhabization” does not mean that the Deobandi school adopted new ideas and beliefs. It is more a question of attitude. In passing it should perhaps be noted that the term “wahhabi” had been used by the British to apply to any Islamic reformist coming back from Mecca in the nineteenth century, at a time when the Wahhabi in the strict sense of the term were not established in the Holy City. But this emphasis on “true Islam” and criticism of local customs, Shi'a beliefs, Western influence etc., played a role in radicalizing an already strict fundamentalism.

3.2 Militant Groups in Pakistan⁴²

The radicalization took the form of the creation of armed branches of the mainstream movements. JUI gave birth in 1985 to an armed branch, Sipah-i Sahaba, whose main target was the Pakistani Shi'as. Another radical group linked to the Deobandi is the former Harakat-ul Ansar, renamed Harakat-ul Mujahedin, which is very active in Kashmir. One of its former leaders, Masood Azhar, after being freed from Indian jail thanks to the hijacking of an Indian plane to Kandahar in December 1999, founded the Jaish-e Mohammad (Mohammed's Army). The Ahl-i Hadith founded a broader based movement, Dawat wal Irshad, whose military branch is Lashkar-i Tayyeba, active in Kashmir. The armed branches claim to be autonomous from the mainstream movements, while the latter could plausibly deny any involvement in armed action, in order to avoid dissolution and repression. The process of the successive creation of splinter groups also seems to express personal rivalries and ethnic divides, between Pashtuns, Punjabis and Muhajir. It might also be a way to blur the connections between armed groups, mainstream parties and the ISI.

Another pattern distinguishes the armed groups from the mother organizations: the leaders of the former are not *ulama*. They are young and are sociologically close to the Islamist militants of the previous generation.

3.2.1 The Radical Deobandi Networks

They are all offsprings of the JUI.

The Sipah-i Sahaba Pakistan (SSP - Army of the Prophet's Companions). Established in 1985 in the city of Jhang, the party is dedicated to fighting Shi'ism, which they consider as being outside Islam.⁴³ Given the fact that in 1985 the main threat for Muslim conservative states like Saudi Arabia was Iran, Saudi support seemed to have helped.⁴⁴ The assassination in 1990 of its founder, Mawlana Haq Jhangvi, led to a string of murders and random attacks against Shi'as, including many Iranian officials living in Pakistan, like Sadiq Ganji, the Iranian General Consul in Lahore (December 1990). The second leader, Haqq Nawaz Jhangvi,

⁴² Information on these movements based on Abou Zahab

⁴³ Rashid, The Great Divide

⁴⁴ Gardezi, H.N., Jihadi Islam: The Last Straw on the Camel of Pakistan's National Unity, paper presented at a conference organized by the World Sindhi Institute, Washington DC, 20 May 2000

was sentenced to death (March 1991)⁴⁵ and subsequently executed (February 2001) for the assassination of Sadiq Ganji, thus becoming an exemplary martyr. The two following leaders have been assassinated. The present leader (2001) is Mawlana Azzam Tariq (an ethnic Muhajir). The party's territorial basis is the district of Jhang, and the centre and south of the Punjab. The SSP also sent armed volunteers to fight alongside the Taliban in Afghanistan from 1998.⁴⁶ It seems to have given hospitality to Yousef Ramzi, convicted of the first bombing of the World Trade Center, just after the attack.⁴⁷ In both cases, it is clear that the SSP took a more internationalist approach than at the time of its creation.

Lashkar-i Jhangvi (LJ - Jhangvi's Army). A splinter group of the SSP, more radical, headed by Riaz Basra, a veteran of the Afghan war and a close associate of Haqq Nawaz Jhangvi. Created in 1994, it is known for targeting Shi'a leaders, intellectuals and professionals, whatever their political commitment, by using death squads. Not very numerous, it is one of the more violent groups. It was based in Kabul until the fall of the city in November 2001. The LJ has been accused by the Pakistani government of having instigated a failed terrorist attack on the then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in 1999.

Harakat-ul Mujahedin (HM - also Harakat-ul Ansar). Established in 1991 as Harakat-ul Ansar (Movement of the Auxiliaries) by Fazl-ur Rahman Khalil (a Pashtun) and Masood Kashmiri, by bringing together two previous movements (Harakat-ul Jihad and Harakat-ul Mujahedin), which were established by Pakistani volunteers going to Afghanistan in support of the Mujahedin, the HM is entirely devoted to supporting the neighbouring *jihad*, in Afghanistan and in Kashmir. A survey carried out in the summer of 2000 by a former US intelligence officer, Julie Sirrs, among the foreign militants captured by Commander Masood in north-east Afghanistan, shows that 39 per cent of the 113 prisoners were affiliated with the HM.⁴⁸ It has apparently been involved in attacks against Westerners in Afghanistan (the murder of a UN Italian officer in Kabul in August 1998). The party was put on the list of terrorist organizations by the US State Department as early as October 1997, and subsequently changed its name to Harakat-ul Mujahedin.

Jaish-e Mohammad (Mohammed's Army). Its founder, Mawlana Masood Azhar, a young Pakistani cleric, was a member of the HM jailed in India since 1994 for his activities in Kashmir.⁴⁹ On 24 December 1999, an India Airline plane was hijacked and subsequently landed in Kandahar; the hijackers obtained the freeing of Masood Azhar, who was protected by the Afghan Taliban and sent back to Pakistan where he set up the Jaish-e Mohammad in February 2000 in Karachi. Many members of the Harakat-ul Mujahedin and of the SSP seem to have joined on an ethnic basis (Punjabis followed Masood Azhar while Pashtuns stayed with Fazl-ur Rahman Khalil). The movement seems to have introduced suicide attacks as a pattern of fighting: on 25 December 2000 a young Muslim from Birmingham (Mohammed Bilal) committed a suicide bomb attack against Indian army barracks.⁵⁰ As a consequence of

⁴⁵ *Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Report*, 14 March 1991

⁴⁶ The author saw SSP tags and leaflets in the village of Istalif, in April 1999, after its recapture by the Northern Alliance troops.

⁴⁷ Ottaway, D., Retracing the Steps of a Terror Suspect, *Washington Post*, 5 June 1995

⁴⁸ Sirrs, J., *The Taliban's Foreign Fighters: A Report Prepared for the Committee for a Free Afghanistan*, Washington: Committee for a Free Afghanistan, 21 January 2001

⁴⁹ *New York Times*, 26 December 1999

⁵⁰ *Libération*, 26 December 2001

the role played by the Taliban in the hijacking, Masood Azhar has maintained close relations with them.

3.2.2 *The Non-Deobandi Religious Movements*

Sunni Tehrik (ST - Sunni Movement). This is the radical expression of the Barelvi school, the arch-rival of the Deobandi school in Pakistan, whose mainstream political expression is the Jami'at-i Ulama Pakistan (JUP), headed by Mawlana Noorani. The Barelvis, who are Sunnis, differ from the Deobandi by their quasi veneration for the Prophet Mohammed and their approval of Sufi celebrations. The head of the Sunni Tehrik was Mawlana Salim Qadri, assassinated in Karachi in May 2001. The ST is mainly fighting against the SSP, in a symmetric game where the two official political expressions (JUI and JUP) of the two competing religious schools of thought compete in elections, while their two armed branches fight against each other in the streets. The Sunni Tehrik has a militant student branch, Anjuman-i Tolaba-i Islam (Society of the Religious Students of Islam).

Ahl-i Hadith and Merkaz-i Dawat wal Irshad. Like the Deobandi and the Barelvi, the Ahl-i Hadith movement is firstly a religious school of thought, established during the nineteenth century as a puritan high class urban movement, which contests the Deobandi acceptance of traditional culture and literature (many Ahl-i Hadith claim to be *seyyed*, i.e. related to the Prophet Mohammed). They reject anything which they regard as not being strictly Islamic: in this sense, they are close to the Saudi Wahhabi, and are often dubbed "wahhabis" by their opponents.⁵¹ Like the Deobandis and Barelvis, the Ahl-i Hadith have created a political branch, but only in 1987: Merkaz-i dawat wal irshad (Centre for Preaching and Guidance). Based in a compound in Muridke, near Lahore, it gets support from Saudi Arabia and private Arab donors from the Gulf. This association is more involved in preaching and education than in politics per se (they do not run for elections). They are not numerous at all, if we compare with the two Jami'at-i Ulama, but in recent years they have developed an overall militancy reaching far beyond their usual urban and elite constituency. They have opened their own network of *madrasa*, where, contrary to the other non-governmental religious schools, they teach English (as well as Arabic). They claim to have 140 schools and 20,000 students. They organize an annual meeting in Muridke, inviting all the radical religious organizations of Pakistan as well as many foreign militant groups (Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Palestinian Hamas etc). But unlike their Saudi counterparts, the Merkez puts great importance on *jihad*, and has created an armed branch, the Lashkar-i Tayyeba (LT - Army of the Perfect). The Lashkar-i Tayyeba has been very active in the struggle against India: it attacked the Red Fort in New Delhi in January 2001 and has been accused of the attack against the Indian Parliament on 13 December 2001, although the organization has denied involvement.⁵² The leader is Mawlana Zaki ur-Rahman Lakhvi. The LT has encouraged the development of suicide attacks in Kashmir.

3.2.3 *The Neo-fundamentalist Emirates of the NWFP*

On both sides of the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, local tribesmen (usually Pashtuns) have occasionally put at their head a *ulama* who claimed that they were carrying out a direct transition from tribal administered districts to *sharia* administered territories. It is

⁵¹ See Metcalf, chapter 7

⁵² *Libération*, 27 December 2001

a good example of the way neo-fundamentalist groups in fact express traditional tribal identities.

The Tehrik-i Nifaz-Shariat-i Mohammadi (TNSM - Movement for the Implementation of the Shariat of Mohammed) was founded by Mawlana Sufi Mohammed in the Malakand agency among Pashtun tribesmen.⁵³ Violently anti-Shi'a, the movement campaigns for the replacement of local tribal law by the *sharia*, taking advantage of the abrogation by the Supreme Court of the special legal status of the tribal areas (despite the fact that the Court was in fact arguing in favour of the implementation of Federal Law). It became famous by blocking the Malakand Pass on 11 May 1994. The same phenomena appeared in the Khyber and Orakzay (Tehrik- Tolaba) agencies as well as in the district of Kohat.

These groups are very close to the Afghan Taliban: same ethnic basis, same tribal background, same opposition to any form of westernization and entertainment (they attack video shops, ban TV and music etc.). They have constantly praised and supported the Taliban and might provide support for Taliban and Al Qaeda militants fleeing Afghanistan after the US military campaign.

One should note, that on the Afghan side on the border, there are at least two such emirates: the Dawlat-i Islami (Islamic State) of Mullah Afzal, in Nuristan, among the Kati tribe, and the emirate of Mullah Jamil ur-Rahman in the Pech valley, among the Safi tribe. Both are linked to the Ahl-i Hadith movement and kept their autonomy relative to the Afghan Taliban.

3.3 The Afghan Taliban

The Taliban movement is the heir to most of the neo-fundamentalist movements in Afghanistan: most of its early members belonged during the war against the Soviet Army to the Harakat-i Inqilab and the Hizb-i Islami (Khales faction).⁵⁴ The Taliban did belong to the Deobandi networks of religious schools; they are Afghans, but most of them spent years in Pakistan in the Deobandi *madrassa*. In the early years of their rise to power, the Taliban were joined by many Pashtuns from different political backgrounds, who were eager to thwart the new power of the non-Pashtuns in Kabul, which was taken in April 1992 by a coalition of northerners, under the leadership of Masood. The Taliban embody two sets of logic: firstly, a neo-fundamentalism which is committed to implement the sole *sharia* and claims to bypass ethnic and national divides (hence the hospitality given to Bin Laden); secondly, a Pashtun legitimacy along a rather traditional pattern of uniting the tribes under a charismatic religious leader.

For the first time in Afghanistan, the religious leader chose to take the power for himself (Mullah Omar was designated Amir ol Momumin, or Leader of the Believers, in December 1995), but without building any real state apparatus. The contradiction between the two types of legitimacy has unravelled over the years. Instead of building a strong state, the Taliban leadership chose, or was driven by events, to sever all ties with the international community for the sake of protecting Bin Laden. This slow merging between Al Qaeda and the Taliban leadership was expressed by the radicalization of the Taliban after the year 2000: the

⁵³ Talbot, p. 339

⁵⁴ Maley, W. (Ed.), *Fundamentalism Reborn: Afghanistan and the Taliban*, London: Hurst, 1998; Rashid., *Taliban*

destruction of the Buddha statues, the obligation for Hindus to wear an identity mark, the arrests of Christian missionaries, etc. Internationalism overrode national interests.

The transnational connections have been particularly strong with Pakistan, due to the conjunction of three levels of common identity: fundamentalism, ethnicity and tribalism. The Pakistani government, without any ideological consideration, has constantly helped the Taliban: it was the government of Benazir Bhutto who helped them to emerge as a leading movement.⁵⁵ But the Taliban is the only example of a successful radical Islamic movement for which, after seizing power, national interests did not prevail over international solidarity. This explains the sudden fall of the Taliban: they were opposed by non-Pashtuns, but also by many Afghan Pashtuns who were antagonized by the supra-national preferences of the Taliban. Moreover, tribal patterns and customs were kept alive, under the veil of islamization. The campaign against America and the Northern Alliance had no ideological character for the Taliban rank and files: they negotiated and surrendered along traditional Afghan patterns of tribal warfare, unlike the Arab and Pakistani volunteers, who fought to death. Afghan national identity appeared to be very alive, but it worked against the Taliban. The defeat of the Taliban in Afghanistan is a clear sign of the decline of ideological Islam, whatever its forms, and it is unlikely to remain a significant factor in Afghan politics in the coming years.

4 The “Arab” Connection: Al Qaeda

Al Qaeda is not a genuine Afghan nor Pakistani organization, but has played a decisive role in the realignment and radicalization of the religious movements in both countries since 1996 (when Bin Laden completed the move from Sudan to Afghanistan). This organization is the offspring of the “Office of Services” (Mektab ul Khadamat) established in the early 1980s in Peshawar (Pakistan) by Abdullah Azzam, a Palestinian Muslim Brother with Jordanian citizenship. The scheme, supported by the Pakistani ISI, the Saudi Minister of Intelligence and the CIA, was to send Muslim volunteers to fight against Soviet troops in Afghanistan.⁵⁶ The project backfired after the Soviet withdrawal of February 1989: instead of being disbanded, the Arab volunteers kept going into Afghanistan, where they received training and fought first against the communist regime until its fall in May 1992, and then against Commander Masood. The movement turned anti-Western during the Gulf War. Azzam, who was assassinated in September 1989, in dubious circumstances, was de facto replaced by Osama Bin Laden, a young Saudi businessman of Yemeni descent, who wanted to enlarge the field of action of the Arab brigade beyond Afghanistan to include the whole Muslim world. Stripped of his Saudi nationality, he went to Sudan and Yemen, before returning to Afghanistan in 1996.⁵⁷

The majority of the volunteers came from Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Algeria. According to a report prepared by Bin Laden and published in 2000 by the *Frontier Post*, “a total of 2,359 youngsters from eight Arab countries had lost their lives during the Jihad. According to country-wide break-up, 433 young men from Saudi Arabia, 526 from Egypt, 184 from Iraq, 285 from Libya, 180 from Syria, 540 from Algeria, 111 from Sudan and 100 from Tunisia

⁵⁵ Rashid, *Taliban*, chapter 1

⁵⁶ On the origins of Al Qaeda and the Taliban see Maley, and Rashid, *Taliban*

⁵⁷ On the origins of Al Qaeda, see J. Miller and S. Liall, Hunting Bin Laden’s Allies, *New York Times*, 21 February 2001

were among the martyrs.”⁵⁸ Many leaders of the Egyptian Gama’at and Jihad organizations became refugees with Bin Laden (Ayman al Zawahiri, Mohammad Islambuli, Fuad Qassim, Mustafa Hamza, Ahmed Taha, Abou Zubeida and Sheykh Omar Abdurrahman and his two sons). In the opposite direction, many Arab volunteers returned from Afghanistan to their country of origin (where they were usually referred to as “Afghans”) to found radical Islamic organizations. In Algeria, many “Afghans” were among the founders of the FIS (Front islamique du salut), such as Said Mekhloufi, Kamareddin Kherbane and Abdullah Anas (Bujema Bunnua, son-in-law of Abdullah Azzam), for example.⁵⁹ They are even more numerous in the radical GIA (Groupe islamique armée), of which all the initial leaders came back from Afghanistan: Tayyeb el Afghani (killed in 1992), Jaffar el Afghani (killed in 1994) and Sherif Gusmi (killed in 1994). The editorial writer of the London-based GIA journal *Al Ansar*, Abu Messaab (a Syrian), and Abu Hamza al Misri (the Egyptian Mustafa Kamel), lived for a long time in Peshawar. In Yemen the founder of the “Islamic Army of Aden Abyan”, Sheykh Tariq al Fadli, is also an “Afghan”, as is the jailed opponent of the Saudi family, Abu Abdurrahman al Sarehi. In Jordan, the “Army of Mohammed”, responsible for terrorist attempts against churches and tourists, was also created by “Afghans” like Khalil al Deek. The group Abu Sayyaf in the Southern Philippines was also created by “Afghans” (Janjalani). In Northern Caucasus Amir Khattab (a Saudi and also a former “Afghan”) was instrumental in launching the second Chechen war in August 1999, by assisting the Chechen commander Shamil Basayev in attacking Dagestan. Most of the defendants in the trials concerning the February 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center and the attacks on the US embassies in East Africa in 1998, were also “Afghans” (Omar Abdurrahman, Ramzi, Salameh and Ajjaj in the case of the first, and Mohammed Saddiq Odeh, Mohammed Rashid Daoud al Owhali, and Wadih el Hage in the case of the second).⁶⁰

How does the Al Qaeda organization work? It was based on a hard core of militants from various countries who came into contact inside Afghanistan at the end of the 1980s, in particular at the “Lion’s Den” (Massada) camp, near Khost, which was attacked by Soviet troops in 1987. Bin Laden, Khattab, Abu Abdurrahman al Sarehi, Abu Zubayr Madani (later to be killed in Bosnia) and others fought in the same battle. Many among the activists involved in the new generation of radical Islamists in the 1990s came from this hardcore of activists. Bin Laden’s headquarters in Kandahar were staffed mainly by Egyptians, while “dynastic marriages” have strengthened the ideological connections: Bin Laden’s son married the daughter of his military adviser Abu Hafis al Misri. Such a mixing of “brother in arms”, ideological and matrimonial connections, going beyond ethnic and national identities, is typical of the Bin Laden network. A good example is the network around Abu Hamza al Mesri, an Egyptian preacher who heads the Finsbury Park Mosque in London: a former “Afghan” (he lost both hands due to a mine explosion), he was the mentor of a group of British Muslims who were caught in Yemen in December 1998 for planning to attack the British embassy; most of the members of the group were of Pakistani origin, including his own stepson. He has regularly issued declarations in favour of the Taliban and Bin Laden, is said to be a member of the Fatwa committee of Al Qaeda (though he has denied this), while

⁵⁸ Hussain, I. Osama Prepares List of Arab Martyrs of Afghan Jihad, *Frontier Post* [Peshawar], 13 October 2000

⁵⁹ Engelberg, S., One Man and a Global Web of Violence, *New York Times*, 14 January 2001

⁶⁰ For a detailed account of the international dimension of Bin Laden’s militants see the two cases studied in Miller and Liall; see also Ottaway; also United Press International, R. Sale, Anatomy of a Bombing Cell, 2 January 2001

being an active member of the London-based Al Muhajirun group.⁶¹ Multiple affiliations are common, although the initial links between the “Office of Services” and the Arab Muslim Brothers organization seem to have faded.

A new generation did appear after 1992: young activists, new in politics, came to Afghanistan for the sake of *jihad* but never fought against the Soviets nor the communists. They were no longer dispatched by the Pakistani ISI, nor by the Saudis, but came through different underground channels: the first step is usually a personal encounter with former “Afghans”, met in local mosques in a Western country, then a trip to Pakistan through religious Pakistani networks. After religious and military training, they were sent to fight against Masood or in Kashmir. Some of them came from Europe, second generation Muslims or converts. Other elements, particularly well integrated in Western society, are sent back to the West, to organize cells and eventually terrorist actions: the man responsible for this dispatching is a close aid to Bin Laden, Abu Zubaïda.

A good example of this new generation is Ahmed Ressay. Born in Algeria around 1972, he left for Marseilles around 1990, and there became an Islamist (not in Algeria). He had some links with the “Roubaix” Islamic activists who clashed with the police in 1996 in France. He migrated to Canada in 1996. He went to Afghanistan around 1998, through Abderraouf Hannachi, an Imam of a Montreal mosque who put him in contact with Abu Zubeïda. He was instructed to blow up Los Angeles airport, but was caught in October 1999, in Seattle, in a car loaded with explosives.⁶² Terrorists who committed the suicide attacks against the World Trade Center on 11 September 2001 seem to share the same profile: radicalization in Western Europe, travel to Afghanistan for training and back to the West to commit terrorist actions. This generation, however, is not connected directly with the Afghan and Pakistani struggle: they go there just for training.

Members of this new generation are no longer connected with the mainstream Islamist parties, travel extensively, migrate, acquire various citizenships and are usually educated. They are perfectly adapted to the “global” world, because they are the children of this world. Their alliance with the Taliban is firstly due to the close connections established by the first generation with the Afghan Mujahedin. Secondly they share with the Taliban many common ideas: implementation of *sharia* is the only way to establish an Islamic society, *ummah* is more important than nation-state (the Taliban demoted the Afghan state from the “Islamic State of Afghanistan” to the “Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan”), and they have the same perception of Islam being endangered by Christian and Jewish influences. Afghanistan probably provided the only possible safe haven: until 11 September Washington did not want a direct confrontation with the Taliban and hoped to rely on the Pakistanis to achieve the closure of the “terrorist” camps. But after 11 September the decision was made to ignore the Pakistani factor and to attack.

5 Conclusion: The Consequences of the 11 September and of the US Military Campaign

Bin Laden shares with the Taliban and the Pakistani religious movements some common views:

⁶¹ *New York Times*, 31 December 1998

⁶² Meyer, J., Terrorist Says Plan Did Not End with LAX, *Los Angeles Times*, 25 February 2000

- the rejection of any national and ethnic differences between Muslims in favour of the reconstitution of the *ummah*, that is the community of all believers. Not interested in establishing an Islamic society in a given state, their priority is to mobilize the whole *ummah*. In this sense they are the “Trotskyists” of Islamism, advocating “permanent revolution” instead of “building Islamism in one country”. This is why they appeal to uprooted, exiled or isolated elements.
- a call for *jihad* to free the *ummah* from non-Muslim encroachments. Their favourite battlefields are on the fringes of the Muslim world, where they perceive these encroachments as most severe (Bosnia, Kosovo, Chechnya, Central Asia including Afghanistan, Kashmir, The Philippines).

Nevertheless their political programme is very limited: implementation of *sharia* and *jihad*. They have no blue-print for an Islamic state and society, as did for example the Iranian Revolution. For them, to recreate a Muslim society simply presupposes the return to what they see as the true tenets of Islamic behaviour among the faithful.

In organizational terms, the connections between these movements are both loose and pervasive. There are two different nexuses, which are closely cooperating, but have a different history. On one hand, there is the Al Qaeda organization, headed by Osama Bin Laden, based in Afghanistan and staffed mainly with Arab nationals. On the other hand, there is a loose coalition of Pakistani religious movements, based in or around Lahore in Pakistan, which are recruiting and training volunteers to be sent to fight in Kashmir or in Afghanistan. Both networks also have a “Western” dimension in the sense that they recruit among Muslim immigrants living in Europe and in the US (and sometimes among converts). In any case, it is clear that what is happening in the area under consideration (Pakistan, Afghanistan) is connected with the radicalization of a fringe of second generation Muslims living in western Europe. Travel to Afghanistan has become an “initiation trip” for many of the radicalized youth living in Europe.

In this framework, the Afghan Taliban are not at the centre: their external connections go through the Arabs and the Pakistanis, according to religious, ethnic and government channels; they do not use any Afghan diaspora, and have no staff trained in external relations. They just provided an asylum for Al Qaeda and a training field for the Pakistani jihadists but were not at the core of the system.

The US military campaign destroyed the Afghan Taliban and Al Qaeda. Al Qaeda cannot work without being protected by some sort of state authorities: the survivors will leave the area or remain fugitives, without being able to operate against the West. But the Pakistani religious networks are still alive and well, although they are facing stronger repression from the Government, itself under pressure from the US and India. But these pressures will not lead to the destruction of the Pakistani religious networks, which are too pervasive, informal, and entrenched within the society. Even if the slogan of “shariatization” is not very popular among the bulk of the Pakistani population, Kashmir remains a national cause and it would be difficult to strike against all pro-Kashmir groups.

In parallel, the ethnic dimension of the religious networks (for instance the importance of the Pashtun connection) may trigger an expression of solidarity towards repressed extremist groups among Pashtun who are not necessarily religious extremists. NWFP Pashtuns are still

supporting the Taliban and will provide asylum to many fugitives. Whatever the development, religious radical movements will remain active in Pakistan.

Nevertheless the principal consequence of 11 September has been the decision of the Pakistani government, under US pressure, to break with the religious extremist movements, even if they still have sympathizers inside the ISI. General Musharraf has pledged to curb the radical movements. But it should be noted that, since early 1999, the Government has already been trying to repress the extremist movements, which were getting out of control. A list of 76 wanted terrorists was published at the time.⁶³ An initiative to change the curriculum of the private *madrassa* was announced in December 2001 (introducing English and sciences).⁶⁴ As shown by its attitude after 11 September, the Army remained a professional body, loyal to its former Chief of Staff, now Pakistan's Head of State. Connections still exist, intelligence may leak, but the Pakistani Army is not on the verge of a coup d'état against its own former Chief of Staff. If tensions with India do not lead to an armed confrontation, the Pakistani government should be able to resist the pressure of the religious extremist groups, but would have to reshape its policy towards Afghanistan (by engaging with the new Government), and probably towards Kashmir, by ceasing to fight India through religious extremist proxies.

⁶³ *The News* [Karachi], 4 March 1999

⁶⁴ *Le Monde*, 29 December 2001

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