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**ISLAMIST RADICALIZATION AND DEVELOPMENTAL
AID IN SOUTH ASIA**

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Countering Radicalisation through Development Assistance

In the spring of 2005 the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs called on the Danish Institute for International Studies to undertake a policy study on how to counter radicalisation through development assistance.

Despite growing interest in the field, very little research has yet been conducted. To expand the knowledge base, a number of subject matter experts were identified and asked to produce papers on select topics. Initially, the papers were intended to serve only as background material for the policy study. Due to considerable international interest it has been decided to publish the papers as DIIS working papers, making them available to a broader audience. All papers can be downloaded free of charge from www.diis.dk.

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The papers do not reflect the views of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs or any other government agency, nor do they constitute any official DIIS position. For more information on the policy study, please contact Michael Taarnby Jensen (mtj@diis.dk) or Louise Andersen (lan@diis.dk).

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Contents

Abstract.....ii

Introduction..... 1

India 8

Voluntary and Forced..... 9

Pakistan 10

Madrasahs..... 11

Bangladesh 13

Global Lessons 19

Developmental Aid and Islamist Radicalism..... 25

Abstract

This working paper explores the reasons commonly identified for the rise of political and radical Islam throughout the Muslim world. Besides Anti-American sentiment which is often attributed to U.S. support for Israel as well as American backing for hated repressive regimes, especially in the Middle East, the paper also looks at the radicalization of Asian Muslim communities. Regional conflicts have created large cadres of committed *Jihadis* and unresolved conflicts have likewise contributed to the growth of radicalism.

Which ever the case, the absence of ideological alternatives and the declining performance of the state in caring for its citizens is a major factor, which have been exploited by well-funded and organized radical groups. Western aid, as experience has shown in South Asia, has largely been used in terms of short-term security interests.

Introduction

Almost half of the world's Muslim population of approximately 1.3 billion is in Asia. Of the 10 countries in the world housing the largest national Muslim populations, seven (Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Turkey, Iran, and China, in that order) are located in this region; and the first four of them (Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India) hold as much as 40% of the Muslim world total.¹ South Asian Muslims form the single largest Muslim population in the world [Pakistan (population 160 million, 97% Muslim) Bangladesh (population 142 million, 83% Muslim) India has 138 million Muslims]. And this is bound to accelerate in the next decade or so.

Asia Population (in Millions)²

<i>Country</i>	<i>2002 Population Estimate</i>	<i>2020 Population Projections</i>
India	1.045.850	1.416.560
Pakistan	147.663	242.744
Bangladesh	133.377	180.658

It also pertinent to point out that by 2020 youth will constitute the predominant part of population in much of South Asia. Youth bulges are expected to be a significant factor in the stability analysis if one assumes that the trajectory of any terrorist movement rests on the susceptibility of the youth worldwide. In prognosis, Islam has enough young men - the pool of unemployed Arabs is expected to reach 25 million by 2010 - to fight a war during the next 30 years and due to mass migration to Western Europe, the worst of the war might be fought on European soil.³ By 2050, according to the latest UN projections, the population growth rate of the Muslim world will converge on that of the United States (although it will be much higher than Europe's or China's).⁴

¹ Robert Wirsing, Political Islam, Pakistan, and the Geo-Politics of Religious Identity, www.apcss.org/Publications/Edited%20Volumes/GrowthGovernance_files/Pub_Growth%20Governance/Pub_Growth%20%20Governance%20ch13.pdf.

² Source: http://www.mongabay.com/igapo/population_projections.htm.

³ Spengler, "The demographics of radical Islam," *Asia Times*, August 23, 2005. www.atimes.com/atimes/Front_Page/GH23Aa01.html.

⁴ Ibid.

At the outset it is necessary to mention that Islam is not a monolithic religion. Its adherents in South Asia and different parts of the world, and within each community, practice their core beliefs in diverse ways and there is considerable cultural, social and national heterogeneity among Muslims.⁵ However, notwithstanding the differences in ritual and even religious belief or practice, Muslims have a strong sense of belonging to one community – the *Ummah*.

Several reasons are commonly identified for the rise of political and radical Islam throughout the Muslim world.⁶ Anti-American sentiment among Muslims is often attributed to virtually unconditional U.S. support for Israel as well as American backing for hated repressive regimes, especially in the Middle East. The Middle East factors into Asian Muslim politics but there are other, more local, reasons for radicalization of Asian Muslim communities. The Afghan and Kashmir wars have created large cadres of *Jihadis* in Pakistan who have, until recently, been trained and supported by the state. After President Pervez Musharraf's decision to align Pakistan with the United States not all *Jihadis* are willing to accept the state's U-turn and are carrying on their Jihad in pursuit of their beliefs. Unresolved conflicts in southern Philippines and Indonesia feed radicalism in Southeast Asia in a manner similar to the role of the Kashmir issue in South Asia. But in each case, the absence of ideological alternatives and the declining performance of the state in caring for its citizens is a major factor, which then can be exploited by well-funded and organized radical groups.

In South Asia, a series of global events – the conflict over Kashmir, the first Gulf War, the crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Taliban in Afghanistan, the Palestinian conflict and the War on Iraq - have all contributed towards creating a global Muslim identity. Indeed, like the 9/11 hijackers were influenced by contemporary socio-political and economic realities, Muslims in South Asia have, undoubtedly, been affected by events in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Palestine, Kashmir, Chechnya, et al and tend to discern them from an Islamic identity. Within such an understanding, a perception that the Orient and Occident are necessarily opposed to each other and are irreconcilable is at the heart of Islamist radicalism. Indeed, there is in a certain sense an oversimplification and generalization that pervades contemporary Muslim understanding of the global world.

⁵ Husain Haqqani, "Islam in South Asia: Implications for U.S. Policy," Written testimony before the House Committee on International Relations' Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific, July 14, 2004.

⁶ Ibid.

Amidst the globalization process, poor economic conditions along with socio-cultural isolation have led to many among the Muslim youth being outside the spheres of civil society. It is primarily these sections that make an attempt to return to a more literal interpretation of Islam in the search for empowerment. And Islamist extremist groups lay great emphasis in influencing such susceptible minds and regrettably, have had much success within South Asia and in the immediate neighborhood. A vital facet of these groups is their strong emphasis on ideology with the members being motivated by divine command. The willingness of many youths to volunteer and carry out suicide attacks is a demonstration of the extent of radicalization.

The rise of religious extremism in South Asia and the Middle East is linked to, among others, four over-bearing factors: the absence in much of the Muslim world of democratic, accountable governments, and, indirectly related to this, disputes over contested territory; the failure of governments in some Islamic countries to address problems arising from rapid social, demographic, and economic changes in the last century; financial, logistical, and moral support provided by external actors; and the breakdown within Islam itself of *Ijtihad* – the established tradition whereby religious clerics independently interpret the Koran in order to apply Koranic law to diverse and changing circumstances.⁷

It is true that the average Muslim youth in countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, and among the Muslim population in India and elsewhere in South Asia has become increasingly politicized by radical Islam. The patterns, however, are remarkably dissimilar. While the Indian Muslim empathizes with the issues that affect the *Ummah*, he or she has stayed away from participating in the global *Jihad* currently being articulated by Osama bin Laden and local affiliates across the world. Indeed, within India, not a single non-Kashmiri Muslim has been arrested or killed since the dramatic escalation of the terrorist campaign in Jammu and Kashmir in 1990.⁸ India's success in contesting the movements of extremist Islamism is based largely on the tolerant, pluralistic Islam that has been embraced by the overwhelming majority of Muslims, and the relationship of stable accommodation with other Faiths that Islam has entered into within the context of a democratic, open and secular constitutional polity.⁹ It is useful to note that India is the rare exception in a world of intolerance,

⁷ Islamic Extremists: How Do They Mobilize Support?, Special Report 89, United States Institute of Peace, July 2002,

www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/sr89.html.

⁸ Interview with senior police officer, New Delhi, September 23, 2005.

⁹ K.P.S Gill, Speech at the First Annual Jerusalem Summit, October 12-14, 2003.

where every Faith that has been encountered has been embraced, and has evolved a *modus vivendi* with other belief systems.

Islamic identity is undergoing politicization across the globe and most certainly in Pakistan. But, the moot question is what drives and sustains radical Islam in Pakistan? Or how entrenched is radical Islam in Pakistan? President Pervez Musharraf had himself warned during an televised address to the nation on January 12, 2002 that the greatest danger facing Pakistan came not from outside, but from Pakistan's own home-grown Islamist radicals – “a danger,” he said, “that is eating us from within.”

Given Pakistan's immense significance in the GWOT, its own radicalization warrants a detailed scrutiny. In the analysis on Pakistan presented to the Bush administration in its first weeks in office by The Rand Corporation, it warned that “the most disturbing of these trends [in Pakistan] has been the growth of Islamic extremism. Extremist groups thrive because of Pakistan's continuing state failures and because they are intentionally supported by the Pakistan military and secret services in the pursuit of the latter's goals in Kashmir and Afghanistan.”¹⁰ In Pakistan, the military and intelligence services tightly control political space. For years, the Pakistani State recruited and trained religious radicals in pursuit of its strategic ambitions in Afghanistan and Kashmir.¹¹ Pakistan's Islamists made their strongest showing in a general election during parliamentary polls held in October 2002, securing 11.1% of the popular vote and 20% of the seats in the lower house of parliament. Since then, they have pressed for Taliban-style Islamization in the North West Frontier Province and Balochistan bordering Afghanistan, where they control the provincial administration. Because of their ties to the military, initials of the alliance of religious parties Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal – MMA – are often referred by critics to mean the Military Mullah Alliance. The ratio of its population living below the poverty line (31% of total population in 2003) is increasing, adding to the pool of disaffected youth searching for simple answers to complex questions and therefore likely candidates for recruitment to radical causes.¹²

¹⁰ Frank Carlucci, Robert Hunter and Zalmay Khalilzad, *Taking Charge: A Bipartisan Report to the President Elect on Foreign Policy and National Security*, RAND Corporation, 2000, p. 57.

¹¹ Haqqani, *Islam in South Asia: Implications for U.S. Policy*, Written testimony before the House Committee on International Relations' Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific, July 14, 2004.

¹² *Ibid.*

The networks and support structures of Islamist terrorism in South Asia have been painstakingly constructed through the Pakistan-Afghanistan arc - with strong historical linkages in training and 'battle inoculation' to the Al Qaeda/Taliban combine - backed by enormous flows of financial support from West Asia and from affluent expatriate Muslim communities in the West, in a sustained strategy of 'erosion, encirclement and penetration'.¹³ The essential elements of the staged process that commences with the creation of a recruitment base and ends in the deployment for terrorist action or support activity include:

A 'hardening' of Islam through a distortion of the relatively pluralistic practices of South Asian Muslims – a process of “religious mobilisation and an extremist Islamist reorientation”¹⁴ that may extend over decades before it is translated into violence. The transformation of the mosque and the *madrassa* (seminary) into 'schools of hate'¹⁵ has been the primary – though not exclusive – instrumentality of this mutation.¹⁶ This involves a sustained and “vicious process of the demonisation of all other Faiths and nations among the people of Islam,”¹⁷ and is constructed out of a triad of ideological concepts: the transnational Islamic *ummah*, *khilafat* and *jihad*. The transfer of populations and demographic destabilisation – both externally induced and natural – has been powerful complementarities in these processes.

The second stage of this process is the mobilisation of motivated Islamist cadres for political action, and for support activities to existing terrorist operations, both in present areas of such operation as well as in all potential areas of expansion. Such potential areas are conceived, within the pan-Islamist perspective, to comprehend all concentrations of Muslim populations, wherever these may be located.

¹³ Ajai Sahni, “South Asia: Extremist Islamist Terror & Subversion,” in *The Global Threat of Terror: Ideological, Material and Political Linkages*, K.P.S. Gill and Ajai Sahni, eds., New Delhi: ICM-Bulwark Books, 2002, pp. 181-239.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Jessica Stern, “Pakistan’s Jihad Culture,” *Foreign Affairs*, New York, November/December 2000, Also at <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/issues/0011/stern.html>.

¹⁶ See, for instance, Chandan Nandy, “Report: Illegal madrassas along Bengal border,” *The Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, February 7, 2002. This is part of a spate of disclosures following the attack on (January 22, 2002) security personnel guarding the United States Information Centre (USIS) at Kolkata. The mosques and *madrassas* were, in nearly all cases, funded by financial flows from the Jeddah-based Islamic Development Bank, and included a total of 208 *madrassas* and 458 mosques in ten districts on the Indo-Nepal and Indo-Bangladesh borders.

¹⁷ Sahni, “South Asia: Extremist Islamist Terror & Subversion,” p. 205.

The third stage involves exfiltration and training of such cadres for terrorist operations – in the past, primarily in Afghanistan and Pakistan. These processes now continue, currently at a less visible and scaled down level, in camps in Pakistan, Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) and in Bangladesh.

The fourth stage involves the infiltration of these cadres back into the target communities, either for immediate terrorist operation in ‘active’ theatres, or for the creation of cells that engage in consolidation activities, further recruitment, the build-up of arms and ammunition caches, financial mobilisation, propaganda, the creation of ‘front organisations’ that engage in legal and political activities based on an exploitation of the institutions and processes of democracy to undermine democracy, or as ‘sleepers’, awaiting instructions for deployment and terrorist action.

The principal organizations directly engaged in the process of Islamist radicalization and terrorism in South Asia include.

Groups Based in Pakistan

Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM)
Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT)
Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HuM)
Harkat-ul-Jihad Islami
Al Badr
Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM)
Muttahida Jihad Council (15 constituent members)
Dawood Ibrahim (Organised Crime – Islamist Group)
Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP)
Sipah-e-Mohammed Pakistan (SMP)
Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ)
Al-Rashid Trust
Rabita Trust
Ummah Tamir-e-Nau
Jamaat-Ulema-e-Islam (Fazlur Rahman faction)
Jamaat-Ulema-e-Islam (Samiul Haq faction)
Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (TNSM)

Groups Based in Nepal

Jamaat-e-Millet-e-Islamia (Nepal)
Nepal Islamic Yuva Sangh

Groups Based in India

Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI)
Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen
Muslim United Liberation Tigers of Assam (MULTA)
Muslim United Liberation Front of Assam
Muslim Security Council of Assam
Muslim Volunteer Force
Muslim Liberation Army
Muslim Security Force
Islamic Sevak Sangh
Adam Sena
United Muslim Liberation Front of Assam

Groups Based in Bangladesh

Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islamia (Bangladesh)
Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS)
Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB)
Jama’atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB)
Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh
Adarsa Kutir
Al Faruk-Islamic Foundation
Hataddin

These groups, however, do not exhaust the range of organizations that are implicated in the ‘staged processes’ of recruitment. A number of other organizations, not directly involved in

terrorist activities – and often publicly proclaiming their condemnation of terrorism – have been deeply instrumental in the early stages of the ‘hardening of Islam’ and the ‘mobilization of Islamist cadres for political action.’ These activities, undertaken over extended periods of time, have crucial significance in preparing the ideological orientation that lends itself to eventual terrorist mobilization, and have been integral to recruitment in all theatres of current Islamist terrorist activity in South Asia. Some of the organizations involved in such activities prominently include:

Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan
Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh
Jamaat-e-Ulema Pakistan
Jamaat-e-Ulema Bangladesh
Tablighi Jamaat (with chapters and activities across South Asia)
Ahl-e-Hadis (with chapters and activities across South Asia)
Hizb ut-Tahrir (with chapters and activities across South Asia)
Deendaar Anjuman (India)
All Parties Hurriyat Conference (Jammu and Kashmir)
Jamaat-e-Tulba (Pakistan and Bangladesh)
Jamaat-ul-Muderessin (Bangladesh)
Islamic Shasantantra Andolan (Bangladesh)
Islami Oikya Jote (Bangladesh)

Further, a wide range of mosques and *Madrassas* (seminaries) across the region, though most drastically in Pakistan and Bangladesh, have been penetrated or taken over by hardline Islamists, and are used as primary locations for ideological motivation and recruitment by extremist and terrorist groups. While, in the Pakistani and Bangladeshi case, many thousands of these have actually established centers of training for terrorism and concentrations of terrorist cadres and command and control systems, in other parts of the sub-continent, this process has not gone as far. Nevertheless, these religious centers are integral to the strategy of the Islamist terrorists, as they often are for the support structure of their other activities. Their role is complemented directly by terrorist actions to shut down secular educational institutions, a pattern that has been widely noticed in all areas of terrorist activity, including Jammu and Kashmir. This enormously widens the potential recruitment base for Islamist terrorism, as it pushes increasing numbers of children into the only surviving educational and ‘social’ institutions in many rural areas – the seminary and the mosque.

Individuals join extremist groups for a number of reasons: the desire to promote specific political goals; in response to a variety of financial, spiritual, and emotional incentives; individuals who, regardless of their social class or economic background, feel they have been humiliated and treated as “second class” by government authorities and others.¹⁸

India

Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) has been the primary target of radical Islam in South Asia. During the initial phase (early 1989-1993) of terrorism in J&K, the radical agenda was largely localized with groups like the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) and Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM) mobilizing cadres from local populations. The ‘lead institutions’ for the recruitment and political mobilization of the terrorist cadres were some of the mosques across the State, and a sustained, virulent and escalating campaign of hatred had brought the State to the brink in December 1989. Later, with the JKLF eschewing violence, the HM became, for a long period, the only local *jehadi* group active in J&K. Over time, however, Pakistan began to regard these local groups as ‘unreliable’, since neither group declared itself in favour of Kashmir’s merger with Pakistan, and the Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI) created a succession of Pakistani-dominated groups operating in J&K. This led to the phase of foreign terrorists dominating the ‘movement’ in the State.

A look at the comparative figures of local and foreign terrorists in J&K provides an insight into the level and patterns of radicalism. The penetration of foreign terrorists in J&K was co-terminus with Pakistan’s nurturing and continued support to the erstwhile Taliban militia in Afghanistan. Around the same time, the Al Qaeda had established its headquarters in Afghanistan and a substantially large section of the cadres of various *Jehadi* groups active in J&K were trained in Pakistan and Afghanistan and saw action in these theatres.

Notwithstanding their overwhelming foreign component, terrorist groups active in J&K, prominently, including the HM, Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), Harkat-ul-Jehadi-e-Islami (HuJI), continue to recruit locally in J&K.

¹⁸ Islamic Extremists: How Do They Mobilize Support?, Special Report 89, United States Institute of Peace, July 2002.

Foreign terrorists arrested and killed in J&K

	1991-94		1995		1996		1997		1998		1999		Total	
	Arrest	Killed	Arrest	Killed	Arrest	Killed	Arrest	Killed	Arrest	Killed	Arrest	Killed	Arrest	Killed
Pakistan/PoK	49	80	22	28	6	44	8	55	16	103	9	73	110	383
Afghanistan	6	122	0	39	5	48	10	38	1	24	0	8	22	279
Egyptian	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Sudanese	0	3	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Yemen	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	4
Lebanese	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	2
Bahrain	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1
Tajikistan	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	2
Uzbekistan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Turkish	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Nigeria	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Iran	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bangladesh	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	3	1
Algeria	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Saudi Arabia	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
UK	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Nepal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Iraq	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Other	0	32	0	50	2	97	0	162	0	263	0	90	2	694
Total	60	243	22	120	13	192	20	260	18	393	9	171	142	1379

Source: Institute for Conflict Management, New Delhi

VOLUNTARY AND FORCED

Both, voluntary and forced forms of recruitment into the ranks of extremist Islam occur.

However, according to official sources and an analysis of the media reportage between 2001-2003, voluntary recruitment has decreased considerably in J&K. Voluntary recruitment was at its highest during the early phase of Islamist violence in the State, when local groups like the JKLF and Hizb-ul-Mujahideen were active.

The basis for voluntary recruitment into the *jehadi* ranks is often ideological (religious convictions regarding the need for *jihad* and the 'threat to Islam'), as well as a range of personal factors such as revenge for the death/injury/rape of a family member, oppression (perceived or otherwise) by the Indian state, particularly the armed forces, personal enmity or disputes, low self-esteem and frustration, machismo and the cult of the gun, as well as the significant financial rewards. The promise of a certain amount of money to the family of the recruit in the event of death is also a motivating factor for recruitment.

Voluntary recruitment is also linked to indoctrination. Rajinder Singh Bhullar, a senior Border Security Force (BSF) officer in Kashmir, said in October 2001 that the main reason for youngsters' response to a call to arms is that they "have seen nothing but bloodshed in the valley."¹⁹ According to him, it's easy to indoctrinate them because they grew up with militancy. Voluntary recruitment is also, in some measure, fuelled by the ongoing crisis in J&K's agricultural economy. According to Praveen Swami, although reforms carried out during the regime of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah created an egalitarian ambience in the countryside, population growth made small holdings simply unable to sustain the sons of the first generation of land-revolution beneficiaries.²⁰ In an economy where little forward movement is under way to create rural industries, the younger sons have only hard-to-find Government jobs to look to. However, the dynamics of the ongoing recruitment go far beyond a simple linkage with the status of the rural economy.

Cultural factors also play a significant role. Apart from the active mobilization on religious grounds, for many teenagers, the romance of 'waging *jihad*' for a supposedly righteous cause also offers liberation from a life with little hope for the future. "I've come across cases," says Bandipora Deputy Superintendent of Police Khalid Madni, "where the Pakistani terrorists in the mountains give kids Rs. 500 and ask them to purchase something trivial, like a few packets of cigarettes or some batteries. They let them keep the change. Romance, escape from school, money, what more could a kid want?"²¹ Hindi film machismo, wrote Pakistani analyst Mohammad Amir Rana, was the inspiration for many *Jihadi* recruits; the *Jihad* itself was an opportunity to put it into practice.

Pakistan

Through the decades of the 1980s and 1990s, the entire process of recruitment for Islamist 'jihad' was directly planned, funded, controlled and overseen by the official establishment in Pakistan, particularly the Army and its intelligence wing, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). Such support and control continues, though, in the hostile post-9/11 environment, it has been driven deep underground. Several terrorist groups have, however, evolved independent capa-

¹⁹ "Jihad the new obsession for J&K youth," *The Statesman*, Delhi, October 30, 2001.

²⁰ "Jihad's child warriors," *Frontline*, Chennai, Vol. 20 No. 20, September 27 - October 10, 2003.

²¹ Ibid.

cities for operation and recruitment and are no longer dependent on state support, and some of these are actively hostile to the state and its present regime under President Pervez Musharraf.

MADRASSAS

With active Government support in the past, and no regulation even now, a conservative hardline Islamist thinking dominates the *Madrassas* of Pakistan, transforming them into a breeding ground for terrorists. Many of these *Madrassas* are directly engaged in terrorist training as well. The Taliban originated in the *Madrassas* of Pakistan. The Darul Uloom Haqqania near Peshawar in the North West Frontier Province, patronized by Maulana Samiul Haq, who heads a faction of the Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam, has allegedly served as a training ground for terrorists now in Jammu and Kashmir and Central Asia, and those belonging to the Taliban militia. The Maulana and his 3,000 students proudly call it “the University of Jihad.” Its alumni included at least eight senior Taliban leaders, and reportedly Mullah Omar used to send a personal message to every graduating class until his regime’s collapse.

- The exact number of *Madrassas* is not known. President Pervez Musharraf has put their number at 10,000 – by all independent accounts an understated figure. *Herald* in its November 2001 edition says: “According to the Interior Ministry, there are some 20,000 madrassas in the country with nearly 3 million students.” In 1947, West Pakistan had only 245 seminaries and by 1988, they increased to 2,861. Between 1988 and 2000, this increase comes out to be 136%.²² According to Jessica Stern, there are an estimated 40,000 to 50,000 *Madrassas* in Pakistan.
- Most prospective students start when very young. Many students come from impoverished families, unable to feed and educate them. In addition to educating them in the extremist Islamist ideology, these schools house, feed and clothe them and, perhaps most significant, isolate them from the outside world and any views not offered by their instructors, who are never challenged or questioned. Students and their families, of course, generally consider admission to the schools a blessing, a chance to escape from a mind-numbing life of extreme poverty, and graduation usually is a source of pride as well as a guarantee of lifelong employment.

²² Khaled Ahmed, “Madrassa: Islamic Rejectionism and Terrorism,” *South Asia Journal*, October-December 2005, p. 35.

- After admission to a *Madrassa*, students (only males are admitted) start by memorizing the Quran. The youth then spend years learning to interpret the Quran and the Hadith – the sayings of the prophet Muhammad. There is little or no other education and students do not study history or math, science or literature. Of current events, they learn only what their teachers tell them, and this is deeply coloured by their Islamist extremist ideology. They have no access to the variety of television, radio, newspapers or magazines. Most of the *Madrassas* in Pakistan teach the rigid version of Islam adopted by the Taliban. It is a brand of Islam that keeps women unschooled and largely unseen, that stones adulterers and bans music, television and the flying of kites or balloons. More significant, the brand of Islam taught in Pakistan’s madrasas calls for a perpetual *jihad*, or holy war, against non-Muslims.
- Some schools provide far more than recruitment services, providing safe havens, training centers, supply depots and clandestine meeting sites. In September 2003, for instance, Pakistani security forces raided a *Madrassa* in Karachi, detaining more than a dozen Indonesian and Malaysian students, including Rusman Gunawan, younger brother of the notorious South East Asian al Qaeda lieutenant, Hambali.

Jessica Stern notes that, in Pakistan, when a boy becomes a ‘martyr’, thousands of people attend his funeral. Poor families become celebrities. Everyone treats them with more respect after they lose a son, a martyr’s father said. “And when there is a martyr in the village, it encourages more children to join the *jihad*. It raises the spirit of the entire village,” he added. In poor families with large numbers of children, a mother can assume that some of her children will die of disease if not in war. This apparently makes it easier to ‘donate’ a son to what she feels is a just and holy cause.

It is useful to note, however, that the *Madrassas* are not alone in producing terrorist alumni. A significant number of students and graduates from the state-run educational system are also attracted to the extremist *jihad*, and join various terrorist groups. Though these schools do not directly support recruitment or terrorist activities, their Government-prescribed curricula include a substantial component of extremist religious ideas that create the bases and mindset that lends itself to subsequent mobilization by the *jehadi* groups.

The principal strategy pursued by Islamist extremists in Pakistan seeks to “capture” civil society institutions, such as educational institutions and the media, in order to eventually

capture the state.²³ This strategy recognizes that the Pakistani state and secular elite are fragile. Authoritarian and inadequate in providing even the most basic services to the deprived, the Pakistani state now focuses its resources primarily on foreign debt servicing and military expenditures. Indeed, argues Mustapha Kamal Pasha, a leading factor in the rise of religious extremism in Pakistan is the decline of the “developmental,” service-oriented state. Pakistan’s mainstream education is in an appalling condition and a 1997 survey informed that only 57% of the citizens of school-going age were registered, 90% of whom were in the state-owned schools where 20% of the teachers did not attend and 60% of the pupils dropped out before completing primary school.²⁴

Bangladesh

Bangladesh is increasingly recognized as the locus of a significant and expanding threat emanating from radicalized Islamist extremist mobilization and its systematic transformation into political and terrorist violence.²⁵ It has, for some time now, been an established staging post for terrorism within the region, and is seen as a potential centre of Islamist consolidation for the ‘global jihad’ as well – despite repeated and vociferous official denials.

Worse, these processes are rooted in an entrenched political dynamic that has progressively diminished the space for secular or moderate politics in the country. Given the polarization and extreme hostility between the two dominant political parties in Bangladesh, and the near complete split down the middle in voting patterns, the Islamist parties have become central to the processes of Government formation in the country, and have gradually expanded their political presence as well. These trends have been compounded further by the combination of religious mobilization, intimidation and extremist violence that these radical parties and their armed fronts engage in, as well as their very wide and expanding presence in the social sector,

²³ Islamic Extremists: How Do They Mobilize Support?, Special Report 89, United States Institute of Peace, July 2002.

²⁴ Khaled Ahmed, “Madrasa: Islamic Rejectionism and Terrorism,” *South Asia Journal*, October-December 2005, p. 40.

²⁵ See Kanchan Lakshman, “Islamist Extremist Mobilization in Bangladesh”, Jamestown Foundation. <http://jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2369724>.

particularly education. Given these broad trends, the scope for any reversal of the Islamist extremist consolidation in Bangladesh has shrunk progressively.

It is necessary to understand the dynamic of these processes, as well as to make an objective assessment of their real and potential threat, both in terms of internal stability and external security. Firstly, what are the real dimensions and magnitude of the threat of Islamist extremist mobilization in Bangladesh? The coastal area stretching from the port city of Chittagong south through Cox's Bazaar to the Myanmar border, notorious for piracy, smuggling and arms-running, is the principal area of activity of the Harkat-ul-Jehadi-e-Islami Bangladesh (Movement of Islamic Holy War, HuJI-BD), which is a member of Osama bin Laden's International Islamic Front and a designated terrorist outfit in many countries, including the United States.²⁶

Further, the Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB or Awakened Muslim Masses), a vigilante Islamist group, is reported to have created strong bases mostly in northwest Bangladesh, in the districts of Rajshahi, Satkhira, Naogaon, Bagerhat, Jessore, Chittagong, Joypurhat, Natore, Rangpur, Bogra, Chittagong, and Khulna.²⁷ Elsewhere, the Jama'atul Mujahideen (Party of the Mujahideen) is training small groups of youths for Jihad in the northern districts of Natore and Bogra, one in the southwestern district of Chuadanga and another in the mid-eastern border district of Chandpur. It also has a network in the Shaghata, Sundarganj and Sadullapur areas of Gaibandha district as also in Rajshahi district and parts of Khulna city.²⁸

Prof. Abu Sayeed, in his two books, *Aghoshito Juddher Blueprint* (Blueprint of an Undeclared War) and *Brutal Crime Documents*, claims that around 50,000 militants belonging to more than 40 groups are now controlling a vast area of the country, with assistance of ruling coalition partner Jamaat-e-Islami and a section of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).²⁹ Sayeed also says over 50 camps are now in operation across Bangladesh, where Islamists are getting military training and that militant groups have their recruits in all sections of the society, including mosques, seminaries, educational institutions, secretariat, judiciary, mass media and even the armed forces.

²⁶ Profile of Harkat-ul-Jehadi-e-Islami, South Asia Terrorism Portal, www.satp.org.

²⁷ Profile of Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh, South Asia Terrorism Portal, www.satp.org.

²⁸ Sharier Khan, "Bangladesh New Battleground for Jihad," www.oneworld.net/article/view/66160/1/?PrintableVersion=enabled.

²⁹ "Cops seize books from Abu Sayeed's house," *The Daily Star*, Dhaka, February 19, 2005.

The prevailing socio-political dynamics lend themselves to the consolidation of Islamist extremism in the country. For instance, the JMJB is believed to have exploited the countryside's abhorrence towards left-wing extremism to spread radical Wahhabism among the rural populace and in the process also emerged as a significant force to be reckoned with. The group's rapid spread has been primarily through an assumption of the role of 'protector' in areas of widespread mal-governance, support of local administration and the linkages and claims of contact with the Al Qaeda-Taliban combine. Taking recourse to a policy of appeasement, the Khaleda Zia regime has remained largely indifferent to the growing power and clout of such radical Islamist groups.

The opposition Awami League (AL) in a 74-page report titled 'Growing Fanaticism and Extremism in Bangladesh: Shades of the Taliban' (released on February 13, 2005) has documented the rise and expanse of Jihadi groups as well as the politics of vendetta.³⁰ In what is probably the first detailed documentation of Islamist extremism by an internal source in Bangladesh, the AL report mentions at least 34 bomb blasts between 1999 and February 2005, in which 164 persons died and 1,735 people sustained injuries. A deeper scrutiny of these blasts reveal that, while there were only 13 bomb blasts between 1999 and 2003, year 2004 alone saw 13 such attacks, and there have been eight blasts in the first two months of the current year. Eight of the 34 bomb attacks documented by the report have targeted the AL; nine were detonated during cultural functions; and five occurred at religious shrines, including the one in the shrine of Hazrat Shahjalal in Sylhet on May 21, 2004, in which the British High Commissioner was wounded.

A sharp polarization of the country's polity has meant that while the Government looks to maintain an 'electoral balance', the Islamist extremists seek to broaden their base. This is crucial and is expected to continue, considering the past trajectory. In the October 2001 Parliamentary elections, the ruling BNP secured 40.97% of the votes, with its coalition right-wing parties, Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh securing 4.28%, and the Islami Oikyo Jote (Islamic Unity Council, an alliance of seven radical Islamist groups) winning 0.68%. At the other end, the opposition AL received 40.13% of the vote; indicating the electoral bipolarity with the

³⁰ "Growing Fanaticism and Extremism in Bangladesh: Shades of the Taliban," Official Website of the Awami League, www.albd.org/aldoc/growing/growing.fanaticism.pdf.

radical Islamist parties tilting the balance in favour of the BNP.³¹ It is this battle for ‘electoral balance’ between the BNP and AL that is being exploited by the Islamist extremist groups.

According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), the Bangladeshi Government is succumbing to pressures from Islamist extremist groups and aligning itself with those perpetrating acts of discrimination and violence against minority communities.³² There are dangers of an entire new generation of young people being weaned away towards fundamentalism. In its 45-page report, ‘Breach of Faith: Persecution of the Ahmadiyya Community in Bangladesh’, HRW has documented a campaign of violence and intimidation unleashed by, among others, the Khatme Nabuwat - an umbrella group of Sunni Muslim extremists - against the Ahmadiyya community.³³ The coalition Government has not only failed to prosecute those responsible for the violence but has also acquiesced to the banning of Ahmadiyya publications, one of the demands of the extremists. Parties such as the Jamaat-e-Islami and Islamic Okye Jyote, who are part of the ruling coalition, have been vigorously campaigning that Ahmadiyyas should be officially declared as non-Muslim.

The extremists and the present Government are in unison in preventing the international community from discerning such a process of radicalization and thus are in a regular denial mode. Although no exact data is available, many expect that when the radicalization process reaches its peak in the immediate future, up to 20 million young people would have been indoctrinated with a narrow and inward-looking worldview.³⁴

Evidence of the geographical reach of radical Islam in Bangladesh was provided on August 17, 2005 when there were 459 coordinated bomb blasts within a single hour, across 63 of the country’s 64 districts. Even for those who have long focused on the growth of Islamist extremism and terror in Bangladesh, the sheer scale and dispersal of these blasts came as a surprise.³⁵ Intelligence sources estimate that at least two persons would have been involved in the planting of each explosive device – suggesting an operation mobilizing well over a thousand cadres through the length and breadth of Bangladesh. While the sheer number of

³¹ Official Website of the Election Commission Secretariat, Bangladesh, Accessed at www.bd-ec.org/stat/Main%20Menu.htm.

³² “Bangladesh under the shadow of Islamic fundamentalism?” www.asianews.it/view.php?l=en&art=3530.

³³ Ahmadiyyas consider themselves Muslims, but interpret the Prophethood differently from mainstream Islam.

³⁴ “Bangladesh under the shadow of Islamic fundamentalism?” www.asianews.it/view.php?l=en&art=3530.

³⁵ Ajai Sahni, “Bangladesh: Behind the Smokescreen, the Terror Proliferates,” *South Asia Intelligence Review*, Vol. 4 No. 6, August 22, 2005, South Asia Terrorism Portal, www.satp.org.

explosions is startling, the bombs were all of low intensity and of crude manufacture, clearly intended to communicate a message, rather than to inflict hard damage to life and property. Only two persons were killed and an estimated 100 injured while most of the targets were Government establishments, mainly offices of the local district administration and courts. The most coherent explanation that arises within the prevailing political context in Bangladesh is that these were, simultaneously, the demonstration of expanded capabilities, a strategy of mobilization and a campaign of intimidation. The demonstration of terrorist capabilities is, at once, a powerful tool for further recruitment in areas where such operations are executed, and a severe warning to political opponents that dire consequences attend any efforts of opposition.

Madrassas have been the focal point of the dissemination of *jehadi* literature and ideas in Bangladesh, and are a breeding ground for terrorists. There has been a systematic pattern of use of seminaries for shelter/hideouts, cover building, communications, arms caching, and recruitment of cadres. The extremist influence has grown dramatically since the BNP-JEI-IOJ combine has come to power, with a widening of activities and the support base, especially in the countryside where the *Madrassas* are active and growing in numbers. Today, the role model for many young men in rural areas is the dedicated Islamic cleric with his skull cap, flowing robes and beard. For the recruits, the Islamist extremist signifies 'national pride', and a way out of the misrule, disorder and corrupt worldly politics.

A number of *Madrassas* and training camps continue to recruit and train cadres across the country, and particularly in the loosely controlled Chittagong Hill Tracts, often under the protection and direction of the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence of the Bangladesh Army, with support and inputs from the ISI. The ISI is deeply involved with the Islamist terrorist outfits operating in Bangladesh. For instance, on June 2000, an Indian Intelligence agency intercepted a radiogram, which revealed that the ISI had set up a strong base in Kuri-gram and Rangpur areas of Bangladesh near the Coochbihar border. There was also direct evidence that a section of officials and personnel of the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) was colluding with the ISI. Indian Intelligence also believes that the ISI, in collusion with the HuJI, was training militants in the use of sophisticated arms and explosives at camps set up at Rangmari, Sundermari, Masaldanga and other villages.

Present in Bangladesh are many demographic and cultural factors that led to Islamist terrorism in neighboring Pakistan and Afghanistan. Economic challenges, lack of education, endemic

corruption and lack of faith in elected governments have increased the attractiveness of radical Islam in Bangladesh.³⁶ Similar to the latter, Bangladesh too has a large network of extremist religious schools that have contributed to radicalization of the deprived youth. According to Samina Ahmed of the International Crisis Group, Bangladesh's *Madrassas* have mushroomed, reaching an estimated 64,000 from roughly 4,100 in 1986.³⁷ Most seminaries offer free education and are relatively independent of Government control, in terms of finances and the curriculum. A literal and traditional interpretation of the Holy Quran is the primary focus of most seminaries in Bangladesh as is the case in Pakistan.

Traditionally, Islam in Bangladesh has been relatively liberal. However, through more and more radical *Madrassas*, the extremists intend to bring Bangladeshi Islam in line with their orthodox worldview. In their attempt to change Bangladesh, Islamist extremists have been systematically targeting different sections of the society.

The country's Islamist extremist outfits have been looking to implement, in stages, a decade-long strategy to prepare an atmosphere compatible with an Islamic revolution in Bangladesh. Intelligence officials said the strategy was adopted in 1998 together with other Islamist groups and parties, which believe in *Jihad* and want to establish Islamic rule. "The 10-year-long mission was undertaken only after establishing a strong foundation by recruiting thousands of workers and agents since the early 1990s," an unnamed official told a Dhaka-based newspaper.³⁸ His investigation reportedly revealed that the frequent bombings are meant to make the citizenry used to such incidents so that they accept it as a part of life and not react on a mass scale. Alarming, he said: "The militants will continue bombing, assuming it will inure the people and help them to launch *Jihad*." Islamist outfits that are currently operating have separate identities to give the impression that the bombings are isolated incidents, but in reality they are now working in unison to achieve their goal of establishing a fundamentalist, theocratic state. Apart from recruiting dedicated leaders and workers they have been able to plant their people in most institutions of the society, including government departments and agencies. Among them there are influential ministers, lawmakers, politicians, law enforcers,

³⁶ See U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Christina Rocca's statement before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on International Relations on June 22, 2004. www.usembassy-dhaka.org/state/StatePD/pre1jun23_04.html.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ "Islamists on 10-year mission to prepare ground for revolution," *News from Bangladesh*, Dhaka, October 23, 2005; www.bangladesh-web.com.

government officials, businessmen and journalists, but they are all working behind the scenes.³⁹

All this having been said, is there a danger of exaggerating the threat from the Islamist mobilization in Bangladesh? While it is true that much of South Asia is already under the influence of Islamist extremism, Zachary Abuza, author of *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia*, aptly observes: “Bangladesh is becoming increasingly important to groups like Al Qaeda because it’s been off everyone’s radar screen. Al Qaeda is going to have to figure out where they can regroup, where they have the physical capability to assemble and train, and Bangladesh is one of these key places.”⁴⁰

The success of radical Islam in South Asia and elsewhere in the world is their aggressive and sophisticated recruitment techniques. According to Angel Rabasa, “The targets are separate potential pools of recruits, each requiring different methods and venues for recruitment. The key recruitment nodes are mosques and Islamic study circles; schools, universities, and youth organizations; health and welfare organizations, including charities; and other social clusters. Recruitment methodologies vary: in universities, for instance, the process involves Quranic study groups or circles where members gradually internalize the ideology of the group.”⁴¹

Global Lessons

The trajectory of Islamist extremism in South Asia is an important construct for the Muslim Diaspora in Western Europe, especially in Britain. A vast majority of Britain’s 1.6million Muslims originate from South Asia (approximately 1million: two-thirds are from Pakistan, under a third from Bangladesh and the rest from India). Around a third of all British Muslims are under the age of fourteen, the age at which one is vulnerable to social deviation. And while

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Zachary Abuza as quoted in Eliza Griswold, “The Next Islamist Revolution?”, *The New York Times*, January 23, 2005.

⁴¹ Angel Rabasa, Moderate and Radical Islam, Testimony presented before the House Armed Services Committee Defense Review, Terrorism and Radical Islam Gap Panel, November 3, 2005.

the vast majority of British Muslims dwell in poor, closed communities, the elite is a leadership without followers.⁴²

A large number of young Muslims in South Asia and indeed elsewhere in the Muslim world who have trouble integrating into the mainstream harbor sympathies for Islamist extremism. Integration is possibly the best way to avoid alienation that renders the youth vulnerable to radicalization. The greater the opportunities for such youth, the greater their identification with mainstream society will be.

Recruitment for fighting in Kashmir is high in Britain as 'Kashmir' is a burning issue for Kashmiri immigrants and their children, as well as for a sizeable population of expatriate Pakistanis. A striking illustration of the potency of this issue in Birmingham appeared during the 1999 local elections, when a party called 'Justice for Kashmir' increased its representation to five council seats, making it the fourth largest party group on an extraordinary single-issue platform. Mohammed Ghalib, president of the Birmingham-based lobby group Tehreek-e-Kashmir UK, said of the suicide bomber, Bilal: "The story will encourage the youth that this is a good thing and may encourage them to become more militant. If you call them terrorists then they'll become terrorists. If Indian army soldiers died in a bomb attack then most people here wouldn't mind." Similar trends are emerging in a number of other countries, including the US, Canada and various parts of Europe.

- Sheikh Omar Bakri-Mohammed, founder of London-based Islamic group, Al-Muhajiroun, claimed in 2000 that around 1,800 British Muslims take part in "military service" in different *jehads* across the world each year, recruited at mosques and university campuses across the country. The Syrian-born cleric said the recruits were often undergraduates suffering from an identity crisis who were persuaded to rediscover their parents' faith and encouraged to fight against "occupying forces" in Kashmir, Palestine and Chechnya.
- Many of these recruits are suspected to have come through youth movements such as Al Muhajiroun or attended radical mosques – such as the one in Finsbury Park, presided over by Sheikh Abu Hamza al-Masri. Richard Reid, the "shoe bomber" who tried to blow up a passenger flight in December, 2002 studied in Finsbury Park and frequented Al Muhajiroun meetings. So, too, did James Ujaama, a convert to Islam who is today one of the seven British citizens being held by the US in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The

⁴² Ibid.

“20th hijacker,” Algerian-born Zacharias Moussaoui, chose a mosque at Brixton in south London to do his studying, turning for instruction to another firebrand Imam, Sheikh Omah Abu Omar “Abu Qatada,” nicknamed “bin Laden’s ambassador to Europe.” Bilal Ahmed, the Birmingham resident, who died in the suicide attack on December 25, 2000 in Srinagar, was a member of the Al Muhajiroun movement.⁴³

- The Scotland Yard suggested that as part of their advanced training, some Al Muhajiroun followers were being sent to “terrorist” camps in Oregon and Alabama. Abu Bakri admitted that people from a group called Sekina Securities did come to teach Al Muhajiroun youth martial arts and hand to hand combat, and that “maybe” there was an AK-47 assembling class in the basement of the Finsbury Mosque. Sekina Securities’ website, however – which was taken down by British police after Sept. 11 – used to offer “serious firearms training” at gun ranges in the US and a two-week course called “ultimate jihad challenge” that featured “art of bone breaking” and ways to “improve explosive devices. “Most of the Al Muhajiroun recruits were children of immigrants, whose parents came here in the 1960s to make money. The older generation worked in textile mills, factories, and post offices, and drove buses – eking out a living, never really learning the language, and yet trying their hardest to meld.
- On June 27, 2003, United States officials announced they had arrested eight of 11 people they had charged for their alleged roles in a conspiracy to train to participate in *Jihad*, in Kashmir. US Attorney Paul McNulty said 11 people had been charged in a 41-count indictment for firearms violations and for joining in a conspiracy against a friendly nation. According to the indictment, the 11 defendants allegedly obtained weapons, including AK-47-style rifles, and practiced small-unit military tactics in Virginia using paintball weapons and other equipment as part of their preparation. The indictment said several traveled to Pakistan and trained with the Lashkar-e-Toiba. The eight detained were named as Randall Todd Royer, 30, Ibrahim Ahmed al-Hamdi, a Yemeni; Masoud Ahmad Khan, 31; Yong Ki Kwon, 27, a naturalised American born in South Korea; Mohammed Aatique, a 30-year-old Pakistani; Hammad Abdur-Raheem, 35; Donald Thomas Surratt, 30; and Caliph Basha Ibn Abdur-Raheem, 29. Three others -- Khwaja Mahmood Hasan, 27, a Pakistani-born American; Sabri Benkhala, 28; and Seifullah Chapman, 30 -- are believed to be in Saudi Arabia. The group of organizers and recruits allegedly met in secret in private homes in the Northern Virginia suburbs and in an Islamic center in Falls Church, Virginia, to hear lectures and review tapes of *Mujahideen* engaged in violent *Jihad*.

⁴³ “Exporting Terror,” *The Telegraph*, Kolkata, March 11, 2001.

- In June, 2003, police in Paris arrested a Pakistani national and Muslim Imam, Ghulam-Mustafa Rama, who is alleged to be a senior figure in the Lashkar-e-Toiba movement and was described as being linked to terrorist acts in Kashmir and part of bin Laden's International Islamic Front for Holy War against Jews and Crusaders.
- Ahmed el Bakiouli and Khalil el Hassnaoui, two young Moroccan men from the Dutch city of Eindhoven, arrived in Kashmir to wage *Jihad* in December 2001. Early in the morning of January 13, 2001, the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) shot them dead. Sympathizers and friends of the two pointed out on websites that they died as "courageous Mujahideen." They claimed that the two initially planned to go to Afghanistan. When they failed to cross the Afghan border they decided to go to Kashmir. Before he left the Netherlands, Ahmed el Bakiouli chatted on a popular Moroccan website about "Allah's revenge for those who refuse to go to Afghanistan to support their brothers." Ahmed and Khalil regularly prayed in a local mosque with a "fundamentalist" reputation. Ahmed's father had previously been involved in the al-Waqf al-Islami Foundation, which was also based in Eindhoven. The Dutch officials link this foundation to extremist Islamist causes.

Societies with relatively large Muslim immigrant populations such as France (over 5 million), Germany (over 3 million), and the United Kingdom (1.5 million) are vulnerable to radicalization, which is essentially a first step towards the making of a terrorist. Radicalization is also significantly affecting the South Asian Muslim Diaspora. For instance, a fair amount of the youth among Britain's approximately 1.5 million Muslims feel marginalized and have been unable to assimilate. According to a report issued in November 2004 by the Open Society Institute, young Muslim men are increasingly at risk of social exclusion; many feel they are "under siege."⁴⁴ A compound and dislocated reality is predominant. Within such a milieu, radical streams of thought, unsurprisingly, appear as a panacea.

There has been a failure on the part of the international community, especially the West, to pursue a cogent political strategy aimed at de-legitimizing the ideology of Islamist terrorism. And one of the important reasons for this failure is the U.S administration's refusal to realize that Saudi Arabia has been and continues to be the primary ideological and financial sponsor of Islamist extremism worldwide. Uncontested ideological mobilisation across the Muslim world, over the years, has prospered under Saudi patronage. Indeed, such is the power of

⁴⁴ Sylvia Poggioli, "Europe, Islam's New Front Line: Britain," www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4190892.

Saudi Arabian clergy that the dominant interpretation of Islam in many of the Muslim countries affected by extremism today is the radical variant. Liberal Saudi Arabian finances has led to significant sections of the Islamic world falling under the rubric of extremism and fanaticism. For instance, official Saudi sources indicate that between 1975 and 1987, Riyadh's "overseas development aid" averaged \$4 billion per year, and there is evidence that this level was maintained in the 1990s.⁴⁵ While some of this aid did go to legitimate development-assistance activities, Saudi data show that at least half (\$50 billion over two and a half decades) and perhaps as much as two-thirds financed strictly "Islamic activities."⁴⁶ Over the decades, the Saudis have set up a large number of front organizations, such as the World Muslim League, the World Assembly of Muslim Youth, the Al Haramain Foundation, and a sizeable number of Islamic charities. While these have claimed to be independent, all of them were tightly controlled and financed by the Saudi government and the Wahhabi clergy.⁴⁷ Absent a corrective on the Saudi front of the Global War on Terror, enduring success is unlikely.

Radicalization in Western Europe follows a similar pattern. Today, virtually every major European city has a mosque or Islamic center virulently preaching *Jihad*. It is these establishments that inevitably become breeding grounds of Islamist terrorists. Khaled Ahmed notes that most terrorists in Europe and the United Kingdom have come under the influence of the mosque where a cleric has invariably brought to them the *Madrassa* baggage of Islamic rejectionism. In the United States too the 'converted' youths have first been influenced by the local mosque and then sent to Pakistan for 'further training.

Who is being radicalized or which sections of the populace are at risk? These are crucial to both the security and developmental aid establishments. Gudrun Kramer has observed that: "We are sadly lacking in empirical studies examining the social composition and generational set-up of major Islamist movements such as the Egyptian or the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhoods of the 1970s, 1980s, and more particularly the early 1990s... More systematic empirical research would allow us to either support or refute the general assumption that by and large militancy coincides with a modest social background and younger age... and pragmatic

⁴⁵ Alex Alexiev, "The missing link in the war on terror: Confronting Saudi subversion," www.centerforsecuritypolicy.org/index.jsp?section=static&page=alexiev

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

moderation with higher social status, income, education and age.”⁴⁸ From available evidence, there appears to be no such straightforward correlation. Valerie Hoffman’s study, for instance, shows that the social base of Islamist organizations across the Muslim world is almost uniform – students in the technical faculties, recent migrants to cities, and members of the urban lower-middle class.⁴⁹

In Pakistan, the Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI) is largely composed of a lower-middle-class membership that also draws from university students and the intelligentsia. Its initial base of support during the 1940s consisted of young religious scholars, but in the 1950s and 1960s the JeI increasingly appealed to those educated in modern sciences and representing such professions as doctors, lawyers, engineers, and government employees. After its election defeat in 1971, the party sought to expand its constituency by appealing to the uneducated working class and peasants. However, its main base of support remains to be the educated lower-middle class.⁵⁰

Madrasa students remains isolated from mainstream society in a *closed-door* framework for at least eight years during the impressionable part of their teenage years and this practically ensures that the radical *Mullah* (cleric) is able to indoctrinate him against the modern ideas of secularism, democracy and market economy, which is antithetical to radical Islam. In South Asia and elsewhere in the world, a perilous blend of disenchantment, depleted self-worth and peer pressure is making radical Islam more attractive for the youth, an obvious target of the extremist. Marginalized by the forces of liberalization and globalization, the average *Madrasa* student is evidently a potential target for radicalization. The traditional systems of education and knowledge imparted at these seminaries also ensure that those ‘graduating’ virtually have no capacities to be a part of the globalized world. They are, consequently, amenable to any ideology that is perceived to be providing succor. The lack of direction and complete abandonment by the state has ensured that the systematic and institutionalized targeting by extremists has spawned a whole generation of *Jihadis*.

⁴⁸ Gudrun Kramer, “Cross-Links and Double Talk? Islamist Movements in the Political Process” in Laura Guazzone, ed., *The Islamist Dilemma: The Political Role of Islamist Movements in the Contemporary Arab World*, Reading, UK: Ithaca Press, 1995, p. 48.

⁴⁹ Valerie Hoffman, “Muslim Fundamentalists: Psychological Profiles” in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, eds., *Fundamentalisms Comprehended*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

⁵⁰ S. V. R. Nasr, *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution: The Jama’at-I-Islami of Pakistan*, London: I. B. Tauris, 1994, pp. 83-100.

As the *Madrassas* generally do not charge tuition fees - though they do charge a small admission fees that does not exceed Rupees 400 - they attract very poor students who would not receive any education otherwise.⁵¹ According to Fayyaz Hussain, a student who completed his ethnographic research on Jamia Ashrafia of Lahore in 1994, nearly half the students joined the seminary for economic reasons, 41% for social reasons, and only about 6% for religious pursuit. According to a survey conducted by Mumtaz Ahmad in 1976, more than 80% of the *Madrassa* students in Peshawar, Multan, and Gujranwala were found to be sons of small or landless peasants, rural artisans, or village imams of the mosques with the remaining 20% coming from families of small shopkeepers and rural laborers. According to a survey by the Institute of Policy Studies, 64% seminary students come from rural areas and belong to poor agrarian families. According to Rahman, many students, upon probing, confess that their parents had admitted them in the seminaries because they could not afford to feed them and educate them in the government schools. In a survey conducted by Rahman in eight cities of Pakistan in December 2002 and January 2003, seminary students and teachers were asked about their income. Among those who responded, 76.6% belonged to the poorer sections of society. *Madrassa* teachers also mostly (61%) belong to the same socio-economic bracket as their students. This being so, the influence of *Madrassas* on rural people and the poorer sections of the urban proletariat will continue to increase as poverty increases.

There is also a fair amount of 'street support' that radical Islam has been able to drum up in its pockets of influence in South Asia. François Burgat is apt in summing up that "By adopting a vocabulary or a terminology based on local references, this intuitive culture returns to its former universalist claim, and restores the precious symbolic continuity interrupted by the irruption of Western categories. The Islamist rhetoric has caught the public imagination, whereas the hegemonic representations fabricated by other social systems have had the most destabilising effect. It is helping to close the traumatic chapter of colonisation and this is undoubtedly the secret of its formidable ability to mobilise. In order to survive the pitfalls of globalisation, it allows its followers a precious and reassuring feeling of belonging."⁵²

DEVELOPMENTAL AID AND ISLAMIST RADICALISM

Donald Rumsfeld, the US Secretary of Defense, did raise an important issue in his now famous leaked memo of October 2003: Are we capturing, killing, or deterring and dissuading

⁵¹ Tariq Rahman, "The Madrassa and the State of Pakistan," *Himal South Asian*, Kathmandu, February 2004.

⁵² François Burgat, *Face to Face with Political Islam*, London: I. B. Tauris, 2003, p. 50.

more terrorists every day than the seminaries and radical clerics are recruiting, training, and deploying against us?⁵³

Locating moderate Islam and its adherents are central in any strategy that attempts to negate the influence of radical Islam and terrorism. Radicals have the advantage because they have developed extensive networks, spanning the Muslim world and sometimes reaching beyond it.⁵⁴ Liberal and moderate Muslims, although a majority in almost all countries, have not created similar networks. Moderate Muslims feel exposed and isolated. Developmental aid should pay attention to campaigns and programs that de-legitimize extremism among Muslims since it is here that long-term financial assistance will be beneficial. A change in the mindset is an imperative as far as combating radical Islam is concerned since the mosques, *Madrassas* and sections of the Muslim media have, as Shoair Choudhury of Bangladesh appropriately said, had ‘absolute power over our hearts and minds for too long’. The terrorists’ goal is to polarize the society. Thus, much needs to be done to promote the moderate elements in Muslim society. The moderates of the Faith cannot directly confront the extremists once the latter begin to push their ideas through campaigns of terrorism.⁵⁵ The moderate voice is often stifled with the first shot of the extremists’ gun. While moderates can be expected to raise their voices against extremism, and have often done so, this is possible only under conditions where the risks are manageable. It is, consequently, necessary for both state and society to protect moderate Islam. While only Muslims themselves can effectively challenge the message of radical Islam, there is much that the international community can do to empower Muslim moderates in what is essentially an ideological struggle.⁵⁶

Poverty may not be the basis for Islamist terrorism, but the proponents of *Jihad* do manipulate poverty to their advantage. However, the “militant Islam-from-poverty thesis,” Daniel Pipes points out, has found wide acceptance.⁵⁷ “Islam is the religion of bad times,” said an Egyptian sheikh. “It is enough to see the poverty-stricken outskirts of Algiers or the refugee camps in Gaza to understand the factors that nurture the strength of the Islamic Resistance Movement,” said Mahmud az-Zahar, a Hamas leader in Gaza. “Fundamentalism grows at the same

⁵³ “Rumsfeld’s war-on-terror memo,” www.usatoday.com/news/washington/executive/rumsfeld-memo.htm.

⁵⁴ Angel Rabasa, Moderate and Radical Islam, Testimony presented before the House Armed Services Committee Defense Review, Terrorism and Radical Islam Gap Panel, November 3, 2005; www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/2005/RAND_CT251.pdf.

⁵⁵ K.P. S.Gill, “Give Voice To Moderate Islam,” *The Pioneer*, New Delhi, December 20, 2003.

⁵⁶ The Muslim World after 9/11, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, California, December 2004.

⁵⁷ Daniel Pipes, “God and Mammon: Does Poverty Cause Militant Islam?” www.danielpipes.org/article/104.

pace as economic problems,” noted Prime Minister Eddie Fenech of Malta. “Fundamentalism’s basis is poverty,” said Shimon Peres of Israel. But, the relation between poverty and radical Islam is not unambiguous. Militant Islam, argues Pipes, “attracts highly competent, motivated, and ambitious individuals. Far from being the laggards of society, they are its leaders.” In some way, political Islam is all about God, not Mammon, Pipes urges.

Alan Krueger, an economist from Princeton, and Jitka Malečková of the Charles University in Prague, have investigated whether there is a causal link between poverty and terrorism.⁵⁸ Specifically, they analyzed the determinants of participation in militant activities in the Middle East. They also looked at cross-country data on the connection between economic conditions on the national level and the occurrence of terrorism by individuals from various countries, and analyzed public opinion polls on the strength of support for attacks against Israeli targets in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Their analyses suggest that any connection between poverty and terrorism is indirect and probably quite weak.

A glance at some basic economic and demographic indicators of five Muslim countries – Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Tunisia – prior to and during the early 1990s shows that there is little correlation between economic deprivation and insurgency.⁵⁹ In all five countries, the Islamist current was thriving in the 1980s and could have potentially played a more militant role during the early 1990s, as evinced by the strong presence of Islamist organizing at the university and in civil society.

In Algeria and Egypt, Islamists rebelled in the early 1990s (although rebellion in Egypt was much more limited than in Algeria).⁶⁰ In Jordan, Morocco, and Tunisia, Islamists either retreated from political confrontation (Morocco and Tunisia) or accommodated the state regime (Jordan) during the 1990s. The table below indicates that there are no significant differences in the economic-demographic data of the five Muslim countries, or at least they are insufficiently significant to explain variation in patterns of violence. To the extent there are differences in economic and demographic realities, the relative deprivation theory would suggest that countries like Jordan and Morocco should have experienced higher levels of violence during

⁵⁸ Root Causes of Terrorism (Abstracts of Presentation), Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, June 9-11, 2003, www.nupi.no/IPS/filestore/Root_Causes_Summaries.pdf.

⁵⁹ Mohammed M. Hafez, *Why Muslims Rebel: Repression and Resistance in the Islamic World*, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2005, p. 10.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

the 1990s as did Algeria and Egypt, which was not the case. When compared to Algeria, Jordan has experienced nearly similar worsening economic conditions during the 1980s and early 1990s (see table). Like Algeria, it witnessed negative average GNP per capita growth rates, high population and urban growth, high rural-to-urban migration, a high percentage of urban population living under poverty, and a high percentage of people unemployed by the early 1990s. The level of inequality in Jordan is nearly the same as in Algeria. The latter witnessed urban riots in October 1988 as did Jordan in the spring of 1989. Yet despite having comparable economic-demographic data, Jordan had a relatively moderate Islamist movement during the 1980s and 1990s, one that eschewed violence and remained as a “loyal opposition” within the monarchy. In Algeria, Islamists rebelled.⁶¹

Economic and Demographic Data for Five Muslim Countries

Country	Average Annual GNP per Capita Growth Rate (1980-1992)	Population Growth (1980-1992)	Urban Growth (1980-1992)	Estimated Contribution of Rural-Urban Population Growth (1980-1992)	Approximate Unemployment Rate in Early 1990s	Urban Population Below National Poverty Line	Gini Index
Algeria	-0.5 %	2.8 %	4.9 %	43 %	20 %	7.3 % (1988)	40.14 (1988)
Egypt	1.8	2.4	2.5	4	15	35.9 (1990-1991)	32 (1991)
Jordan	-5.4	4.9	6.0	38	20	15 (1992)	43.36 (1992)
Morocco	1.4	2.5	3.8	34	16	7.6 (1990-1991)	39.2 (1990-991)
Tunisia	1.3	2.3	3.4	35	16	7.3 (1990)	40.24 (1990)

Source: Most of the data were collected from Alan Richards and John Waterbury, *A Political Economy of the Middle East*, Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1998, pages 49, 79, 134, 252, 254. Gini index data was taken from “Global Poverty Monitoring” reports of the World Bank.

The mere existence of poverty and deprivation is not sufficient to explain levels of Islamist rebellion. The case of the Iranian revolution shows that it is not even necessary. Between 1960 and 1977, the years preceding the Islamic revolution, Iran’s annual real growth rate was nearly

⁶¹ Ibid.

9.6%, which was about double the average of developing countries. Moreover, absolute poverty was measurably reduced and unemployment was relatively small and localized.⁶²

At another end, there is a danger that liberal developmental financing by the international community may lead to the worst case-scenario of further radicalization, something which K.P.S. Gill described as “each dollar of ‘development aid’ or ‘financial relief’ to Pakistan releases a dollar of domestic resources for further militarization, radicalization and extremist religious mobilization.”

For many decades, international aid programs from the United States and the West have contained components under the broad rubric of education reform and many millions have been spent – and unfortunately often misspent.⁶³ And despite the Bush Administration outreach, large sections of the institutional Islamic leadership in America do not support U.S. counter-terrorism policy, denouncing virtually every terrorism indictment, detention, deportation and investigation as religiously motivated attacks on Islam.⁶⁴ Furthermore, with deep pocketbooks and religious conviction, the Saudi Wahhabists have bankrolled a series of Islamic institutions in the United States that actively seek to undermine U.S. counter-terrorism policy at home and abroad as also regularly subsidizing organizations and individuals adhering to the militant ideology espoused by the Muslim Brotherhood and its murderous offshoots Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Al Qaeda.⁶⁵

The US government, according to Husain Haqqani, repeatedly makes the mistake of defining as “moderate” those authoritarian Muslim rulers who fulfill America’s foreign policy goals. These strategic American allies are not the force for ideological moderation that would change the Muslim world’s long-term direction. Authoritarian governments in the Muslim world do not want democracy as that would amount to the potentates giving up their power. It is the democratic movements opposed to governments in the Muslim world who are likely to be the

⁶² Jahangir Amuzegar, “The Iranian Economy Before and After the Revolution,” *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 46, No. 3, 1992, pp. 414-5.

⁶³ Martin Schram, “The United States and Madrassas,” www.theglobalist.com/DBWeb/StoryId.aspx?StoryId=3453.

⁶⁴ Testimony of Mathew Epstein Before the United States Senate Judiciary Committee Subcommittee on Terrorism, Technology, and Homeland Security, “Saudi Support for Islamic Extremism in the United States,” September 10, 2003.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

real engines of social and political change in the Middle East and South Asia.⁶⁶ Muslim rulers, who have created the problem of intolerance in the Muslim world in the first place, cannot bring the enlightenment or moderation that President Bush claims is his goal for the world's 1.4 billion Muslims.⁶⁷

A recent report by the US Congressional Research Service indicated that although President Pervez Musharraf had promised to reform Pakistan's seminaries, and his government launched a five-year, US\$113 million plan to bring the teaching of "formal" or secular subjects to 8,000 "willing" *Madrassas*, no concrete action was taken until June of 2002, when 115 of them were denied access to government assistance due to their alleged links to militancy.⁶⁸ In November 2003, the government decided to allocate about US\$50 million annually to provide assistance to registered seminaries, especially by paying the salaries of teachers hired to teach non-religious subjects.⁶⁹ According to the CRS report, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) was implementing a five-year, US\$100 million bilateral agreement, signed in August 2002, to increase access to quality education throughout Pakistan, with an emphasis on the Balochistan and Sindh provinces. USAID education-related projects in Pakistan included efforts to improve early education, engender democratic ideals, improve the quality of assessment and testing, provide training to educators, and construct or refurbish schools in the volatile Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), adjacent to the Afghan border.⁷⁰

After decades of sponsoring hatred and terrorism, Pakistan is currently seeking redemption through a promise – repeated incessantly since 9/11 – to clean up its seminaries, and to rid them of extremism and hatred, claiming that this would strike at the base and root of Islamist terror. The promise has raised great expectations in the West, and the aftermath of the London bombings provided another opportunity for President Pervez Musharraf to do a reality-check on the course of his 'enlightened moderation'. On August 29, 2005, the Supreme Court of Pakistan ruled that the *sanads* (certificates) issued by *Madrassas* are not valid as these institutions are run without statutory sanction and without affiliation to a recognized university or education board. In its detailed verdict, the Court held, further, that *Madrassas* were function-

⁶⁶ Husain Haqqani, "US, Muslims and Democracy," *The Indian Express*, New Delhi, November 18, 2005.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Education Reform in Pakistan, CRS Report for Congress, www.fas.org/man/crs/RS22009.pdf.

⁶⁹ Khaled Ahmed, "Madrasa: Islamic Rejectionism and Terrorism," *South Asia Journal*, October-December 2005, p. 35.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

ing illegally in the country, since they do not have affiliation with any University or Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education. The apex Court noted that unregistered *Madrassas* do not teach a curriculum that can train students to face the 'harshness of the modern world'. Seminaries, the Court observed, are not providing students with general education that could enable them to come into the mainstream of society and compete with the educated class for employment or other purposes, including elections. It noted that not a single religious educational institution had included in its curriculum subjects like English, Urdu and Pakistan Studies, even though the Inter-Board Committee of Chairmen had recommended this.

The highest Court in Pakistan was only validating what has already been extensively documented. However, in focusing on a failure to include English, Urdu and Pakistan Studies in the *Madrassa* curriculum, the Court failed to recognize that President Musharraf's approach to *Madrassa* reform is itself skewed, and so are Pakistan's state-prescribed educational curricula. In a scathing criticism of the educational system in its September 1, 2005 editorial, *The Daily Times* observed:

...the seminaries in Pakistan enlist a million pupils and throw up thousands of 'graduates' every year with nothing much to do except set up new mosques to earn their livelihood... Pakistan cannot produce young people who can propel the economy forward. What kind of young men does Pakistan produce? In a word, warriors. The truth is that there is nothing secular in Pakistan Studies, English and Urdu, either, if you take a close look at the textbooks that the students have to mug up.

Articulating the government stand, Religious Affairs Minister Ijazul Haq, son of the former President Zia-ul-Haq under whose leadership the 'Madrassa culture' in Pakistan was spawned, declaimed: "We will have zero tolerance against terrorism, zero tolerance against sectarianism and zero tolerance for hate literature." However, the rhetoric has not been backed with comparable action and the resistance to reform is widespread. For instance, the Rupees 5.8 billion Religious Seminaries Reform Project, launched to improve the standard of education in Pakistan's seminaries, has still not been implemented in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP), perhaps the worst affected provinces as far as radicalization and the *Jihad* culture are concerned. The Federal Government had formulated the scheme in 2002 to teach subjects such as English, Pakistan Studies, Mathematics, General Science, Computers and Economics in the *Madrassas*, and the Economic Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) had approved it on January 7, 2004. ECNEC had approved PKR 5.8 billion for the project and 15.7% out of the sum was earmarked for the NWFP. An unnamed official told *Daily Times* on

August 22, 2005, that, “not a single rupee has been spent from the amount, as the provincial Government has not yet implemented the scheme for reasons not known.” It was from the seminaries of the NWFP that a majority of the Taliban had emerged.

There is some evidence of the military regime buckling under pressure from the Islamists. On August 26, 2005, the government said that it would not check, investigate or even comment on audit details of accounts submitted by the seminaries. Federal Religious Affairs Secretary Vakil Ahmed Khan told *Daily Times* that only a brief report of the accounts’ audit would be sent to the registrar, who would neither check nor investigate the figures. He clarified that the seminaries were not bound to disclose names of their donors, but they had been asked to submit details of their expenses and donations. Seminaries are funded by a mixture of charity and donations, both from within and outside Pakistan. In 2001, the Government commenced partial funding in order to encourage the introduction of a ‘secular’ curriculum and PKR 1.654 million was disbursed during 2001-02 among *Madrassas* who accepted the Government’s conditions. More evidence of the half-heartedness of reforms was provided when Vakil Khan told *Reuters*: “There is no punitive provision in the existing law. The Government will consider such things after December 31 and not before that.”

The Islamist extremists have always rejected government attempts at interference in their ‘empire’. The past few years have seen the Musharraf regime introduce two ordinances to control militancy in the seminaries but the clergy ensured that both were unsuccessful. The first ordinance, called ‘Pakistan Madrassa Education (Establishment and Affiliation of Model Dini Madaris) Board Ordinance 2001’ was promulgated on August 18, 2001 and endeavored to reform existing curriculum by introducing secular subjects. Another mechanism, the Voluntary Registration and Regulation Ordinance 2002, was introduced to control the enrollment of foreigners and to monitor them. Although exact figures are not available, a negligible number is reported to have registered and not a single seminary was closed for disregarding the ordinance. While embarking on several initiatives to combat zealotry and broaden educational offerings, the Musharraf administration announced a number of measures to make seminaries participate in the modernization programme. These reforms included a five-year, \$1 billion Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) plan to ensure inclusion of secular subjects in syllabi of religious seminaries; a \$100 million bilateral agreement to rehabilitate hundreds of public schools by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).⁷¹

⁷¹ Amir Mir, “Schooling for Terror,” *South Asia Intelligence Review*, Vol. 3, No. 35, March 14, 2005, www.satp.org.

In his address to the nation on January 12, 2002, General Musharraf had declared, "...madaris [seminaries] will be governed by same rules and regulations applicable to other schools, colleges and universities. All madaris will be registered by 23rd March 2002 and no new madrassa will be opened without permission of the Government. If any madrassa is found indulging in extremism, subversion, militant activity or possessing any types of weapons, it will be closed."

These declarations have fallen on barren ground, and the new deadline for seminary registration is now December 2005. Meanwhile, *Jihadi* groups that were proscribed after the General's January 12 speech (and that have been proscribed on two occasions since) were soon active again under different names, even as little changed on the *Madrassa* registration front, and it was 'business as usual' for the extremists, after a brief flurry of apparent state action against them. Amir Mir has reported from Pakistan that three years down the road since Musharraf's historic January 2002 announcement, the 'modernization campaign' has largely failed, and hardly a few cosmetic changes could be introduced in the seminary system. Most of the religious leaders and Islamist organisations rejected the legislation requiring religious seminaries to register and broaden their curricula beyond rote Koranic learning. Under the reform programme, drafted on the advice of the Bush administration and financed by USAID, special government committees were constituted to supervise and monitor the educational and financial matters and policies of the seminaries. Most of these schools are sponsored by the country's leading religious parties, be it Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, Jamiat Ulema-Pakistan, or Jamat-e-Islami Pakistan, while many others are affiliated with *Jihadi* groups which preach an extremist ideology of religious warfare.

Another of the examples from Pakistan where developmental aid and attempts to support moderate Islam is coming under severe strain is to be discerned in the education sector. To reform the education, Gen. Musharraf signed an executive order on November 8, 2002 inducting the Aga Khan University Examination Board (AKUEB) into the national education system.⁷² The AKUEB has been given the task of upgrading and modernizing the declining standards of education and of holding examinations for private educational institutions. The affiliation of these institutions to the Board is voluntary. The Board has not been given any

⁷² The AKUEB was selected for this assignment due to its outstanding track record. Over the years, the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) has emerged as one of the most effective association of Community Based Organizations in Pakistan, and has changed the lives of large numbers of people in the remotest areas of Pakistan, including the Northern Areas, where no Government agency has ever undertaken any development work.

role in Government schools, and the system is also intended to help groom teachers in private educational institutions with excellent skills through training. The AKUEB would bring modern examinations, both in English and Urdu, at an affordable cost to a much broader section of society, providing parents and schools an option in the style of education they desire from classes IX to XII.

Musharraf's initiatives on this count have been greeted as a step in the right direction by the enlightened section of Pakistani society. However, the Islamist extremists have launched a virulent campaign against these reforms. A wide range of facilities is available to these groups for the propagation of their venomous propaganda, including the *Jihadi* media, pulpits and loudspeakers at mosques, and public rallies. The extremists accuse the AKDN of receiving a 'bribe' of \$45 million as grant from the US for 'perverting' Pakistan's education system by 'spreading nudity and obscenity' and 'introducing a free-sex environment'.

More recently, the 9/11 Public Discourse Project noted that "Increases in the FY2006 budget, and a five-year \$3 billion package of assistance, are encouraging signs of a long-term commitment to Pakistan. But there is still little movement beyond security assistance: too much of our assistance is in the form of a cash transfer, and funding to improve education in Pakistan is still far from sufficient."⁷³ The report by Vice-Chairman Lee Hamilton noted with caution that, "Musharraf has made real efforts to take on the threat from extremism, yet Pakistan remains a sanctuary and training ground for terrorists. Musharraf does not appear to have lived up to his promises to regulate the madrassas properly or close down all those that are known to have links to extremist groups. Taliban forces still pass freely across the Pakistan-Afghanistan border and operate in Pakistani tribal areas. Terrorists from Pakistan carry out operations in Kashmir. Finally, the results of promised democratization efforts are yet to be seen."⁷⁴ Pakistan is thus a part of the problem and the solution.

It remains to be seen how much decisive action the General can or will be allowed to take this time, especially since he claims that he is much stronger now than he was when he made his earlier attempts at reform. The past trajectory, regrettably, does not inspire optimism. Whenever Pakistan has been under the global scanner for Islamist terrorism since 9/11, a crack-down has been ordered. However, the endeavor to tackle Islamist extremism is suspect and the pattern remains consistent each time around: dispersed arrests and the subsequent release

⁷³ 9/11 Public Discourse Project, www.9-11pdp.org.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

of a few hundreds foot-soldiers of the global *Jihad*; the re-grouping of the outlawed outfits under different names; and eventual restoration of the status quo ante till the next major international terrorist incident. Meanwhile, many of the seminaries continue to propagate radical Islam and an ideology of unrelenting hatred, and to serve as recruitment and training centers for terrorist networks.

The U.S. government has identified two major goals with respect to its engagement in the Muslim world: (1) enhancing domestic security and (2) promoting moderation among Muslims. However, these two goals may be contradictory; for example, security requirements often limit the government's ability to do effective outreach.⁷⁵ Fukuyama questions how one transfers strong institutions to weak states. He notes that we understand how to transfer resources, people and technology, but "well-functioning public institutions require certain habits of mind, and operate in complex ways that resist being moved."⁷⁶ A far more important aspect is that the West must now recognize the contradiction in their simultaneous support for democracy and dictatorial Muslim regimes. A US-sponsored international conference on democracy in the Middle East during the first week of November 2005 ended without a final agreement because one of America's closest allies, Egypt, insisted on retaining control over the pace and method of democratization.⁷⁷ The Forum for the Future, a joint US-European initiative launched at the 2004 G-8 summit hosted by President Bush is part of the Bush administration's plans for promoting democracy in the Islamic world. But the authoritarian governments that receive massive amounts of aid from the US do not want democracy.

As Egypt, which accounts for a quarter of the Arab world's population and is the second-largest recipient of US aid, demonstrated at the Bahrain meeting of the Forum for the Future, Muslim dictators want to control the democratization process and would love to get more American money in the name of building democracy and if Hosni Mubarak had his way, the way forward for the US and the Muslim world would be for the US to increase aid for the authoritarian Muslim regimes and declare these very regimes as democratic.⁷⁸

Slogans of "Palestine before democracy" or "Kashmir before normalisation" enable America's authoritarian allies to carry on business as usual. For its part, Washington knows the game but

⁷⁵ Ann Phillips, USAID Summer Seminars, <http://www.usaid.gov/policy/cdic/notes10.html>.

⁷⁶ Francis Fukuyama, "The Imperative of State-Building," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 15 No. 2, April 2004, p.17.

⁷⁷ Husain Haqqani, "US, Muslims and Democracy," *The Indian Express*, New Delhi, November 18, 2005.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

continues to play along. Even after the setback at the Forum for the Future in Bahrain, US officials were muted in their criticism of the rulers they finance. For the sake of stability in the region, the US is willing to pursue a dichotomous policy. It insists on defining democratization as its priority but refuses to condemn those that obstruct its democratization agenda, namely the Muslim potentates Washington trusts with ensuring stability.⁷⁹

Proponents of radical Islam and the developmental sector may also, in instances, be competing for support of the same constituency. In places like Afghanistan and Pakistan, two key areas for the aid sector and radical Islam, both groups vie for rural dominance. While developmental aid looks to foster democracy in areas currently under the influence of radical Islam, proponents of the latter would inevitably oppose the former since genuine democracy means loss of their power. Regrettably, Western aid mechanisms invariably fail to note such nuances. For instance, Ann Phillips of the USAID points out that radical Islamists often represent the strongest opposition group against repressive secular governments. In Pakistan, radical Islam is not the opposition, nor is it in Bangladesh. Asma Jehangir, a prominent human rights activist in Pakistan, notes in this context that, "It is ultimately the military that is their [Islamist extremists] friend."⁸⁰ And the Pakistani military, according to her, has used the Islamists against democratic forces and against leadership that has come in through democracy. Perplexingly, most of the Western aid is routed through the military regime of President Musharraf. These inherent contradictions have played out in South Asia since the GWOT began.

Most of the programs geared toward Muslim society do not address Islam itself, but try to promote democracy and political, economic, and social opportunities that will reduce the allure of extremist messages.⁸¹ But at some level, external aid mechanisms should begin addressing the issue of Islam itself and not move away from the same. And this should not be done purely through the more prevalent 'donor agency' framework.

Western aid programs are also perceived with a certain amount of distrust with some even discerning a neo-colonial agenda in it. Some in Afghanistan felt that NGOs were often antithetical to the private sector and worried that the private sector would be left out of the

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Asma Jehangir, Interview with Asia Source, http://www.asiasource.org/news/special_reports/jahangir2.cfm.

⁸¹ Claire Ehmann, Regional Examples of Outreach Efforts, www.usaid.gov/policy/cdie/notes10.html.

reconstruction efforts.⁸² The concern was that resources would be channeled through NGOs and the United Nations (UN), which have their own, non-market agenda. The NGOs were perceived by a section as undermining the business community since all contracts on reconstruction appeared to be going to expensive NGOs and not to the local business community. There was also an expectation that somehow the international community should improve living conditions for Afghans. For instance, on the issue of security participants had unrealistic notions that the international community would come in and establish a police and legal system similar to what exists in the US and Europe. These ideas are tied to the very high expectations that have been created by the international community, NGOs and Afghan Government officials about the prospects billions of dollars of aid and also explains the relatively negative opinion so many had of NGOs and the UN, and even of the Government in Kabul.⁸³

Failed or failing states and their conflict potential are now an inherent part of the bilateral aid framework and policies of international development agencies. But the more troubling questions relate to managing development aid in such countries since there are immense amount of risks associated in engaging with such states. These challenges are further compounded in those countries where central governments are not in full control of their territory, and/or where governments are not prepared to play their allotted role in counter-terrorism.⁸⁴

Most respondents from the developmental aid fraternity in South Asia, including in Afghanistan, described the initiative as an extremely difficult undertaking. The most needy beneficiaries are often located within a concentrated sphere of conflict, which witness a high level of violence, thus rendering it difficult and dangerous for aid agencies to deliver assistance. While in some cases, short-term assistance is made possible, it is the crucial aspect of long-term aid that is important in countering radical Islam. And the long-term goal of countering extremist Islam, at least as far as South Asia is concerned, has suffered due to the institutional cultures and organizational dynamics of donor agencies, which are not inherently suited to the specifics of societies affected by extreme radicalization and violence. For instance, accomplishments are often measured in terms of the monies disbursed, rather than the end results. Furthermore,

⁸² Conference Report: Private Enterprise in Afghanistan, Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan Foundation for Central Asian Development with the support of Center for International Private Enterprise, December 2002, www.cipe.org/regional/nis/privateenterprise.pdf.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Adele Harmer and Joanna Macrae, "Humanitarian Action and the 'Global War on Terror': A Review of Trends and Issues," HPG Briefing, No. 9, July 2003. www.odi.org.uk/hpg/papers/hpgbrief9.pdf.

many donors provide funding on a year-by-year basis, rendering long-term planning difficult. Focused and continuous support is imperative when dealing with issues of such global magnitude. Impact assessments perceived from the immediate time frames are often illusory since in reality it takes years for actual impact to be discerned. Some respondents also brought to light western developmental aid programs' design problem: a disproportionate interval between the pledge of funds and commencement of project execution. Support for state building should essentially be a long-term activity, particularly in the realm of increasing political participation and strengthening public services.

Humanitarian aid that ensures that non-combatants are fed, sheltered, and healthy, but does not alleviate the violence around them, can lead to the "specter of the well-fed dead" and even more disturbing, the provision of humanitarian assistance can give non-combatants a mistaken sense of security and protection by the international community, with tragic consequences.⁸⁵ Further, some have discerned, rather erroneously, that pouring more and more money into a region of strife and mis-governance will, magically, rid the areas of violence and insurgency.⁸⁶ Most areas of disorder in South Asia are also areas of the most extraordinarily incompetent and corrupt governance. Administrative ineptitude has been compounded manifold, moreover, by the structures of intimidation and violence in wide regions, which make it impossible for the administration to 'deliver' public goods and services, even where the desire exists.

Western aid, as experience has shown in South Asia, has largely been used in terms of short-term security interests. Many in Pakistan, for instance, believe that the US is a selfish friend with a track record of abandoning them in emergencies. Mohammed Shehzad in his post-earthquake reportage has noted that "Thousands of people would not have succumbed to their injuries had the big fleet of the US choppers parked in the neighborhood (Afghanistan) flown promptly to transport them to hospitals. The Army and the US came into action too late – when all hope had died!"⁸⁷ In Bagh (Pakistan occupied Kashmir), Dr. Shamim Khan (a Pakistan-born British doctor) responded sarcastically and with hostility to questions about the US contribution in the earthquake relief work: "We set up an operation theater in a tent. A US Chinook landed here and the theater disappeared! This is the Americans' contribution!" A

⁸⁵ Amelia Branczik, Humanitarian Aid and Development Assistance, www.beyondintractability.org/m/humanitarian_aid.jsp.

⁸⁶ K. P. S. Gil, "Packages: Institutional fraud," *The Pioneer*, Delhi, November 27, 2004.

⁸⁷ Mohammad Shehzad, "Pakistan: The State Fails, the Jihadi Prevails," *South Asia Intelligence Review*, Vol. 4 No. 17.

rational balancing between security interests and capacity building is essential if developmental aid is to be effective.

The experience in Pakistan has shown that reliance on civil society projects to promote democracy amidst what are essentially authoritarian governments is problematic. On assisting Pakistan's transformation, Ashley Tellis notes "The structural reforms he has overseen have focused mainly on strengthening his own hold on power, and reforms related to policy improvements carry no guarantees of surviving his term in office. For all his pleas about "enlightened moderation," Musharraf has in fact done little to develop institutions that will promote a democratic temper or provide moderate political forces in Pakistan an opportunity to prosper. To the contrary, his political machinations have resulted in Islamist political parties rising to prominence in Pakistan's highest legislative bodies for the first time, while his strategies for preventing Islamist control of the state in the long term all hinge on continued military supremacy in Pakistani politics."⁸⁸

No accountability exists for such regimes as far as their domestic policies are concerned. And since most aid is being routed through state channels, capacity building and attempts to promote democracy, consequently, is bound to suffer. The use of conditionality should be introduced in policies towards such regimes and economic sanctions, if necessary, should be resorted to since aid accountability is vital.

Most observers today appropriately conclude, that Pakistan will not be able to remedy its multifaceted failures in governance, economic management, and foreign and strategic policy unless its leaders restore civilian democratic rule, governed by a constitutional framework with appropriate checks and balances.⁸⁹ Any attempt at reform that attacks Islamabad's complex problems piecemeal will produce only temporary palliatives. Rather, resolution will require significant external assistance, a permanent commitment to reconstituting a democratic order free of military interference, and time.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Ashley J. Tellis, "U.S. Strategy: Assisting Pakistan's Transformation," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 28 No. 1, Winter 2004, p. 98.

⁸⁹ Aquil Shah, "Democracy on Hold in Pakistan," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol.13, No. 1, January 2002, pp. 74–5.

⁹⁰ Ashley J. Tellis, "U.S. Strategy: Assisting Pakistan's Transformation," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 28 No. 1, Winter 2004, p. 101.