

Madrassas, Militancy and Politics in Pakistan

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During the years of Afghan resistance, one saw a mushrooming of madrassas of all hue all over Pakistan. Many of them were principally set up to indoctrinate young Afghans with the spurious ideology of Islamic Jihad and use them as cannon fodder in the struggle against the communists. In the aftermath of the Soviet pull out and return of Afghan refugees, these institutions continued to operate and still survive to this day in Pakistan misdirecting the young and the docile to wage Jihad against forces they deem to be posing threats to Islamisation of the society in their way. The present paper by Vivek K. Mishra seeks to argue that the forces controlling these institutions, which withdrew from the forefront for some time after the American 'War on Terror', are resurfacing in Pakistan now and the country is paying a heavy price on account of its continued equivocal approach to an issue which threatens to usher in a near-Taliban type system of administration in Pakistan. [Editorial Board]

In the post-cold war period, Islamic militancy has emerged as a potent force in international affairs. 'Islamic fundamentalism' as the organising principle behind militant resistance has been there since the days of the anti-Soviet, anti-communist operations in Afghanistan. During the whole of 1980s, radical Islamic groups of several hues sprung up in Afghanistan and Pakistan, which were imbued with the belief that Islamic tenets as interpreted by them, were infallible and sacrosanct and hence must prevail. After the pullout of the Soviet forces these forces even had a sense of victory, which further strengthened their belief in a rather perverse projection of Islam as an ideology of social and political mobilisation.

It is an irony that the global Islamic solidarity that is being blamed for incidents like the twin-tower crash in New York or killings in Bali, was engendered by active or passive encouragement by the intelligence agencies of the Western countries which found in Islamic militancy the most reliable antidote to communists in power in Kabul. The mujahideen forces that challenged the communists in Kabul was truly international in composition. It consisted of elements from most of the Muslim majority states— from Indonesia in the south-west, Algeria and even Morocco in Africa. The success of the mujahideen and overthrow of the Soviet-backed dispensation from power in Kabul, for the Americans and their allies, this was a spectacular achievement. But the events ever since have made the world aware of the dangerous potential of these forces of terror that were primarily tended by the US and then left free to devise their own methods of asserting themselves in the international sphere.

It is important to mention here that during the years of the jihad, Pakistan as a frontline state was implementing the strategies of the US and was ruled by a military dictator, Zia-ul-Haq, who basically thrived on his commitment to Islamicise Pakistani society. During this period Pakistan emerged as a nerve centre of Islamic fundamentalism and one saw a mushrooming of madrassas of all hue all over Pakistan. Many of them were principally set up to indoctrinate young Afghans with the spurious ideology of Islamic Jihad and use them as cannon fodder in the struggle against the communists.

Most of the radical Islamic organisations that owe their origin to the ideologies propagated by such madrassas justify use of force against those societies and Muslim states, which do not follow their interpretation of “Shariah” and the “Quran”.^[1] They believe that Muslims who follow the western secular and cultural norms are non-believers who should either conform to their interpretation of Islam or be eliminated. The missionary zeal of Islamic fundamentalist movements and their efforts to impose rigid Wahabi traditions on the Muslims of the South and Central Asian regions have disturbed peace in the entire Muslim world and neighbouring states and societies. The activities of Islamic fundamentalist organisations reveal that they are not really reformists or revivalists, but they are hungry for power, basically using the name of Islam to achieve their political objectives.

The Madrassas

The word “*madrassa*” is an Arabic word, which means ‘to learn something’. Therefore, the word *madrassa* implies the place where something is taught (school). The primary aim of the *madrassa* is to acquaint the students with the Islamic worldview and outlook of life through the teaching of “Quran” and “Sunnah” (sayings of Prophet Mohammad), which should guide them and find expression in all aspects of their life. These individuals are expected to be the torchbearers of Islamic knowledge, carrying its light to people from all walks of life, at every opportunity and in all circumstances for the sake of Allah.^[2] To impart a sound knowledge of Islam with an understanding of practical implications of its teachings in the contemporary world, the *madrassas* are also supposed to teach the students how to invite others to Islam in a peaceful and non-aggressive manner.

However, in today’s Pakistan, the environment obtaining in the *madrassas* is very different. They differ widely from the government-controlled schools and universities in Pakistan. Unlike public schools and universities, *madrassas* have no concept of co-education. The general perception about *madrassas* as they have evolved in Pakistan today is that they are fundamentalist in orientation. They are regarded by even educated Pakistanis as the breeding grounds for Islamic terrorists to wage Jihad in Kashmir and other parts of the world. They provide weapons and training to the Jihadis and are regarded as being largely independent of the control of the Pakistani government.

But are these assumptions correct? It is wrong to assume that all these *madrassas* preach “Jihad” and convert the students into “Jihadis”. There are many *madrassas*, which teach secular

subjects and do not indulge in militancy. According to the report of Human Rights Commission of Pakistan 2001, “about one-third of these schools provide military training to their students and some madrassas send their students for training and participation in Afghan civil-war, without the knowledge of their parents.”[3] So it is clear that there is a distinction between madrassas, which preach militancy on the one hand and madrassas, which impart secular education on the other.

In the 1980s General Zia-ul-Haq promoted the madrassas as a way to garner legitimacy for his rule and to recruit youth for the anti-Soviet War in Afghanistan. At that time, many madrassas were financed by the *Zakat*, (the obligatory alms tax given by Muslims for the needy and collected by the state in Pakistan), giving the government at least some authority to control these madrassas. But by and by wealthy Pakistani industrialists at home or abroad started funding more and more religious schools in Pakistan. Some were funded by private and government-supported NGOs in the Persian Gulf States and Saudi Arabia and by Iran. The students of these madrassas were in the beginning drawn mainly from Afghan refugee camps. Jihad was the main subject in the madrassas set up during General Zia’s time by the fundamentalist parties like Jaamat-i-Islami and Jamit-ul-ulema-e-Islam.[4]

The success of the Mujahideen against the Soviet Union gave hopes to Islamic Fundamentalist groups and their political mentors in Pakistan. After victory in the Afghan War, Jihad became an instrument of gaining political power by exploiting the religious sentiments of the people. Accordingly, several thousands of Kashmiris were trained by Pakistan in the 1980s to open a new front in Kashmir. Their slogan was, “We have celebrated victory in Kabul— let us go to Kashmir now.”[5] The frontiers of Jihad now extended from Chechnya to Kashmir and across the Indian Sub-continent to Bangladesh, Philippines and Indonesia. Militants trained in the madrassas in Pakistan have now become a formidable force, which operate successfully in several parts of the world.

In 1947, there were 137 madrassas in the entire country, but by the middle of the year 2000, the number of registered madrassas had grown to nearly 11,000. Some commentators in Pakistan have also estimated that the current number of unregistered madrassas would be between 40,000 to 50,000.[6] Most of these madrassas are free to preach narrow and violent versions of Islam. The mind-boggling curriculum in these madrassas entirely neglects all branches of practical and secular instructions and comprises of purely theological education like recitation of Quran, and indoctrination of Jihad.

Most of the madrassas offer religious instructions ignoring Mathematics, Sciences and other secular subjects that are important for functioning in modern society. The inevitable consequence of such education has been the chronic inability to produce reality-based theories of change, which in turn has given rise to extraordinarily narrow exclusionary perspectives and deepening sectarian divisions. All this has crystallised in the present syndrome of violence. Even worse, some extremist madrassas preach “Jihad” without understanding the true meaning of the concept.

They equate Jihad, which most Islamic scholars interpret as striving for justice (and principally an inner striving to purify the self), with violent guerrilla warfare.

These madrassas encourage their graduates to fulfill their “spiritual obligation” by fighting against the Hindus in Jammu and Kashmir in India and against the Muslims of other sects in Pakistan.

The main reason for parents sending their children to these madrassas is not that they want their children to become Jihadis, but due to their economic inability to send them to private schools and the government’s failure to provide necessary infrastructure, in terms of primary and secondary schools, and competent teachers. The Pakistan government spends around 2 per cent of GNP on education.[7] Even this amount does not reach the proper destination because of the prevalent corruption and misappropriation. Most of the government schools are running without teachers and the local politicians occupy school buildings. Whereas the upper class parents can afford to send their children to the private schools, the lower class parents have no other option, but to send their children to these madrassas.

These madrassas provide accommodation, food and scholarship. When the students finish their studies, quite a few madrassa graduates become professional mosque muezzins, professional pulpit preachers and prayer leaders. Their services are required at weddings and also at funerals. However, all the madrassa-returned students do not get such employment. To provide employment to the madrassa graduates, the society would require many mosques every year, but the inadequate growth of mosques in the preceding years, has created severe unemployment problem. In fact, unemployment is the most important factor in Pakistan; even young students who have graduated in secular education in government and private institutions also join Jihad. Crisis in Pakistan is so acute that many of the madrassa-educated students go on to join Jihad.

Important Facts about Madrassas

The madrassas cater to the education of people from areas where education is not easily accessible, catering to the poor and deprived.

- * All those involved in military training in addition to education are located in remote areas.
- * All entrants are mostly uneducated and poor.
- * In the name of religious education, madrassas generally promote a rather conservative and regressive version of the religion, divorced from reality, that advocates violence as a means to a desirable end.

If poverty is a fertile breeding ground for bigotry, then lack of education is the fertilizer for its growth. All those advocating violence as a means to an end, seek to justify their acts by saying that violence is a legitimate means to “right a perceived wrong”. The corrupted version of religion imparted to students in the madrassas accords divine sanction to these acts.

Many of these madrassas abound with pro-Jihadi literature— some of which are produced within the madrassas and many others are made available through a network responsible for coordination among the madrassas at some level. The walls of many of these madrassas carry large posters glorifying the Afghan Jihad, the militants and Osama bin Laden. It is pertinent to mention here that there are different kinds of madrassas depending upon their sectarian outlook, which divides the Jihadis in many ways. However, the common theme they cherish is celebration of violence almost as an end in itself.

In these madrassas, students are generally enrolled at the tender age of six and continue until they are sixteen. At such an impressionable age, it is fairly easy to inspire students to join the Jihad.[8] In reality, the parents of the students of these madrassas do not know anything about the modus operandi of these places of learning. “I had handed over my son to the madrassa so that he learns the Quran, not the handling of the guns”, said a father of a 13-year-old student who visited Afghanistan along with his colleagues from the Jamia Islamia Madrasa, Clifton, (Karachi) without his parents’ knowledge.[9]

Many of these madrassas are clearly geared towards producing ‘Mujahideen’(holy warriors) ready to wage “Jihad”. They are made to believe that Islam is in danger and that it needs their service. The recruits from madrassas are then taken to training camps, most of them located in the northern part of Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir (PoK). As Ahmed Rasid has noted, “over 80,000 Pakistani militants have been trained and fought with the Taliban since 1994. They form hardcore Islamic activists ever ready to carry out a similar Taliban style, Islamic revolution in Pakistan.”[10]

Madrassas are the supply-line for Jihad. So, if madrassas supply the labour for Jihad, then wealthy Pakistani and Arabs around the world supply the capital. On Eid-ul Azha, the second most important Muslim holiday for the year, Muslims are required to sacrifice animals and give the hide to charity. Pakistani militants groups solicit such hidden donations, which they describe as a significant source of funding for their activities. Most of the militant groups’ funding, however, comes in the form of anonymous donations sent directly to their bank accounts. Laskar-e-Taiba, which was banned by President Pervez Musharraf on January 12, 2002, and has resurfaced as Jamiat ud Dawa in recent months, is an Ahl-e-Hadith (Wahabi) group that even raises its fund on the Internet.

The Jihadi guerrilla and insurgent forces are also allegedly armed with high technology weaponry and provided with a sophisticated command and communication network. Such Jihadi movements do indeed pose a threat to all secular and democratic states in the neighbourhood. For example, all the neighbouring areas in the Afghan-Pakistan belt are being threatened by the aggressive design of these radical Islamic groups. Even China has taken notice of the support provided to the Uighur Muslims of the Xinjiang by radical Islamic groups operating from Pakistan and Afghanistan. Pakistan is waging a new kind of war against India, using the

madrassa product of “Jihadi Forces” as a front in Jammu and Kashmir for achieving its own political objective.

Such madrassa system has also affected the inter-sectarian relationship in Pakistan. Shia and Sunni madrassas have spawned rival terrorist forces that are engaged in violent attacks on sectarian rivals. There is also a deep schism between Sunni Deobandi and Barelvi madrassas and a large number of Ahl-e-Hadith madrassas.[11] It has been observed, however, that the Barelvi madrassas are not so much involved in militancy.

The mushrooming of madrassas in Pakistan has also led to the weaponisation of society, which is mostly witnessed in the frontier and border regions of Pakistan. Trade in contraband goods is the lifeline of the thousands of such groups in Federal Administered Tribal Area (FATA) and other tribal families in many areas, which are adjacent to Afghanistan. All these factors pose internal security threat to Pakistan.

Making of a Jihadi

During the phase of training, the recruits are taken to camps, most of which located in the northern parts of Pakistan and POK. The Al-Akhwan Academy located in the mountainous region of Chakwal about 110 km from Islamabad can train a batch of 750 recruits at a time. Similarly, Markaz-e-Toiba, which can train 400 recruits at a time, meets the needs of the Lashkar-e-Toiba. Al Badar-I and Al Badar-II in Muzaffarabad specialise in commando operations.[12]

The basic training lasts from six to eight weeks. It starts with a process of indoctrination, in which the recruits are made to read Islamic literature and be psychologically prepared for Jihad. They are asked to climb mountains in the dark, carrying on their shoulder bags weighing 20-30 kg. During this session, the trainees are constantly watched, and only those who are found committed and psychologically fit are selected for the next stage of training. The selected ones are sent for the Special Task Force (STF), after a short break of two to three weeks. During this session the recruits are trained in handling guns, firing methods, dismantling and assembling weapons etc. They handle all kinds of weapons—from pistols to Kalashnikovs to rocket launchers and rocket propelled grenades.

A winding up session during which tests are conducted to assess the trainees follows the STF course. Certificates are sent to the heads of the organisations to which the youth belongs. The best candidates are sometimes recalled for commando training, which lasts about three months. Such activity is buttressed by the madrassa culture that is prevalent in Pakistan.[13] One example cited is of the Jihad-training centre at Muridke near Lahore within the premises of the Markaz-Dawa-wal Irshad, which has been renamed after 9/11 as Jamat-ul-Dawa Pakistan.

This was founded in 1987 by three university teachers— Zafar Iqbal and Hafiz Mohammad Saeed from the university of Engineering and Technology in Lahore, and Abdullah Azam of the International Islamic University. From its relatively humble beginning, it grew into a formidable force. By 1997, the organisation was running 30 schools where nearly 5,000 students were enrolled.[14] While these schools followed the official syllabus for the teaching of secular subjects, additional study of Arabic, the “Quran” and “Sunnah” were compulsory from the primary level. These schools were clearly geared towards producing Mujahideen or holy warriors, ready to wage Jihad. “We will continue to work in the twin fields of education and Jihad”, said Professor Zafar Iqbal, one of the founders of the Markaz. “Jihad is being carried out to establish the system of Allah in the world. But this system cannot be established without education”,[15] the Professor explained.

The Haqqania Madrassa in Akhora Khatak, in the NWFP, is a sprawling collection of buildings on the main Islamabad-Peshawar highway. This is the biggest Madrassa in Pakistan. Its mosques and classrooms and dormitories are spread over eight acres of land and the Madrassa has currently enrolled more than 2,800 resident students. The students, range between 8 and 30 years (and sometimes 35 years) of age.[16] Haqqania is notable not only because of its size, but also because many leaders of the Taliban graduated from here. According to reports at Haqqania, indoctrination seems total and effective. Asked whether nuclear weapons should be deployed in Jihad or not, all the students in a classroom raised their hands in approval.[17]

It may be noted that the Binori Town mosque in Karachi is regarded as a veritable Mecca of Islamic learning. The mosque has been spreading Deobandi Sunni ideology and claims to have students as well as donations from many countries, which include Britain, France, Germany, and Philippines etc. The Binori Town mosque is the second largest seminary in Pakistan. The mosque imparts comprehensive Islamic education to some 8,000 students at a time.[18]

The emergence of purely Jihadi organisations is an important feature of the Pakistani madrassas. They vow to fight for the cause of Islam and for Muslims the world over. They have association with political and religious forces. Together, the Islamic political parties and the militant outfits have given rise to what may be called a “Jihadi culture”, with Jihadi movements and Jihadi strategies which are deployed inside and outside the country by the vested interests.

It will be useful now to discuss some of the major organisations/outfits wedded to the idea of militancy and violence, which recruit madrassa-returned youth for their campaigns in Pakistan and Kashmir.

Jamaat-i-Islami: Jamaat-i-Islami was founded by Maulana Maudoodi’s, in 1941 and symbolised the aspirations of the religious groups to control power in the country established in the name of Islam. The Jamaat-i-Islami runs the Syed Maudoodi International Institute at its headquarter in Lahore, which trains and financially helps, Islamists. For the Jamaat-i-Islami, the dispatching of zealots to fight against oppression of Muslims in any part of the world, or the bombing of an

enemy installation, was justified if it was for the larger Islamic cause. The Jamaat-I-Islami has well-disciplined cadres, through which it vociferously advocates fundamentalism.[19] Hizbul Mujahideen, operating in Kashmir, is a militant outfit of the Jamaat-i-Islami. Syed Salahuddin heads this group, which has been operating in Kashmir since its inception in 1989 in Srinagar.[20] Most of its militants are Kashmiri, both from the POK and Kashmir.

Al Badar: Al Badr is the third largest militant group operating in Jammu & Kashmir. In its present form, the organisation surfaced in September 1998, after splitting away from the Hizbul Mujahideen and Bakht Zameen is the current chief of Al Badar. An organisation by the name first emerged in 1971 when it persecuted the Bengalis of East Pakistan. With the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Al Badr operated as a faction of Hekmatyar's Hizb-e-Islami.[21] The organisation began training the first Kashmiri insurgents in 1989, and in 1990 became actively involved in Kashmir as a regiment of the Hizbul Mujahideen.

Tehrik-e-Jafaria: A major Shia organisation in Pakistan, the party was born following the major success of the Shia's protest movement against certain aspects of Zia-ul-Haq's Islamisation Laws. It splintered into many groups including Sipah-e-Mohammed Pakistan, a violent anti-Sunni faction.

Harkatul Mujahideen: It is one of the most active militant groups, which have often been accused by western countries of being involved in terrorism. When the United States declared Harkatul Ansar a terrorist organisation in 1995, following the kidnapping of five western tourists in Kashmir, the group immediately changed its name to Harkatul Mujahideen. But the name also has a history of its own. Harkatul Ansar itself was formed in 1993 when two Deobandi militant groups, Harkat-e-Jihad-e-Islami and Harkatul Mujahideen merged with each other. Farooq Kashmiri, with Fazlur Rehman Khalil as a secretary-general, presently heads it. In terms of political and material support, it is linked to both the factions of Jamiat-ul-Ualma-e-Islam (JUI) of Samiul Haq and Fazlur Rehman.[22]

Lashkar-e-Taiba: It is the most aggressive of these organisations, and the one with the largest manpower and resources. Lashkar-e-Taiba (army of the pure) is the militant wing of Jamaat-ud-Dawa (earlier Markaz-ul-Dawat-ul-Irshad) Pakistan, an Ahle Hadith, Wahabi organisation based in Muridke, near Lahore founded in 1986. There are many Pakistani Jihadi organisations operating in Kashmir, but Lashkar is the largest of them. Eighty per cent of the Lashkar's soldiers belong to Pakistan. Since its inception, it has managed to attract thousands of committed young madrassa students into its fold.[23]

An interview with the Amir of the Lashkar-e-Taiba (L-e-T) reveals the specific motivations and goals of this organisation. The interview was conducted by a Pakistani Journalist, Zaigham Khan, with Hafiz Mohammed Khan; "Our Jihad is confined strictly to non-Muslims, and particularly Hindus and Jews, the two main enemies of the Muslims"[24] The Lashkar operates four training camps: Maoskar-e-Taiba, Moaskar-e-Aqsa, Omal Qura and Abdullah Bin Masood—in the mountainous terrain of Jammu & Kashmir. The organisation has also set up a

Baitul Mujahideen (house of Mujahideen) in Muzaffarabad, which serves as a reception office for all those aspiring to join the struggle in Kashmir.

There are two different modes of training imparted at these camps. The first is a 21-day standard or general course called the Daura-e-Aama, while the second is a more intensive three-month course called Daura-e-Khasa.[25] It is during the latter that the recruits learn the techniques of guerrilla warfare, use of small arms and the art of ambushing. As a matter of policy, a volunteer must stop shaving and grow bread as soon as he has formally been recruited by the organisation.

Pakistan, on December 25, 2001, froze the bank accounts of L-e-T, which was blacklisted by US. Lashkar-e-Taiba chief, Hafiz Muhammad said on December 25, 2001: "We have no offices or assets in Pakistan-our assets are our Mujahideen and who can freeze them?"[26] Lashkar was said to be involved in the December 13, 2001, attack on the Indian Parliament. President Musharraf banned this organisation on January 12, 2002. It is regrouping under Jamaat-ud-Dawa recent media reports from Pakistan suggested.

Jaish-e-Mohammad(J-e-M): J-e-M (Army of Mohammad) differs from other Jihadi outfits in the scope of its agenda, which extended beyond the battle against Indian forces in Kashmir. Following its creation in the last week of January 2000, the group quickly became involved in sectarian warfare within Pakistan and its approach towards Jihad proved to be a source of conflict with other Jihadi organisations.[27] The J-e-M, which was banned on January 12, 2002, grew at an astonishing rate. Its chief Maulana Masood Azhar expounded the concept of *muqqalid* or follower, a doctrine, which has its roots in Deobandi teachings. Azhar preached that Jihad could not be waged in the absence of a spiritual leader to whom all holy warriors owe allegiance and condemned those who did not subscribe to the idea.[28] Jaish's formation splintered the Harkatul mujahideen, and a large number of Harkat activists opted for Azhar's organisation. They converted Harkat offices across the country into Jaish outlets overnight. Some L-e-T activists also crossed over to the J-e-M. General Musharraf also banned it on January 12, 2002. However, Jaish has renamed itself as Tehrik-e-Khuddam-ud-Din and expanding its network within Pakistan right under the very nose of the Pakistani administration in Karachi.

Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan(SSP): SSP is a hard line Sunni political-cum-militant organisation. It is vigorously opposed to Iran and to the Shia community in Pakistan. It has links with Harkatul Mujahideen and Jaish-e-Mohammad. Its chief Azam Tariq became Masood Azhar's *muqqalid*. [29] Lashkar-e-Jhangvi is a separate militant wing of the SSP. It is one of the most dreaded militant sectarian organisations operating in Pakistan. The SSP came to be the umbrella political group while the Jaish-e-Mohammad and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi represented the organisation's Jihadi and domestic militant wings respectively. Pakistan President General Pervez Musharraf banned both the organisations on August 14, 2001.

Conclusion

In Pakistan, there is a close relationship between Islamic political parties and various militant outfits. For instance, the Jamiat-ul-ulema-e-Islam (JUI) had a fundamental connection with the Taliban, since Afghan youth educated at JUI-run madrassas, originally formed the rank and file of the student's militia. Similarly, the Jamaat-i-Islami is said to have spawned a guerrilla offshoot of the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, while most Ahl-e-Hadith political groups in the country are affiliated with the Lashkar-e-Taiba. Similarly, Shia political parties in Pakistan are associated with the Hizb-e-Wahadat.[30]

Pakistan can blame no one but itself for the backlash of its Afghanistan policy in terms of increased militancy and terrorism at home and outside. Thousands of volunteers affiliated with the Jamiat-ul-Ulema (Fazlur-Rehman), Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Islam (Samiul Haq), Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-i-Jhangvi, and Kashmiri fighters from the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, Al-Badr Mujahideen, and Arab nationals from the different countries have been trained in guerrilla and defence warfare in Afghanistan during the last two decades, and hundreds more continue to report at the military camp in PoK.[31]

Presently, ISI and other agencies are still operating in many training centres in PoK and in Pakistan. Significantly, most of these training camps— as well as, transit, holding and launching camps— are known to be located near identified army units. The ISI-run training programme is fairly intensive and includes lessons in handling of weapons and explosive devices.[32] It is also believed that under the patronage of the ISI, Pakistan's religious organisations had established close contacts with clandestine Islamic movements in Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.[33] Several of Pakistani Islamic fighters reportedly crossed over to these predominantly Muslim republics, which were part of the erstwhile USSR, to promote the cause of Islam against infidel communists.

The Soviet officials had protested strongly against the infiltration of Pakistani Islamists into those states. Another area in the region, where one suspects Pakistan's hand in the escalation of the conflict situation is Chechnya (a small Muslim majority part of Southern Russia) engaged in a war of total secession from Moscow. Chechens have been extended various kinds of help and assistance by Pakistan.[34] Leaders of Pakistan's Jamaat-i-Islami confirmed that their volunteers have been fighting alongside Dudayev's forces. Apart from providing ideological and military training to Islamic militants from Xingiang, Pakistan is reported to have been arranging for extension of various kind of assistance to Uighur Muslims of the northwestern Chinese province. [35]

It is an irony of history that the US, which gave all assistance to the growth of Islamic militancy and extremism to promote its interests in Afghanistan, has now been paying a high price for its misadventure. For instance, the stinger missile, which the US supplied to rebels, (Taliban) has become a major security threat to western interests, and now the same Islamic militants, it once funded have turned against the US.[36] On the one hand the US now calls them terrorists, they, on the other hand, say that the US is the greatest terrorist in the world.

The menace of Islamic extremism and terrorism has been a serious threat to various Islamic and secular countries in Asia, Africa, Europe and the United States and it will continue to remain as a threat unless the international community decides to fight it both militarily as well as intellectually.

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