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AFGHAN AND PAKISTANI TALIBAN
A Comparative Study of
Their Political Ideology and Religious Affiliations

Muhammad Kalim Ullah Khan¹ and Osman Bakar²

Abstract

The main aim of this article is to discuss several facets of the socio-political phenomena known under the general name of Taliban that swept Afghanistan and embroiled Pakistan in a regional conflict since the last decade of twentieth century. The focus of the discussion is on the emergence of Afghan and Pakistani Taliban as two separate and distinct movements, their organizational developments, and their similarities and differences in terms of political ideology, religious affiliations, and relationships with Pakistan. The organizational and political-religious transformation of the Taliban is examined in this article in three historical phases. First, the political-religious background in Afghanistan that led to the formation of the Taliban in 1994 and its rise to power in 1996 only two years after its existence as an Islamic movement. Second, the seven-year period 1994-2001 during which the Taliban ruled Afghanistan until they were ousted from power following the invasion of the country by the US-led coalition forces a month after the September 11 (2001) tragic event in New York. This article examines the transformation of the Taliban as a movement and as a government ruling in the name of Islam during this period. And third, the twenty-year period when the Taliban as opposition forces waged an insurgency against the US-installed puppet regime that successfully ended with them regaining power in August 2021. The article concludes with some

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remarks on the possible directions in which the Taliban could be heading in the post-2021 era.

Keywords: Taliban, Afghanistan, Pakistan, ideology, the US, extremism, and religious.

Introduction

There is no doubt that the Taliban has become an important as well as a controversial issue in the contemporary world. They now ruled Afghanistan for the second time after humiliating the United States (US) and its allies by forcing them to flee the country. They returned to Kabul with little resistance. The first time the Taliban ruled Afghanistan, with hardly any experience in governance and administration not to mention their political immaturity and religious extremism, they gained fame in the West for hosting the US' then number one enemy Osama bin Laden and his senior aides and providing him with a sanctuary in the Afghan mountains. They also gained notoriety in the West as oppressors of women. But many Muslims do not agree with this Western view. They prefer to give the Taliban a chance to prove to the world that without external interference they would bring positive changes in Afghanistan both on the political and religious fronts.

It is important to emphasize though that this group owes its existence and violent growth to the confluence of several international forces that sought to draw Afghanistan into their respective political and military orbits of influence. These forces, clearly more so than the domestic ones, particularly American and Russian interventions in various forms, helped plunge the country into chaos. But neighbouring Pakistan and India also had a fair share of their divisive interference in Afghanistan over the decades. These two traditional rivals in the Indian subcontinent could not let their hands off Afghanistan even for a single moment because of its apparent strategic importance to them. Global superpower and regional rivalries and infightings among the Afghan Muslims help pave the way for the emergence of the Taliban as a radical Islamic movement and thrust them to the centre-stage of international politics at the turn of the twenty-first century.

The Taliban (literally students in both Pashto and Arabic) was founded as an Islamic movement in 1994. Its founding-leader (*amir*) was Mulla Mohammed Omar, an Afghan militant from the Pashtun ethnic group, which is the largest in the country. It was a group unknown to the outside world until they gained power in 1996 by default. As it happened, the Taliban emerged on the political scene that year to fill the prolonged power vacuum created by the failure of the Mujahidin coalition to form a working government. Although the Taliban was founded in Afghanistan, its name initially was not exclusively used to refer to its members who were Afghan citizens. There were also significant numbers of Taliban members who lived on the Pakistani side of the border with Afghanistan. They were either Afghan students in Pakistani madrasas (seminaries) many of which were financed by Saudis, or Pakistani madrasamates who were also ethnic Pashtuns. Taliban members in the two countries were thus united in religion and ethnicity. Moreover, rather noteworthy is the fact that ethnic Pashtuns constitute nearly 20% of Pakistan's population making them the second largest ethnic group in the country. This demographic fact means that the first Taliban government in Kabul enjoyed sympathy and support from the Pashtun population on both sides of the border. They could rely on the local Pashtun population as a source of membership recruitment.

However, the label Pakistani Taliban did not appear until after the American invasion of Afghanistan and the fall of the Taliban government. We will later explain the developments in the post-invasion Taliban movement that led to the identification of Pakistani Taliban as a distinct group from the Afghan Taliban who were waging an insurgency against the American puppet regime in Kabul. There has been some confusion among researchers about the identity of the Pakistani and Afghan Taliban. This article will show that the two groups are not identical, although there exist ideological, social, and organizational relationships between them. It will discuss similarities and differences between the two Taliban groups.

The Emergence of the Taliban: Historical Background

The original Taliban that was established in 1994 by Mulla Omar was an independent Islamic movement with its own cause and goals.

Before its appearance, several streams of Islamic ideology favouring the enforcement of Islamic law (*Shariah*) have flowed across Afghanistan. Each stream is identified with a particular Muslim organization or Islamic movement. In this sense there were several Islamic movements and Islamic political parties predating the Taliban, including *Hizb-e-Islami* (Islamic Party) led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar (born: 1949) and *Jamiat-e-Islami* (Islamic Society) led by Burhanuddin Rabbani (1940-2011). Scholars have used different theories to explain the diversity in Islamic ideological movements in the country that are basically political in nature. The theories include those that see these movements as expressions of “traditional revolt”³ against modernity or as a “fundamentalist variety of pan-Islamism identified with the Muslim Brotherhood”⁴ in the Arab world or as a nationalistic response to the modern challenge.

The Islamic political ideology in its various forms in Afghanistan did not develop during the Soviet occupation. Rather, it has been nurtured as early as 1968 by such thinkers as Professor Ghulam M. Niazi (1932-1978)⁵ and Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani, and even earlier in 1957 by Dr Saeed M. Musa Tawana, another academic from Kabul University. Abdul Rahim Niazi (d. 1970) founded the student organization *Jawan-e-Musalman* (Muslim Youth) in 1968 in Kabul University.⁶ The Soviet Union tried its best to crush this organization through its Marxist leader Sardar Muhammad Daud Khan (1909 – 1978), who overthrew the monarchy of Mohammad Zahir Shah (reign: 1933-1973) in 1973 through a military coup d’etat to establish Afghanistan as a republic. However, this first President of modern Afghanistan failed.⁷ He was

³ C. Gerald, “With the Afghan rebels,” *The New York Review of Books*, 1980.

⁴ S. Harrison, “Dateline Afghanistan: Exit through Finland,” *Foreign Policy* 41 (Winter) (1980): 178.

⁵ Ghulam Nazi was a Professor of Theology at the Faculty of Shariah, Kabul University. He founded the first Islamic circle in Afghanistan (1957) and later (1967) together with Rabbani *Jamiat-e-Islami* Afghanistan and is thus qualified to be treated as the founder of the Islamic movement in modern Afghanistan.

⁶ F. Rahman & B. Qureshi, *Afghans Meet Soviet Challenge* (Peshawar: Institute of Regional Studies, 1981).

⁷ S. G. Speen, “Flexible ‘fundamentalism’ favoured by the US and for Afghanistan,” in *Issues in the Islamic Movements*, ed. K. Siddiqui (London: The Open Press

assassinated in 1978. Anti-communist Muslim fighters intensified their guerrilla war against the Afghan communist government. The regime was in deep trouble. The following year in late 1979, the Soviet Union intervened to save the communist government. That fateful event was to plunge Afghanistan into a civil war, the so-called Soviet Afghan War (1979-1989), which was essentially a protracted armed conflict between the Soviet Union and the Afghanistan Mujahidin supported by the US and its allies. The Soviet invasion and its aftermath were to drag the US and other powers into the conflict, helping to turn it into a major international crisis.

The original Afghan Mujahidin led by Sibghatullah Mojaddedi (1925-2019) emerged as a jihadi response to the Soviet invasion. Their leaders were highly educated. Several of them were University Professors and doctors. They were determined to establish an Islamic Republic in Afghanistan in place of the hated Marxist Republic. Although there was a mass exodus of Afghans to Pakistan following the Mujahidin liberation war against the Soviet puppet regime in Kabul (1979-1989), the great majority of the Mujahidin did not migrate to Pakistan or Iran; they stayed to fight the puppet regime. The regime installed by the Soviet Union under the leadership of President Najibullah (1947-1996) fought the Mujahidin and its allies for nearly three years without success. When the regime finally collapsed in April 1992, a power struggle emerged among the Mujahidin parties.

After the fall of Najibullah, the Mujahidin coalition reached an agreement on post-Soviet governance on 24 April 1992. An Islamic Council would be formed with Sibghatullah Mojaddedi as President for the first two months followed by Rabbani for the next four months. This development in Afghan politics looked promising at first, but the power sharing agreement collapsed due to infighting among the Mujahidin groups and political differences between Mojaddedi and Rabbani. The latter refused to yield power. Following negotiations to resolve the intra-Mujahidin conflict, the Afghan leaders signed another Islamabad accord on 7 March 1993. According to this agreement, Rabbani was to remain President and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar to become the Prime Minister but that accord

Limited, 1985), 247.

failed to be implemented. The intra-Mujahidin fighting worsened to the point of Hekmatyar's forces attacking Kabul. This development had serious negative implications for the country. In 1996, with the country in chaos without a working government, the then two-year old Taliban with no experience in politics and governance took over Kabul to form a government.

The Taliban: Its First Taste and Reign of Power

The war-weary Afghan people supported the Taliban not for any ideological reason but simply because they wanted to see a normalcy of peace, thinking that they were just "Taliban" (students), politically innocent free from sectarian political ambitions. But the international community – save Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) – did not recognize its government. As for the Taliban, they seemed unconcerned with the international opinion. They just wished to get freedom from the traditional warlords^{8,9}.

Pakistan officially recognised the Taliban government on 25 May 1997. Pakistan justified its recognition and support for the Taliban government by claiming that it wanted to restore peace and unity in its neighbouring Afghanistan, which it then viewed as a highly desirable objective for the Afghan people themselves. Pakistan's position is understandable since if peace were to prevail in Afghanistan, there would be peace in Pakistan as well. Furthermore, since the Soviet invasion nearly 3.5 million Afghan refugees moved into Pakistan,¹⁰ which threatened the country's internal security, peace, and prosperity. According to the Street Wall Journal, four million Afghan people were then living in Pakistan.¹¹ Presently, more than two million Afghan refugees are still living in Pakistan, which is a constant burden on the country's economy and a source of

⁸ R. Yusufzai, "Violation of Islamic teaching," *The News International*, Islamabad. October 4, 1996.

⁹ H. Malik, *Pakistan: Founders' Aspirations and Today's Realities* (Oxford University press, 2001), 395.

¹⁰ M. Jalalzai, *Taliban and the New Great Game in Afghanistan* (Lahore: Dua Publications, 2002), 194; and A. Siddique, "Securing peace and promoting stability in Western Pakistan," in *Stabilization Operations, Security and Development; States of fragility*, ed. R. Muggah (Oxon., 2014), 107.

¹¹ "Unspooking Spooks." *Wall Street Journal Editorial*, 18 September 2001.

violence. From Pakistan's perspective, it had more reasons to gain than to lose from its diplomatic relations with the newly setup Taliban government.

Paramount in Pakistan's decision to recognise the Taliban government was its security interests. In FATA (Federal Administered Tribal Agencies) and along the Afghan border there were many secret agencies working for their own sectarian interests. These agencies found opportunities to sabotage national and regional peace-seeking efforts. Sometimes violence increased along the Durand Line (the 2,670 km international border between Afghanistan and Pakistan) due to the direct involvement of secret agencies such as the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW).¹² A statement by ex-Indian Foreign Minister reflects his country's interest in this region; he said that red lines should not be crossed in negotiation with the Taliban¹³. The Pakistani Army and Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) did not play a negative role against the Taliban, because ISI knew that the American Army and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) would leave the country and they would have to get together on each matter. Pakistan's government and military had spent much energy in ventures since 1979. The Pakistani military or ISI could bring in new constant antagonists and nurtured a permanent neighbour against its wishes.

The ISI had to survive in a complex and complicated web of international and regional networks, but the CIA goals were comprehensive. To the Pakistan government's credit, it saved the country from external aggressions. Indian forces were deployed on Pakistan's border ready with the Israeli Air Force in Siri Nager (Kashmir) to attack Pakistan after 9/11 had occurred. The US and its Allies pressured Pakistan to join them leaving it with no choice but to join. India, Israel, U.S and NATO and other allies' first target was Pakistan. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia and all Muslim countries were hesitant to support Pakistan directly. However, the country survived, although its foreign policy and diplomacy were not favourable to the solidarity of Pakistan and the major issue was Taliban. It was a

¹² Ibid. p. 95.

¹³ S. Khurshid, "Red lines and negotiation with Taliban," *The Express* (Urdu), 21 June 2013.

similar situation that Pakistan faced during the Soviet Afghan War; politically, economically, and strategically the existing situation was a great threat to Pakistan's survival.

Saudi Arabia's recognition and support for the Taliban government followed only a day after Pakistan's. Later that same week, the UAE became the third country to confer official recognition, which is hardly surprising since it usually toes the Saudi line in foreign policy. Saudi support appeared to be primarily based on religious consideration. Many of the Taliban leaders and followers, including Mulla Omar, had studied in the Deoband seminaries (*madrasas*) in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. Many of these seminaries are financed by the Saudis. There is ideological affinity between the Saudi Wahhabi school of thought and the Deoband school of thought that shaped the Taliban mindset. The Deoband school emphasized exoteric aspects or externalities of the Shariah.

In both Afghanistan and Pakistan ethnicity and religiosity are closely intertwined. It is important to first understand the Pashtun tribal structure and Islamic identity before delving further into the issue of the Taliban Movement and its religious ideology. The Islamic identity of the Pashtuns is inextricably linked to their tribal system. Their traditional practices such as *riwaj* (customs) and *Pashtunwali* (the Pashtun code of ethics) are generally not in conflict with Islamic teachings. On their part, the Taliban did not forbid any local customs and village traditions when they were in power, because they believed them to be Islamic. However, they did end a few customs like the *baad system*, in which women from an enemy tribe had to be given to another group in hostility to stop mutual killing.

Foreign invaders found it challenging to draw the Taliban Pashtuns away from their tribal and social structures because their education in *hujras* (adjacent rooms attached to mosques) have made them more traditionally attached to their outward and inward practices of Islam. However, those Taliban who received their education from Pakistani madrasas just paid attention to their outward practices, and their political character was more romanticized. The younger generation lived their whole lives in

Pakistan, from infancy to adulthood, and received their education there as well, particularly from the Deoband school of thought. Which is why, they adhered to outward practices of the religion and were more focused on revolutionary Islamic ideas. For strategic purposes, the US and its allies made every effort to alter Afghan society's tribal structure, especially in the southern belt of Pashtun tribes. Their findings indicated that it was simpler to alter the tribal system of law than the Islamic one. No matter whether the two systems were based on local customs or Islamic law, neither made it possible for invaders to overthrow or destroy them. In a nutshell, Islam coexists with the Pashtun's tribal organization.

The Taliban underwent significant ideological and political shifts beginning in the second half of the 1990s after their rise to power and again after their return to power in August 2021. Quite clearly, over the lengthy period of twenty-five years (1996-2021), dramatic shifts in their ideological outlook took place. Many academics are unsure whether the Taliban Movement began as an Islamic movement or as a Pashtun movement. It should be kept in mind that both Pashtun customs and Islamic traditions were severely distorted during the Soviet occupation, specifically under Najib's communist administration. As we indicated above, the Taliban first appeared on the Afghan national political scene after the Mujahidin failed to reach a consensus on the composition of the national government. They were then mere students who had gathered under Mulla Omar's patronage.

The Afghan Taliban's organizational structure and political administrative set up were partly inclusive and partly exclusive. A clean and effective organizational network would depend on the clarity of its shaping ideas or ideology understood in the positive sense. If the guiding ideas are flawed, then the organizational structure will be weakened. Poor ideology combined with a hollow political administrative set up would make the state weaker. The Afghan Taliban appeared with unclear ideology and direction. As a result, the government failed to sustain itself. Progressively weakened, the government collapsed in a relatively short period.

In the beginning, the Taliban won the sympathies of locals but with the passage of time, people were trying to avoid them, because

of their authoritarian mindset. In the beginning, the Afghan people were happy that the Taliban did not demand power and after establishing law and order, they promised that they would hand over power to the sovereign government. However, after getting control of Kabul their behaviour and attitudes became dictatorial¹⁴. All powers were centralized in one hand, as was the case with the Pakistani Taliban.

During their first reign of power, the Taliban adopted three distinct strategies, namely ethnic, political, and religious. In the 1990s ethnic and expulsion of the Soviet Union strategy were used, in which they were successful and the whole nation was gathered under their umbrella. Ordinary Afghans chose to support the movement as it offered a safeguard against rampant extortion, rape, and other such lawlessness, rather than from a desire to comply with the Taliban's strict approach to religious doctrines.¹⁵ The popular perception amongst many Afghans is that prior to the Taliban rise to power, especially during the rule of the Mujahidin coalition, the government in Kabul has been dominated by non-Pashtuns, and especially by the Tajik-dominated Northern Alliance. This perception has resulted in sympathy for the Taliban, and the number of Pashtuns joining the movement has consequently risen. However, with the Soviet Union's expulsion, the ethnic strategy was abandoned in favour of a religious one that included the enforcement of Islamic laws and regulations. One thing is clear. During the 1990s the Taliban were more inclined towards religious rather than political ideology. But on the religious front the Taliban Administration received a poor review. It is severely criticised by the international community for its strict interpretation of the Shariah, particularly its restrictive view of the place and role of women in education.

The Afghan Taliban's ethnic strategy worked well with the Pashtuns since they share a common ethnic identity. In fact, its appeal extends to the whole Pashtun territory, including the

¹⁴ A. Rashid, *Taliban: Islam, Oil, and the New Great Game in Central Asia*. (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2010), 211.

¹⁵ David B. Edwards, *Before Taliban: Genealogies of the Afghan Jihad* (California: University of California Press, 2002), <http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft3p30056w> (accessed 20 Sep 2022).

neighbouring territory on the Pakistani side of the border from which both Afghan and Pakistani Taliban derive their main support. In this ethnic strategy the Afghan Taliban and the Pakistani Taliban converge. However, their pro-Wahhabi religious ideology has little appeal to the mainstream Afghan society since most Afghans are attached to either the traditional Sunni Maturidi theological school or the Sufi Orders or both.

Ideologically speaking, the Taliban may be classified into two groups: traditional Taliban and politically oriented Taliban. Mullah Omar (1960-2013), the first Afghan President under the Taliban, often mentioned that Islam is the only bond that binds all Afghans and therefore the Taliban should not indulge in fighting based on ethnicity, linguistic or tribal factors. But the Afghan Taliban has proved to be deeply ideological by virtue of their mixing political with religious ideology. They were embracing a divisive and regressive brand of political Islam. In their second reign of power since August 2021 it appears that they are still displaying the same brand of political-religious ideology.

Post-US Invasion Era: Taliban Insurgency and the Emergence of Pakistani Taliban

Following the September 11 (2001) incident, for which the US blamed Osama ben Laden who was given sanctuary in Afghanistan by Mulla Omar, the US-led coalition invaded the country and ousted the Taliban from power in October the following month in the name of fighting terrorism. The invasion further devastated the country and created more turmoil. The Taliban fought back by waging an insurgency against the US-installed puppet regime in Kabul. It was during this period that the media made its first reference to the existence of what is called the Pakistani Taliban that is separate and different from the Afghan Taliban.

Although the Taliban only emerged as a movement in Afghanistan in the last decade of the twentieth century, its early members had received religious education in Pakistan's seminaries. During the insurgency relations between Pakistan and the Taliban were rather volatile. Pakistan had to perform a delicate balancing act between its commitment as an ally to the US-led "coalition of the

willing” against the Taliban-supported Qaeda and its sensitivities to the Pakistani Pashtun sympathy for the Afghan Taliban. The media first used the term “Pakistani Taliban” when armed tribesmen resisted Pakistan’s drive against foreign militants who mostly existed along the Durand Line. Local Pashtuns were mobilized and activated, and it was these who became known as the Pakistani Taliban.¹⁶ They had a visible and active presence in FATA and the outskirts of the NWFP (North-West Frontier Province). Presently, the new name “*Khyber Pakhtunkhwa*” was adopted. Initially, they did not challenge the Pakistani law and order but later they were involved in disturbing the peace¹⁷. Initial government military operations against the Pakistani Taliban were often used more to obtain leverage than to defeat them. Due to conservatism, the FATA region was affected a lot by conflicting interests and fabricated ideas. Anyhow, Al-Qaeda exerted more influence on the Pakistani than on the Afghan Taliban. Some fighters in FATA that have mistakenly been referred to as the Taliban in the media were merely members of religious-cum-social organizations with political ambition and were in no way trying to undermine the government or its local representatives.

The Frontier Crimes Regulation Act 1901 was enforced by the British colonial rulers in the seven tribal regions covering 10,000 square miles. Each region was called an agency. After drawing the Durand Line in 1893, recognized *Sardars* and *Maliks* allowed local customary laws to prevail. The government does not interfere with the local system of *jirga* (council of elders) for the settlement of disputes. One tension, which contributed a lot to providing safe passage for the warriors, occurred in 2001, when the Indian Army was deployed on the eastern border known as *Line of Control* (LOC) due to the Kashmiri freedom fighters’ attack on the Indian Parliament¹⁸. Due to this giving of safe passage, this tribal belt has had a wave of extortions, narcotics, murders, and abductions. As a

¹⁶ H. A. Rizvi, “Understanding the insurgency,” *Daily Times*, Lahore, 5 October 2008.

¹⁷ C. Franco, “The Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan: The Bajaur case’, *NEFA Foundation*, 15 July 2009, www.nefafoundation.org, accessed 13 July 2010.

¹⁸ A. Rashid, *Taliban: Islam, Oil, and the New Great Game in Central Asia*, 224.

result, the local political administration became powerless, and the militants got stronger than ever¹⁹.

Unlike the Afghani Taliban, the Pakistani Taliban was neither independent nor committed to any specific ideology. The Pakistani Taliban has never been a monolithic entity. It was a group that served various interests. For one thing, most groups in FATA are fragmented into smaller units that range from 'hard' to 'soft'. The use of these terms has been much debated; while the hard Taliban mounts attacks in Pakistan and Afghanistan, the soft Taliban focuses on attacking Afghanistan. Both groups are composed of members with different tribal loyalties and different agendas, and a few units in each category oppose the Pakistani state and the security forces. Further, these units consider their fight against the Pakistani as a jihad. Mainstream Muslim community, however, disagree with their interpretation of jihad. The Pakistani Taliban perceives their actions towards the Pakistani Army and the mainstream Pakistani society as a jihad. Nonetheless, there are some slightly more moderate Taliban groups in FATA that, while not necessarily pro-government, are rarely involved in attacks against Pakistani forces. Several of these have opposed the presence of foreign warriors in their respective areas and such groups have concentrated mainly on Afghanistan.

Although without an ideology the Pakistani Taliban use the Taliban name to discredit the Afghan Taliban. However, the attempt to discredit the latter is rather misplaced. The Afghani Taliban are not known to have killed innocent civilians nor take extortion money²⁰. Anyway, the Pakistani Taliban employs a careful strategy to advance their cause based on establishing networks. First, they recruit personnel before initiating vigilante activities, which are justified by attacking so-called un-Islamic activities.²¹ These personnel were trained in different tribal areas by some secret agencies, and a huge amount of dollars was spent for this purpose. This is the traditional

¹⁹ *New York Times*, 19 January 2006.

²⁰ S. N. Jamal, "Afghan Taliban," *Roznāma Express* (Urdu), Lahore, Pakistan, 19 January 2014.

²¹ A. A. Shah, "Pakistani Taliban," *Interview International Center for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR)*, Singapore, 15 January 2009. Retrieved from <http://www.pvtr.org/StaffPublications.htm>.

history of the tribal area; they always keep guns with them. However, it does not mean that they are naturally ill-willed people. They are co-operative, patriotic, caring, dauntless, and brave. However, sometimes exaggerated claims are made. It is not true to say that secret agencies played an important role in nurturing a whole generation to become fighters as claimed by Daniel Markey who described the CIA, through the ISI, as having moved in huge sums of money to help establish madrasas to train a generation in warfare and militancy.²² The fact is that some fighters were brought by secret agencies from all over the world for training in this region, because that area was comparatively favourable and safer²³ according to battle rules, since they could easily be moved to other areas.

According to Ahmed Rashid, a Taliban-expert journalist, the Pakistani Taliban that arose across the border proved to be more ruthless and committed to Al-Qaeda²⁴. The Pakistan Taliban flourished in very remote areas where *takfīr* (apostasy pronouncements) was quite common. These areas are known for being the hotbed of religious extremism. The spirit of Islamic moderation has been lost. Instead, a wrongly interpreted jihadi culture prevailed, which encouraged extremism. Due to ignorance and misunderstandings, different religious groups issued wrong *fatāwa* (religious edicts) against one another. This misuse of fatwa polarized the Muslim community and created enmity among the various religious groups. It foments violence, since having declared a rival group as infidels and astray, renegades or apostates, a religious group may consider it legitimate to act violently.

Misguided jihadi culture that goes against Islamic teachings developed and spread in Pakistan due to two main reasons: one is the Kashmir dispute, and the other is the Soviet Afghan war. As many as perhaps 250,000 young people were recruited into the battlefields through sectarian organizations without being educated on the true

²² D. Markey, *Securing Pakistan's Tribal Belt*, Council Special Report No. 36, Council on Foreign Relations Center for Preventive Actions, August 2008. Retrieved from www.cfr.org/content/publications/attachments/Pakistan_CSR36.pdf.

²³ I. Gul, "Military operations in FATA," in *Political Violence and Terrorism in South Asia*, eds. P. I. Cheema, M. H. Noori & A. R. Malik (Islamabad: Islamabad Policy Research Institute, 2006).

²⁴ A. Rashid, *Taliban: Islam, Oil, and the New Great Game in Central Asia*, 236.

Islamic concept of jihad. Many Pakistanis associated the Pakistani Taliban with violence. The Afghan Taliban has also been blamed for the violence in Afghanistan and the adjoining regions in Pakistan. However, many parties and groups, including foreign powers contributed to violence after the Soviet Afghan War. During the War America and Saudi Arabia poured money into Afghanistan to finance Islamic fundamentalist movements to beat the Russians²⁵.

Hilary Clinton, the former US Secretary of State, also referred to her country's role in fomenting violence in the region when she said, "We also have a history of moving into Pakistan. The people we are fighting today, we funded them twenty years ago. We did it because we were reluctant about that struggle with the Soviet Union; they invaded Afghanistan, and we did not want to see them control Central Asia and so we went to work. Mr. Reagan dealt with the Pakistani ISI and military and recruited the Mujahidin. The Wahabi brand of Islam was imported from Saudi Arabia and from other places. Billions of dollars were wasted to collapse the Soviet Union."²⁶ This was the triangle of Saudi Arabia, the USA and Pakistan, who supported the *deobandi madrasa* students and poured huge amounts of money and supplies into the Islamic areas near Pakistan's border.²⁷ At the same time, the Taliban provided peace for a limited period through their own efforts in their territory. However, one thing that cannot be disputed was that when the Taliban appeared

²⁵ As Amir Rana says, "America started to spend enormous resources in the Afghan war. Berzenski describes that 3 July 1979; President Jimmy Carter sanctioned a fund of five hundred million dollar for this purpose, which was kept completely secret. According to John Pinger, the purpose of that fund was to establish such movement that could foster the religious Islamic fundamentalism to terminate the role of Russia in central Asia. America and Saudi Arabia, during the Soviet Afghan war, provided four hundred and five billion dollars to Pakistan and Afghanistan, and weapons and drugs became prominent business of this region" (Rana, 2002: 17-18). According to an Afghan correspondent Sur Gul Speen, America tried to create influence on Sardar Daud. For this purpose, they sent US\$12 to Daud in 1977. Huge amount was sent through the Shah of Iran to Sardar Daud (Speen, 1985).

²⁶ C. Hillary, *US and Taliban*. Accessed on 23-06-2013, at 11:08pm. Retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch>.

²⁷ A. Rashid, *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

on the scene, sectarianism and ethnic cleansing reached its climax for the first time in the history of Afghanistan.²⁸

The Pakistani Taliban: One Name, Many Groups

The diversity of the Pakistani Taliban needs to be thoroughly examined if we are to understand the complex web of allegiances and relationships among them. The next discussion is about the different Taliban groups and their allies' outfits.

1. Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP)

The Pakistan Taliban was established by Bait Ullah Mehsud under the full name of Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (Taliban Movement of Pakistan), hereafter cited as TTP. The strongholds of TTP are in Orakzai and Mehsud agencies, and North Waziristan and Bajaur. TTP claims it is involved in a defensive jihad against the Pakistan's Army²⁹. According to its spokesperson, 'the main objective of TTP is to fight NATO and US forces. However, we were forced to resort to a defensive jihad in our country, due to the wrong policies of Pakistan's government'³⁰.

The Pakistani Taliban wanted to create a government modelled on the Afghan Taliban government existing during the period 1996-2001. This was their first strategy to wrest control of the western province of Pakistan. They had sympathizers who agree with their strategies³¹. This is the case not only in tribal areas but also in Karachi, Pakistan's largest city and economic hub, where they had proved capable of paralyzing it with their disruptive activities; even Mulla Omer claimed that the Taliban had the ability to take control of Karachi³². Furthermore, they have threatened the *Muttahida Qaumi*

²⁸ A. Rashid, *Taliban: Islam, Oil, and the New Great Game in Central Asia*.

²⁹ *Daily Times*, Lahore, 16 December 2007.

³⁰ M. Abdul-Baqi, *Pakistani Taliban Disclosed*. Retrieved from www.islamonline.net. Accessed on 15 July 2010.

³¹ H. Abbas, "A Profile of Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan," *CTS Sentinel*, 2008. http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/publication/17868/profile_of_tehrikitaliban_pakistan.html.

³² F. Khan, "Taliban and their sympathizers," *Daily Times*, 10 August 2008.

movement (MQM)³³ headed by Altaf Hussain. The Pakistani Taliban's disruption and destabilization of Karachi had resulted in daily target killings and suicide attacks. No doubt, in this violent setting in Karachi, ethnic issues were at play, but the actual problem was political. The Pashtuns and the Mohājir were in political disputes fighting for dominance in such a significant highly populated area as Karachi.

TTP is known to have close connection with the madrasas. It is claimed that in the madrasas they controlled students were indoctrinated with ideology of violence. Many top leaders of the movement such as Abd Ullah Mehsud³⁴ are associated with the *Madrassa Islamia Banoria*, Karachi. To counter this threat of violence some Madāris have banned the Taliban outfits. However, the ban is quite difficult, if not impossible, to be implemented.

In the Waziristan region, which is divided into North and South, there are three dominant tribes, namely the Wazir, the Mehsud and the Dawar. The word 'Waziristan' means the land of the Wazirs³⁵. The inhabitants of the North and South Waziristan are known as the Utmanzai and Ahmedzai Wazirs respectively. The Wazirs generally abide by the Islamic traditions. The Mehsuds are less inclined to respect inherited traditions and are generally more violent³⁶ than the Wazirs. The Wazirs are dauntless and patriotic. There is enmity between the Wazir and the Mehsud tribes. This is because Dre, which is a clan of the Mehsud tribe, has wrested control of the Baddar Valley and Chalweshti from the Wazirs³⁷. Some jihadi organizations, like *Lashkar-e Jhangvi* and *Harkat-ul Mujahedin*, have operational partnerships with one another. According to Akbar S. Ahmed, the Mehsuds are naturally more jubilant³⁸ in their transitory victories than the Wazirs. Ahmed's characterization of the

³³ F. Khan, "Operational partnership," *Daily Times*, 4 September 2008.

³⁴ He was the *Fadil* (specific course of uloom-e Islamia wal-Arabia)

³⁵ A. S. Ahmed, *Religion and Politics in Muslim Society: Order and Conflict in Pakistan* (Cambridge University Press, 1983), 20.

³⁶ K. Fukui & J. Makarkis, eds., *Ethnicity and Conflict in the Horn* (Ohio University Press, 1994) 15-32.

³⁷ C. U. Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties Relating to India and Neighboring Countries* (Foreign and Political Dept., Government of India, Delhi, 1933).

³⁸ A. S. Ahmed, *Religion and Politics in Muslim Society*, 20.

Mehsud's patriotism is not shared by some others including the author's own friend from Waziristan who was cynical about it, suggesting instead that the Mehsuds' patriotism was only to get reward, nothing beyond that. If they can get rewards from foreigners, they would be happy to display their acts of patriotism. Minhaj-ud-Din Mehsud speaking about his own Mehsud tribe lends support to the same view in his MA thesis³⁹. Intra-political ethnic violence contributed a lot to the growth of the TTP in the region, since the psychological factor of ethnic identity plays an important role. Due to several factors, the Mehsuds became better suited to spearhead the reign of TTP.

2. Muqami (Local) Tehrik-e Taliban (MTT)

Muqami Tehrik-e Taliban (MTT) was formed with the aim of merging its forces with the Afghan Taliban to fight against NATO and US forces and if Pakistani forces created hurdles, it would fight against the Pakistani military⁴⁰. MTT has affiliations with the Afghan Taliban, Islamic Jihad Union, Tanzim Al-Qaeda Al- Jihad and the Libyan Islamic Fighters Group. MTT is more moderate than the TTP. Although they want to enforce the same Taliban model of Islamic rule in Pakistan, Mulla Umar persuaded the Pakistani Taliban to concentrate their energies in Afghanistan. Moreover, he was offended by the TTP's formation, and he disowned the Bait Ullah Mehsud⁴¹. The second difference between MTT and TTP is that the former is in favour of negotiation with Pakistan's government. The third difference between the two is that unlike TTP, MTT has no foreign fighters.

3. Lashkar-e Islam (Horde of Islam) (LI)

The Khyber region is the stronghold of LI. Through this agency, more than three hundred trucks loaded with supplies come through the Khyber Pass crossing Torkham. LI is locally known as Tanzeem (organization), founded by Muftī Munir Shakir. The organization has

³⁹ M. Mehsud, "*Impact of Education on Social Change in South Waziristan Agency*," (Unpublished Master's Thesis, Punjab University, Lahore, Pakistan, 1970).

⁴⁰ *Dawn*, Karachi, 1 July 2008.

⁴¹ *Asia Times*, 24 January 2008.

many sectarian differences with Peer Saif-ur-Rahman. Peer Saif-ur-Rahman belonged to a *Sufi* (mystic) way, which had many similarities with *Beralvis*, and due to sectarian differences with Munir Shakir, he had to shift from the Khyber agency to *Faqir Abad* near Lahore. LI's ideas match with the Deobandi sect and they declared jihad against the non-Deobandis; its followers strictly oppose the Sufis whom they consider as exploiters. Mufti Munir Shakir came from the Karak district and settled in the Kurram agency, but he was forced to flee to the Khyber agency on account of his contentious opinions and later, for the same reasons, he had to leave the Khyber agency too.

LI is not supportive of TTP, although its leaders invited them many times to join. Its main aim is to eliminate all forms of evils which exist in society. Moreover, LI has no objection to the presence of Pakistan's army in Bara; unlike TTP, LI did not have any fight with the Pakistan's army. LI defends the Afghan Taliban's insurgency, but it denies having any link with them. Furthermore, LI has no links with Al-Qaeda, nor does it have any intention to send its members to fight outside the region. Significantly, LI has banned all terrorists from staying in or entering the Khyber agency, be they local or foreign.

4. Punjabi Taliban (PT)

The Punjabi Taliban has settled and dwelled in Mehsud's tribal areas in South and North Waziristan agencies. They are stronger than other Taliban groups⁴² but there is inconsistency in them. They are trying to establish their territory in the Shawal Valley near the Afghan border. However, they have not much presence in this valley. Youngsters are brought to be taught and brainwashed that the Pakistan's Army and polity are pro-American. Punjabi Taliban mostly come from Punjab province where *Beralvis* constitute the majority and due to this, the Punjabi Taliban are more rigorous than the other Taliban groups. Punjabi Taliban have appeared very late on the scene. Their network is not vast because they do not have definite areas to enhance their activities. However, they are getting enough

⁴² *Daily Times*, Lahore, 26 August 2009.

contacts with different organizations. In addition, they have made some relations with al-Qaida. In our view, PT would be a more attractive partner to al-Qaida in Pakistan than the TTP. Moreover, they need to hire people for their activities because their recruits are less in number than those of MTT or TTP. They came from different cities of the Punjab province such as Multan, Bahawalpur, Dera Ghazi Khan, and Rahim Yar Khan. They can speak Pashto fluently, which is the local language of Northern West Province.

5. Tehrik-e Nifaz Shariat-e Muhammadi (TNSM)

Sufi Muhammad established *Tehrik-e Nifaz Shariat-e Muhammadi* (TNSM) in 1992. According to him, the existing system in Pakistan is totally for infidels⁴³. Different *'ulama* in his party give him advice on different occasions. Its members wear black turbans, and they have shoulder length hair. TNSM is not organized in the tribal areas where its members are a majority since they are mostly poor, being labourers and peddlers. For instance, its leader, Mulana Fazlullah, was a chair-lift operator. The TNSM was non-violent but with the passage of time, it indulged in violent activities during the 1990s. However, Sufi Muhammad himself delivered infuriated emotional speeches to provoke the people against Afghanistan. During Musharraf's period, his *Tehrik* (movement) was banned, and Sufi Muhammad was sent to jail⁴⁴. However, now he has been acquitted⁴⁵. The Swat valley with world-renowned natural beauty became the breeding ground for terrorists.⁴⁶ Later, TNSM was merged with TTP without the consent of Sufi Muhammad, and Mulana Fazlullah was appointed as Secretary-General. Consequently, Sufi Muhammad condemned the activities led by Fazlullah. He said, "We never intended to pick up arms for the enforcement of the Shariah. We

⁴³ *Daily Times*, Lahore, 4 May 2009.

⁴⁴ M. Rana, *Back Grounder: Shari'ah Movement in Malakand* (South Asia Net, Pak Institute for Peace Studies, 2008).

⁴⁵ "TNSM chief Sufi Muhammad acquitted, *International News*, 18 April 2015 Retrieved from, <http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-181895-TNSM-chief-Sufi-Muhammad-acquitted-in-16-more-terrorism-cases>. Accessed on 21 May 2015.

⁴⁶ *The News*, Lahore, 18 June 2007.

cannot even think of killing people for this purpose.”⁴⁷ After the merger of the TNSM with TTP, the Taliban were allowed to establish their footholds in the Malakand division.

In the beginning, a minority of the people welcomed Sufi Muhammad in the hope that he would enforce the Shariah. Some people even presented him with jewellery to help him cover the cost of maintaining peace in the region, because they were being compelled by the landlords and other ruling elites to give up the region. No doubt, people were very obedient to the Islamic law, and they wanted to spend their lives according to the Shariah. However, the TNSM leaders were incompetent in enforcing the Shariah. Therefore, Sufi Muhammad could not create peace in Swat Valley and Malakand, and his son-in-law Fazlullah sabotaged the peace process due to the alliance with TTP. Although Sufi Muhammad’s views were not the same as those of TTP, he wanted to enforce the Afghan Taliban Shariah system in Pakistan, specifically in the Swat Valley and Malakand division. In his opinion, only the Taliban can enforce the Shariah law in Pakistan⁴⁸. TNSM did not believe in democracy or other forms of governments because all these systems, according to their definition, are based on infidelity. In his speeches, he declared that the Pakistani constitution was an infidel one, and all the institutions of state were infidel institutions; he said in one speech, “I would not offer prayer behind anyone who would seek to justify democracy.”⁴⁹ According to his doctrine, in the presence of the Quran and the Prophetic Sunnah, there is no need of any constitution⁵⁰.

Conclusion

The foregoing discussion shows that the movement generally known as the Taliban that operates in both Afghan and Pakistani territories appears as fragmented and splintered into many groups. The Afghan Taliban which now rules Kabul for the second time is seen as a united and solid organization. But its relations with the outside world

⁴⁷ *The News*, Lahore, 31 March 2008.

⁴⁸ *The News*, Lahore, 1 July 2007.

⁴⁹ *Roznama Waqt* (Urdu Newspaper), 14 May 2009.

⁵⁰ *Roznama Waqt* (Urdu Newspaper), 14 May 2009.

are problematic to say the least. Till now, no country recognises them as the lawful government of Afghanistan, although there has been limited recognition of their de facto governance over the country. The Pakistani Taliban, however, is diverse with some groups working with and some others opposing Pakistan's military and local government authorities. There is tension and conflict not only between the Pakistan Taliban groups and Pakistani authorities but also among themselves. Since the Afghan Taliban is enjoying support from some Taliban groups on the Pakistani side of the border that are opposed to the Pakistani government the relation between Pakistan and Taliban-ruled Afghanistan can only be strained and volatile.

The future of Taliban Afghanistan is full of uncertainties. A major contributing factor to these uncertainties is the unresolved tension and conflicts between the different groups comprised under the Pakistani Taliban and between Afghanistan and Pakistan as close neighbours. In the final analysis the future of Taliban Afghanistan lies in the hands of the Taliban leadership itself. It is a question of whether the movement is prepared to earnestly and sincerely reform and renew itself in the light of the integral teachings of Islam viewed in its totality. Reform (*iṣlāḥ*) and renewal (*tajdīd*) are the two keys to the future of Afghanistan.

TRANSLITERATION TABLE

CONSONANTS

Ar=Arabic, Pr=Persian, OT=Ottoman Turkish, Ur=Urdu

Ar	Pr	OT	UR	Ar	Pr	OT	UR	Ar	Pr	OT	UR	
ء	ب	پ	پ	ز	ز	ز	ز	گ	—	g	g	g
ب	ب	ب	ب	ژ	—	—	ř	ل	l	l	l	l
پ	پ	پ	پ	ژ	—	zh	j	م	m	m	m	m
ت	ت	ت	ت	س	s	s	s	ن	n	n	n	n
ث	—	—	ﺖ	ش	sh	sh	ş	ه	h	h	h ¹	h ¹
ث	th	th	th	ص	ş	ş	ş	و	w	v/u	v	v/u
ج	j	j	c	ض	đ	ž	ž	ی	y	y	y	y
چ	—	ch	çh	ط	ﺖ	ﺖ	ﺖ	ة	-ah	—	—	-a ²
ح	h	h	h	ظ	ž	ž	ž	ال	al ³	—	—	—
خ	kh	kh	kh	ع	‘	‘	‘	—	—	—	—	—
د	d	d	d	غ	gh	ğh	gh	—	—	—	—	—
ذ	—	—	d	ف	f	f	f	—	—	—	—	—
ذ	dh	dh	dh	ق	q	k	q	—	—	—	—	—
ر	r	r	r	ك	k	k/g	k/ñ	—	—	—	—	—

¹ – when not final

² – at in construct state

³ – (article) al - or l-

VOWELS

	Arabic and Persian	Urdu	Ottoman Turkish
Long	ا	ā	ā
	آ	Ā	—
	و	ū	ū
	ي	ī	ī
Doubled	ي	iy (final form i)	iy (final form i)
	و	uww (final form ū) uvv (for Persian)	uvv
Diphthongs	و	au or aw	ev
	ی	ai or ay	ey
Short	ا	a	a or e
	ا	u	u or ū
	ا	i	o or ö
	ا	i	i

URDU ASPIRATED SOUNDS

For aspirated sounds not used in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish add h after the letter and underline both the letters e.g. جھ jh گھ gh

For Ottoman Turkish, modern Turkish orthography may be used.

AL-SHAJARAH

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