

TERRORISM AND THE CONCEPT OF JIHAD: A CRITICAL REAPPRAISAL OF POST-9/11 MILITANCY IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

Post-9/11 terrorism in Pakistan proved to be a complex and multifaceted challenge. A distinguished feature of this violent campaign is its religious orientation. While tracing the causes, the role of Islam as a faith and practice is generally debated. Hence, dominant discourse about this terror campaign revolves around the religious concept of jihad through which militants justify their violence. Since the challenge is multifaceted, the causes of this violence are also diverse but as the militancy intensified over the years, the discourse of religious militancy over-shadowed other factors and constructed a violent image of Islam and jihad as a source of indiscriminate violence. This study draws upon the insights provided by the field of critical terrorism studies and employs the deconstructivism approach to examine this dominant discourse of 'religious' militancy in Pakistan, the concept of jihad. This critical analysis would help to understand and deconstruct the dominant discourse of post-9/11 militancy in Pakistan in the light of both primary and secondary sources of information.

Keywords: *Post-9/11, Pakistan, Terrorism, Jihad, Islamic Rulings, Militancy*

Introduction

Terrorism is not a modern phenomenon.¹ It is generally identified as a ubiquitous phenomenon that has remained recurrent throughout human history. The tragic events of 9/11, 2001, introduced

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¹ C. Cindy Combs, *Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century*, (New York: Routledge, 2018), 55.

terrorism as an emerging threat to the worldwide stage and a new form of warfare was introduced and initiated at the global scale against terrorism, involving world's sole superpower, United States and non-state actors, mainly al-Qaeda at the time led by Osama bin Laden (OBL), hiding in Afghanistan. Initially, Afghanistan became the central stage for the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) due to al-Qaeda's presence and Afghan Taliban's refusal to surrender OBL to the United States as the prime suspect of 9/11 attacks. Since that time, due to Pakistan's geographic compulsions and past links with Afghan Taliban, it was foreseen that it would be inevitable for Pakistan to avoid the repercussions of another war in Afghanistan with whom it not just shares its porous border; but cultural, ethnic and religious ties as well. Over the years, WOT gradually shifted inside Pakistani border areas followed by a vicious cycle of indiscriminate terrorism across the country.

This campaign of militancy and terrorism in Pakistan was generally perceived and projected as religiously mandated *jihad* throughout the years in an effort by the militants to impose their version of Islamic *Sharia* in the country. Self-proclamations of militants under the umbrella organization of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), formed in December 2007, also constructed this image of 'Islamic' militancy. Their public statements, interviews to the national and international media outlets, atrocious actions against public in the areas under their control, and increased terrorist activities across the country, also constructed the image of violence motivated by religious reasons.

This image of 'Islamic' militancy in Pakistan was also predominantly constructed through political and scholarly discourse at the international level. As the WOT started shifting inside Pakistan, the country started to be perceived in Western perceptions as a "potential base for Islamic radicalism".² It was stated by the former American Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, that Islamist militancy in Pakistan has become a key international security concern.³ Writing in 2009, a noted Pakistani analyst, Shuja Nawaz, claimed that FATA sanctuaries for the Taliban and al-Qaeda guerrillas caused the generation of Islamic militancy in Pakistan.⁴ Talking to Al-Jazeera network in 2016, former US Director of Intelligence, Lt General (Retd) Michael Flynn stated that in the last decade

² Stephen Philip Cohen, "The Jihadist Threat to Pakistan," *The Washington Quarterly* 26, no. 3 (Summer 2003): 7-25.

³ Hillary R. Clinton, U.S. Secretary of State, testimony before the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee, "New Beginnings: Foreign Policy Priorities in the Obama Administration," 111th Cong., 1st sess., April 22, 2009, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2009a/04/122048.html>.

⁴ Shujah Nawaz, "FATA: A Most Dangerous Place," (Washington DC: Center on Strategic and International Studies, 2009), 13, https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fspublic/legacy_files/files/media/csis/pubs/081218_nawaz_fata_web.pdf.

or so, there has been doubling of the numbers of radical Islamist groups in Pakistan alone.⁵ In addition, Pakistan was identified as a country where home-grown 'Islamic' extremists target civilians and security forces on a regular basis.⁶

This discourse of 'religious' militancy in Pakistan has greatly impacted the country, its people, security, and interests in all possible ways. Pakistan was perceived as the most dangerous country⁷ and an epicenter of *jihad*.⁸ In addition, how this selected discourse even hampered Pakistani diaspora in the United States, is captured by an American scholar, Craig Considine who observed that "the lives of Pakistanis of all backgrounds were dramatically changed by the 'War on Terror' narrative which associated Pakistanis with Islam, and in turn, Islam with violence and suddenly, Pakistanis were lumped into the same category as 'Muslim terrorists' – brown, bearded, Islamic, backward, violent, anti-Western, and so on."⁹

While keeping in view the above debates, rationale for this study is to deconstruct the dominant discourse of post-9/11 militancy in Pakistan in the light of primary religious sources, intellectual history of *jihadi* thought in South Asia, and personal profiles of militants captured by the distinguished Pakistani scholar Tariq Rahman.¹⁰ Though the subject has been widely discussed and the notion of 'Islamic' militancy has been challenged by various academic studies in general, but this concept in the context of Pakistan is quite under-researched. This paper would contribute to the existing scholarship in the context of Pakistan. With the help of deconstructivist approach, the conduct of militants claimed as *jihad* would be problematized and it would be identified that discourse of 'Islamic' militancy in Pakistan is a constructed one and falls under the

⁵ "Pak-US Relationship: A Double Game? - Upfront," *Al Jazeera English* video, 10:37, May 28, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k4e-w9iHmdI&vI=en>.

⁶ Shamil Shams, "What is Pakistan's Militancy Issue All About?" *DW*, January 12, 2017, <https://www.dw.com/en/what-is-pakistans-militancy-issue-all-about/a-36212654>.

⁷ "Pakistan Obsessed with India, Sees as 'Existential Threat,' Ex-US Spy Chief," *Deccan Chronicles*, May 3, 2019, <https://www.deccanchronicle.com/world/america/030519/pak-obsessed-with-indiasees-as-existential-threat-ex-us-spy-c.html>: Throughout the WOT years, numerous accounts referred to Pakistan as the most dangerous place, including former US President Barak Obama.

⁸ Rajeev Sharma, *Global Jihad: Current Patterns and Future Trends* (India: Kaveri Books, 2008).

⁹ Craig Considine, *Islam, Race, and Pluralism in the Pakistani Diaspora* (London: Routledge, 2018), 4.

¹⁰ Tariq Rahman, *Interpretations of Jihad in South Asia: An Intellectual History* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018).

category of terrorism than *jihad* in the light of primary and secondary religious sources. In the light of intellectual history of South Asian *jihadi* thought, this paper would further argue that post-9/11 militancy in Pakistan lacks any theoretical and intellectual support to its foundation as claimed by the West.

With reference to methodology, this qualitative research employs both primary and secondary data collection methods. Primary data has been collected in the form of militants' self-proclamations and claims of responsibility of indiscriminate terrorist attacks in the name of *jihad*. Primary sources also comprise of references from original religious texts. Secondary data has been collected through literature review spanning the subjects of *jihad* and post-9/11 terrorism signified as the form of 'Islamic' militancy in Pakistan. Findings of this research are discussed in the following pages in an orderly manner to contextualize and situate the issue at hand.

Post-9/11 Terrorist Spate in Pakistan

The most striking feature of post-9/11 terror campaign in Pakistan was its association with Islam and militants' justifications and self-proclamation in the context of *jihad*. This '*Jihadi*' terrorism also introduced the phenomenon of suicide bombings in the country. Plethora of non-state actors emerged in the form of diverse groups who used religion as source of their indiscriminate violence. Another defining feature was the sheer magnitude of violence which left no aspect of Pakistani state and society unharmed. It also involved active military operations and displacement of millions of people from their native regions. The term Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) was heard for the first time in Pakistan in post-9/11 era. Likewise, unprecedented national and international media coverage of Pakistani militants, justifying their violent campaign in the name of *jihad* is another defining feature of the post-9/11 terror episode.

Since concept of *jihad* remained at the center of terrorism debates not just in Pakistan but internationally as well, therefore, it is pertinent to study the phenomenon in detail to know how far concept of *jihad* as a religious ideology provides justification for post-9/11 terrorism inside Pakistan as widely claimed by the militants and perceived, attributed and projected by the West and Western media. Therefore, this descriptive study explores the concepts of terrorism, *jihad* and Islamic rulings on warfare to deconstruct, understand and determine the nature of post-9/11 militancy inside Pakistan, attributed to religion.

Understanding Terrorism

The beginning of the twenty-first century is marked with global terrorism.¹¹ One of the various defining features of this form of terrorism is the emergence of non-state actors such as al-Qaeda with the capacity to conduct worldwide operations, challenge the superpower of the time and hence, the world order.¹² These attacks caused initiation of GWOT impacting many countries and lives of millions of people across the globe. But, despite the gravity of this phenomenon that is driving the foreign policies of many states including the world's only superpower, the term terrorism remained one of the contested ones and the world community remained divided on a unanimously agreed upon explanation. Thus, there are diverse definitions explaining the phenomenon and the exercise has been undertaken by diverse actors including the states themselves, different state institutions, international organizations, academics and scholars worldwide. The distinguishing features of United Nations Security Council's broad definition of terrorism include: an act with intention to cause death or serious injury to civilians or non-combatants, or to threaten a population or force a government or an international organization to do or desist from an act.¹³

In line with various earlier definitions, Cindy identifies terrorism as an illegal form of violence against civilian non-combatant victims, involving an audience to create a mood of fear for political objectives.¹⁴ Alex P. Schmid, an internationally recognized scholar on terrorism studies, views the phenomenon as, "a certain combination of violence and communication whereby the immediate victims are often civilians and the main addressee of the 'language of blood' is often a government or its citizens – or, in the case of state terrorism, a section of the public."¹⁵ Writing in 2006, Bruce Hoffman identified terrorism in the context of political aims and objectives which incorporate violence or threats of violence by a sub-national or non-state organization, to create psychological impacts beyond direct victims.¹⁶

¹¹ Gus Martin, *Essentials of Terrorism: Concepts and Controversies* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2008), 2.

¹² Hassan Askari Rizvi, "Theoretical Foundations of Terrorism," (paper presented at International Seminar on Global Terrorism: It's Genesis, Implications, Remedial and Counter Measures, Islamabad, August, 2005)

¹³ "United Nations Security Council Resolution No. 1566," adopted by the Security Council at its 5053rd meeting, on October 8, 2004, <https://undocs.org/S/RES/1566>.

¹⁴ Cindy, *Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century*, 7.

¹⁵ Alex P. Schmid, ed. *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research* (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2013), 2.

¹⁶ Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 43.

Consulting different definitions, some basic components of a consolidated definition of terrorism can be identified as an act of violence, committed by non-state actors, against civilians, to create fear, in order to communicate with an audience, for political purposes. Thus, civilians are the ultimate victim to communicate a message for political objectives. It is pertinent at this moment to delve into the most debated concept of *jihad* followed by the Islamic rulings on warfare to determine how far this concept can be stretched to justify the violence perpetrated by the diverse groups of terrorists in Pakistan against the predominantly civilian targets.

Concept of Jihad

Islamic concept of *jihad* with reference to terrorism is at the center of terrorism debates across the globe. Pakistani religious scholar, Javed Ahmad Ghamidi highlights that it is one of the most debated concepts in the modern era like polygamy, veiling, and slavery.¹⁷ As the GWOT gradually shifted inside Pakistan, a drastic peak in terrorist campaigns was also witnessed and endured by Pakistan as a state and society that was claimed to be and attributed to be done in the name of Islam by the perpetrators of appalling violence. Since this campaign of terrorism is predominantly identified with the religious concept of *jihad*, therefore, while keeping in view the aforementioned definitions and distinguishable features of terrorism, the much debated concept of *jihad* also needs to be analyzed to determine how far this religious ideology provides a rationale for terrorism.

General meaning of *jihad*, identified and explained by diverse scholars is that it means to 'struggle' or to 'strive' for a cause. Generally it is perceived in the West as a concept of 'holy war' while this is not the accurate translation of the word. Khalid Fadl, being an international scholar and authority on Islamic Law, argues that the concept of 'holy' war does not exist in Islam as this very expression is neither used in the Quran nor employed by Muslim theologians.¹⁸ He explains that the term 'holy war' in Arabic language translates into *al-harb al-muqaddasa* which is not the definition of *jihad*, while in Islamic theology, "war is never *holy*; it is either justified or not."¹⁹

Similarly, he differentiates between the two terms of *jihad* and *qital* and argues that the Quran does not use the word *jihad* to refer to warfare instead it refers to *qital* for fighting.²⁰ Additionally, he explains

¹⁷ Javed Ahmad Ghamidi, Al Mawrid Official, "Islamic Sharia of Jihad: An Introduction (1/17)," *Youtube* video, 26:35, February 6, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jmjjMLS8tKg>.

¹⁸ Khalid Abou El Fadl, *The Great Theft: Wrestling Islam from the Extremists* (New York: Harper Collins, 2005), 222.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 223.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 223.

that the Quran's call to *jihad* is unconditional and unrestricted in terms of seeking justice and truth, whereas this is not the case for *qital*. In the Quran *qital* is constrained and bounded by specific and strict conditions.²¹

British scholar of comparative religion, Karen Armstrong elaborates that the word *jihad* occurs only 41 times in the Quran and only 10 of those instances referred unambiguously to warfare, while all other times it means an effort, to struggle.²² Ghamidi explains that "the meaning of *jihad* is to exhaust all available energy for a task",²³ while another noted Pakistani religious scholar Israr Ahmad further adds to this by identifying that Arabic word '*jihad*' originates from the root word '*jehed*' that means to strive for, or to struggle while the word '*Jihad*' in the context of Arabic grammar means to 'struggle against' that involves two opposing forces or parties that are in mutual struggle or in *jihad* against each other for a cause.²⁴

A hadith (saying of the Prophet) is also widely quoted by scholars that the best *jihad* is against the selfish desires of one's own self. Michael Boivin also explained that "until about the 11th century, Muslim mystics considered there were two types of *jihad*: *jihad al-saghir* or small *jihad*, namely to fight the infidel, and the *jihad al-kabir*, the great *jihad*, or fight against the self."²⁵ In the same context, John Esposito also argues that the concept of *jihad* can be categorized into two broad meanings: violent and nonviolent and he traces this categorization to a well-known prophetic tradition in which Prophet Muhammad is quoted to have said to his companions upon return from a battle that, "We return from the lesser *jihad* to the greater *jihad*."²⁶ The greater *jihad* is identified as the more challenging and more important struggle that is against one's own selfish desires.²⁷ Similarly, once, upon an inquiry about what is the best *jihad*, the Prophet stated that "a word of truth spoken before an unjust ruler"²⁸ is the best *jihad*. These multiple explanations of the terminology, traced directly to the prophetic traditions, well explain the fact that warfare or violence is

²¹ Ibid., 223.

²² B-Reality Media "History, Islam, War, Terrorism," *Youtube* video, 12:37, January 3, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ilSgb1CrhZM&t=22s>.

²³ Ghamidi, "Islamic Sharia of Jihad."

²⁴ Israr Ahmed, *Jihad Bil Quran and Its Five Stages*, Urdu (Lahore: Maktaba Khudam Al Quran, 2012).

²⁵ Michel Boivin, "Jihad, National Process and Identity Assertion in Pakistan: The Dialectic of Metaphor and Reality," in *New Perspectives on Pakistan: Visions for the Future*, ed. Saeed Shafqat (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 105.

²⁶ John Esposito, *Unholy Wars: Terror in the name of Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 28.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Imam Hafiz Abdur Rahman, Ahmad bin Shu'aib bin 'Ali, An-Nasa'i, *Sunan An Nasai 5*, (Maktaba Dar-us-Salam, 2007), 140, <https://www.kalamullah.com/Books/Hadith/>.

neither prescribed nor glorified in terms of *jihad*. On the contrary, even when it is mentioned in terms of *jihad al-saghir* or *lesser jihad*, which is associated with warfare, it is simultaneously explained in terms of and related to the concept of ‘greater *jihad*’ against one’s own self-centered desires.

This concept of greater *jihad* is further elaborated by Fadl in terms of “strong spiritual and material work ethic” of individuals that translates into two broad categories that are interlinked. Firstly, these attributes lead to personal improvement of individuals in terms of piety, knowledge, health, beauty, seeking truth and standing for justice. Secondly, these attributes lead to a just order in which less privileged segments of society are looked after, and truth and justice is sought even at the cost of personal risks. To Fadl, these are all forms of greater *jihad* without which personal and social standards cannot be achieved.²⁹

These diverse reflections explain that there is diversity in the meanings of *jihad*. As identified by Armstrong that ten out of forty one times the concept of *jihad* in the Quran does refer to warfare, this means that it is a matter of interpretation by scholars and theologians in the light of religious and historic accounts. But the question follows that in an Islamic state, who is authorized to wage *jihad*? Is it a prerogative of state or private militias?

To dispel any possibility of *jihad* by individuals or groups, Ghamidi categorically declares that *jihad* or armed struggle is the prerogative of state and not of the individuals or groups.³⁰ He strictly opposes the call of *jihad* by non-state actors on the basis that it is a recipe for disaster.³¹ His opinion is based on this historical observation that during the Prophet Muhammad’s Meccan life period, despite oppression and persecution, believers were never commanded to retaliate. He explains that the concept of *jihad* as a form of warfare developed in the Prophet Muhammad’s Medinan time period, when a small city state was formed and a political order was established.³²

Another prominent religious scholar of the twentieth century and founder of Jamat-e- Islami (JI), Abul A’la Maududi also held the same opinion in the light of religious doctrine and declared *Jihad* as the right of the state with explicit use of force and declared policy and not through covert means.³³ He opposed the call of *jihad* by non-state actors in the first

²⁹ Fadl, *The Great Theft*, 221.

³⁰ Javed Ahmad Ghamidi, *Al-Mizan*, Urdu (Lahore: Topical Printing Press, 2014), 579.

³¹ Javed Ahmed Ghamidi with Saleem Safi, “Islam, Jihad and Taliban(1/4),” *Youtube* video, 40:26, February 13, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oh1c9arB2L4>.

³² Ghamidi, “Islam, Jihad and Taliban.”

³³ Tariq Rahman, *Interpretations of Jihad in South Asia: An Intellectual History* (Berlin: DE GRUYTER, 2018), 178-179.

war of Kashmir in 1947 on the basis of the same argument.³⁴ Similarly, Dr. Israr Ahmed was also of the same view and regarded *Jihad* as the state's responsibility, with overt means and with multiple conditions attached in the light of Islamic teachings.³⁵ These observations and declarations by the renowned religious authorities support the fact that it is the state and not private militias that have the authority to declare *jihad*.

Islamic Rulings on Warfare

Though the concept of *jihad* is being debated that it can be used in both defensive and offensive senses in terms of warfare; however, what is never talked about in the dominant discourse of 'Islamic' militancy is the Islamic rulings on warfare. Being an unambiguous set of rules, these rulings regulate the conduct of war on and off the battlefield and are quite clear and explicit based on the Quran and *Hadith* (sayings of the Prophet), which are two primary sources of Islamic law. Practices and teachings of early Muslims are also generally identified as authentic references for guidance on the conduct of warfare in Islamic religious thought.

As a general principle, the Quran commands that, "whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption done in the land - it is as if he had slain entire mankind and whoever saves one - it is as if he had saved the entire mankind."³⁶ In the same chapter, the Quran also commands to the believers, "do not let your hatred of a people incite you to aggression"; and "do not let ill-will towards any folk incite you so that you swerve from dealing justly, be just that is nearest to heedfulness".³⁷ In case of war, the Quran clearly commands to "fight in God's cause against those who wage war against you, but do not transgress, for God loves not the transgressors".³⁸

From the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad's (Peace be Upon Him) life, it is narrated that once a woman was found killed in one of the battles fought by the Prophet. Upon seeing her dead body, the Prophet expressed his grief and disapproved the killing of women and children.³⁹ It is further documented that this incident prompted the code of conduct for Muslim combatants and they were prohibited from the killing of non-combatants including women, children, elderly, and innocents. Furthermore, they were advised to observe the sanctity of hermits, monks,

³⁴ Jessica Stern, "Pakistan's Jihad Culture," *Foreign Affairs* 79, no. 6 (Nov- Dec., 2000): 117.

³⁵ Dr. Israr Ahmed, "Pak-India War Situation on Kashmir Front," *Quran Academy* video, 1:02, June 04, 1999, <http://quranacademy.com/SnapshotView/MediaID/7224/Title/075-Kashmeer-Pr-Pak-Baharat-Jang-Ki-Surt-E-Haal->.

³⁶ Dr. Israr Ahmed, "Pak-India War Situation on Kashmir Front," *Al-Quran*, 5:32.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 5:2; 5:8.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 2:190.

³⁹ *Muslim*, Book 19, Hadith No. 4319.

or other religious figures believed to be non-combatants. Similarly, willful killing of cattle and animals, burning or destruction of trees and orchards, and destruction of wells was strictly prohibited.⁴⁰

A detailed set of rules formulated by the first Caliph, Abu Bakr, reflect the Islamic restrictions on the conduct of war. The Caliph is said to have commanded his soldiers not to commit treachery or deviate from the right path, nor to mutilate dead bodies, neither kill a child, nor a woman, nor an aged man, nor bring harm to trees, slay not any of the enemy's flock except for food, and leave the people alone who have devoted their lives to solitary service.⁴¹

In the light of these commandments, Fadl categorically argued that those among Muslims who justify terrorism at any level should be assured that "this belief is at odds with Islamic law" and Islamic traditions do not support such unprincipled and opportunistic logic.⁴² Islamic code of conduct on warfare is explicit in theory and practice and post-9/11 terrorism in Pakistan, claiming almost 80,000 civilian lives in the name of *jihad*, can be compared and analyzed in the light of these commandments from various sources of Islamic law.

Tracing Intellectual History of Jihad in South Asia

Narrowing the debate on *jihad* from general to specific in the South Asian context, Rahman identifies that historically, Muslim rulers of India (whether Turks, Pathans, or Mughals), used "the Islamic vocabulary to legitimize their rule in the eyes of their Muslim chiefs and *Ulama*."⁴³ The earliest examples Rahman quoted are of a commander and relative of Sultān Maḥmūd of Ghaznī (971–1030) who was known as *ghazi*, and of Amīr Khusrau (1253–1325) who had written the words *ojihad*, '*ghazi*, and the 'victory of Islam' about Ghasiuddīn Balban's (1266–1287) victory in one of the battles.⁴⁴

Rahman highlights that Sunni Muslims in India considered six canonical works of hadith – *Bukhari*, *Muslim*, *Ibn Majah*, *Abu Dawud*, *Tirmidi* and *Nisa'i*, as entirely authentic while Imam Malik bin Anas's (711–795) *Muwattā* is also praised by Shah Waliullah (1703–1762) as the most authentic book on hadith.⁴⁵ Similarly *Mishkat* was also studied and remained popular in Indian Madrassas. He finds five broad themes related

⁴⁰ Youssef H. Aboul-Enein and Sherifa Zuhur, *Islamic Rulings on Warfare*, (US Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, October 2004), 21-22, <https://publications.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/1693.pdf>.

⁴¹ Youssef H. Aboul-Enein and Sherifa Zuhur, *Islamic Rulings on Warfare*, 22.

⁴² Fadl, "Terrorism Is at Odds with Islamic Tradition," *Los Angeles Times*, August 22, 2001, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/>.

⁴³ Rahman, *Interpretations of Jihad in South Asia*, 75.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 81.

to *jihad* in the collections of all these hadith books used in South Asia. These themes include: praise of *jihad*, desirability of martyrdom, excellence of martyrs and their rewards, continuation of *jihad*, and non-violence against non-combatants, including women, children, elderly, hermits, and those who cannot fight.⁴⁶

Rahman classified the South Asian theologians and scholars discussing and debating the concept of *jihad* in two broad categories: traditionalists and modernists. Traditionalists like Shah Waliullah (considered as the most influential theologian of his era), his sons and followers like Ubaidullah Sindhi, perceived *jihad* as both defensive and offensive and adhered to the view that disbelief must be fought but with sufficient means to do it,⁴⁷ not against the Muslims (even if non-observant of religious law), not by non-state actors without state authority, and it was to be declared by the political leadership. To Rahman, these observations are important in the context of theoretical justification for unequal warfare (including suicide attacks) and rebellion against rulers by contemporary radical Islamists.⁴⁸

Modernist scholars of the colonial period are identified as Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Mawlawi Chiragh Ali, Syed Amir Ali, Shibli Naumani, and Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908) among others. This corps was later joined by Abul Kalam Azad and Ghulam Ahmad Parwez among many others. Muhammad Iqbal, Ahmad Rada Khan of Bareilly, and Maududi were also their contemporaries. Being products of their times and circumstances, and exposed to Western education, they interpreted the idea of *jihad* as defensive.⁴⁹ All these personalities were well-versed in the field of education, had knowledge of Arabic language and were able to infer directly from Quran and hadith employing their linguistic skills to explain and debate their deduced interpretations of religious sources pertaining to *jihad* and other associated issues.

Rahman revealed that there had been reference of *jihad* in the anti-colonial resistance movements during the era of 1831 to 1930. Four such movements are identified including the revolt of 1857, while at least three movements either involved or had some influence of Wahabi thought and two were connected to the present day Pak-Afghan border areas where the idiom of *jihad* is used by the Taliban militants against the central

⁴⁶ Ibid., 86.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 102.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 99, 107.

⁴⁹ "... their observation was influenced by the events of failed mutiny of 1857 against British authority (or war of independence called by South Asians) and an earlier move of offensive jihad by Sayyed Ahmad Bareilwi that had ended in 1831. Both these events proved to Indians that armed conflict was useless...", Tariq Rahman, *Interpretations of Jihad in South Asia: An Intellectual History* (2019), 123.

authority. Rahman stated that Wahabis and the Frontier tribesmen considered *jihad* against the British justified. To him the movements launched by this minority have several similarities with the militant movements affecting Pakistan and parts of India today. He identifies both kinds of movements as surreptitious; without a central, recognised legitimate authority (*imam*); and acting upon decentralised and anarchic legitimisations of *jihad* without state-controlled body of *Ulema* authorising the same. Similarly, the role of *Darul Ulum* at Deband, established in 1867, is also identified as influential in resistance movements, as is the case with today's movements in Pakistan. Despite their activism, these movements also never prescribed to the atrocities and transgressions against non-combatants, but set the trend for asymmetrical warfare against the powerful state.⁵⁰

Various other scholars also illuminated the field of religious thought even after partition of India, including Amin Ahsan Islahi from Pakistan and Wahiduddin Khan from India, who projected the tolerant picture of Islam and the concept of defensive *jihad* along with commenting on other persistent issues of the time. Thus, according to Rahman's tracing of South Asian intellectual scholarship regarding the concept of *jihad*, both traditionalist and modernist scholars upheld the rules and regulations in the conduct of defensive and offensive *jihad* and never prescribed to the transgressions let alone violence against civilians; though, they differed in the matter of certain theological interpretations involving defensive and offensive nature of *jihad*.

Middle Eastern (ME) influence on South Asian *jihadi* thought is identified with Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood which was born under the specific circumstances of regional politics comprising of anti-colonial resistance, local westernized elites in power, and Israeli-Palestinian conflict. An important dimension in the radical concept of *jihad* as a universal and continuous struggle was introduced by this organization of Muslim Brotherhood headed by Hasan al-Banna (1906-1949) and later by Sayyid Qutb (1906-66). According to Rahman, both are considered the most influential theorists of political Islam outside South Asia and have greatly influenced the South Asian religious movements including Jamat-e-Islami of Maududi, but their *jihadi* ideology also spared the non-combatants during a violent struggle.⁵¹

Through historical accounts, Rahman identifies Abd al-Salam Faraj (1954–1982) as the revolutionary Arab figure who transformed the idea of *jihad* to total warfare. He was influenced by the thinking of Ibn Taymiyyah (1263-1328) and especially of Ibn Kathir (1301-1373) who had argued that Muslims should fight the rulers who do not rule according to Islamic law. Faraj interpreted *jihad* as aggressive warfare and obligatory upon

⁵⁰ Ibid., 141,160.

⁵¹ Ibid., 198.

every individual. He prescribed that *jihad* can be waged without the consent of parents and of state. He was the one who identified two types of enemies, those who are near and those who are far away. To him, the rulers of Muslim countries should be eliminated first as the near ones than the ones who are far away like USA and Israel. According to a researcher, Aaron Zelin, Faraj constituted a “paradigm shift in the intellectual history of *Jihadi* thought” and “he really made *jihad* an anarchistic device for total warfare and rebellion against all established authority.”⁵² But this drastic shift in his *jihadi* ideology i.e., approving killings of civilians and non-combatants in warfare, has not been referred to him in Rahman’s work.

Another important Arab thinker identified is Yūsuf al-Qaraḍawi, whose philosophy was Israel specific. In his book *Jurisprudence of Jihad*, he even authorized suicide bombing on the pretext that Palestinians are under Israeli persecution and much weaker party in the conflict.⁵³ However, he authorized such missions only against Israel but his reasoning influenced the other theatres of war as well, as witnessed in Pakistan and Afghanistan.⁵⁴

These ideas also disseminated in South Asia through various historic encounters and present day militants of Pakistan and Afghanistan represent this ideology of total warfare. People like Osama bin Laden and Ayman Al Zawahiri came to Afghanistan to fight the Soviets and stayed back due to their governments’ refusal to accept them back at the end of war while Afghan civil war provided them space and reason to propagate their version of *jihad*. Subsequent developments in the wake of 9/11 attacks further helped their ideology to disperse at national and international levels with the help of international media coverage.

While keeping in view this aforementioned discussion, it is pertinent at this juncture to highlight the profile of Pakistani militants to have an idea about their claims and conducts and to what ideologies and beliefs they subscribe.

Profile of Pakistani Militants

With respect to Pakistani militant organizations which popped up in post-9/ 11 era, it is important to recognize them as shadowy and clandestine groups confined to mountainous tribal areas, and emerging during a crucial time of history in a border region of Pakistan and Afghanistan. These groups also predominantly inclined towards Deobandi religious-political thought of resistance to the foreign influences and occupation. In this respect they are similar to the earlier movements that

⁵² Aaron Y. Zelin, “*Al-Farida al Gha’iba* and *al-Sadat’s Assassination: A 30 Year Retrospective*,” *International Journal for Arab Studies* 3, no. 2 (July 2012): 31, quoted in Rahman, *Interpretations of Jihad in South Asia*, 205.

⁵³ Rahman, *Interpretations of Jihad in South Asian : An Intellectual History*, 207.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 205-207.

had emerged during the colonial period in British India with almost the same credentials.

As to their conduct and claims (in terms of continuous call of *jihad* and establishment of Islamic rule in Pakistan or worldwide), the influence of Middle Eastern militant groups and individual scholars is also recognizable, especially Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's political and *jihadi* thought, Faraj's philosophy of *jihad* and Qaradawi's reasoning in favour of suicide bombings in certain specific situations. But in their other aspects, these post-9/11 militant outfits, grouped under the umbrella of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), did not correspond to the above mentioned movements.

In contrast to the individual scholars deliberated upon by Rahman from South Asian history and from the Middle East, and selectively discussed in this paper, it is identifiable that TTP's leadership had no intellectual or theological background at all. They lacked any religious or modern form of knowledge, while intellectuals discussed by Rahman were well-versed in both modern and theological academic training and sound reasoning. They produced great scholarly works, interpreting Quran and hadith and deliberating upon the pressing issues of their times while reaching out to the people and other scholars on the basis of their research and reasoning. On the other hand, TTP's leadership did not produce any intellectual scholarship over the issues of *jihad*, warfare, *sharia* or any other contemporary subject they deemed important to them, but only resorted to violence against the state and innocent civilians.

Why was this, the case? One reason was that they belonged to the downtrodden class of the society without any familiarity with any educational institution. Profiles of some noted militant leaders reveal that Baitullah Mehsud was a bus conductor, Hakimullah Mehsud was a village madrasa drop out, Maulvi Omar sold perfumes on a vending cart, Mangal Bagh was a truck driver and small-time criminal involved in car-jacking, and Mullah Fazalullah operated ski-lifts in Swat.⁵⁵ With this socio-economic background and surroundings, it is not even appropriate to compare the present day militants with the distinguished intellectuals of the past whether from South Asia or from any other region. It also doesn't seem likely that they had ever had consulted these rich intellectual debates over the issue of *jihad* and all the strings attached to it.

Thus, with lack of quality leadership, TTP proved to be more of a reactionary violent force without any political roots or theological knowledge and relied only upon indiscriminate violence, predominantly against civilians. On the other hand, Muslim Brotherhood is still a dominant political force in today's Egypt. This contrast reflects that the

⁵⁵ Shahzad Qazi, "Rebels of the Frontier: Origins, Organization, and Recruitment of the Pakistani Taliban," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 22, no. 4, (September 2011): 578.

latter has a socio-political foundation for conduct of their politics while the former only based their existence on extreme use of force. Thus, TTP lacks any credibility to be contrasted with any organized political party.

Terrorism and its Implications for Pakistan

TTP led militancy was perceived and projected by the local and international analysts as an “Islamic militancy” and “a key international security concern”.⁵⁶ The diversity of serious security threats associated with the TTP and the Western threat perception can be gauged by one of the studies conducted by Jacob Shapiro and Christine Fair on the subject. Writing in 2009, the authors highlighted TTP’s capabilities in the light of their capacity to establish a parallel administrative structure along the Pakistan-Afghan border areas, increased number of suicide attacks against the Pakistani state, and with their capacity to seize the Red Mosque in the capital of Pakistan in June 2007.⁵⁷ For them, considering these capabilities of an extremist organization, concerns about Pakistan’s stability intensified due to “its nuclear status, dysfunctional civil-military relationship, a demonstrated propensity for risk-seeking behaviour, and ever-expanding connections between local groups and transnational Islamist terrorist organizations.”⁵⁸ Thus, Taliban’s growing activities, being a ‘religious’ force with links to international organizations, had a direct bearing on Pakistan’s security environment in a highly volatile and contested situation in the context of post-9/11 developments in Pakistan and in the surrounding region.

Thus, how an organized terrorist group like TTP can pose grave security challenges to nations and states is evident from the above mentioned projection of threat perception constructed by Shapiro and Fair in terms of national and international security concerns and threat to nuclear weapons of Pakistan from ‘Islamic’ militancy. This aspect should also be analysed in the light of above quoted scholarly opinions that declaration of *jihad* by private militias is a recipe for disaster and that is what the TTP and other organizations actually did to Pakistan.

Conclusion

The research analysed the post-9/11 terror campaign in Pakistan, generally perceived and projected as an ‘Islamic’ militancy (as overwhelmingly claimed by TTP and projected in national and international media), considering original religious texts, diverse and expert scholarly opinions, and in the light of leadership profile of known

⁵⁶ Jacob N. Shapiro and Christine Fair, “Understanding Support for Islamist Militancy in Pakistan,” *International Security* 34, no. 3 (Winter 2009/10) : 79.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

militants to deconstruct and understand the nature of vicious episode of violence in Pakistan's history.

Tracing the history of intellectual thought on *jihad* demonstrated that *jihad*, whether being defensive or offensive, does not prescribe any form of violence against non-combatants under any circumstances. It proved that any scholarly figure, who had done genuine research, never advocated use of force against civilians. Only lack of genuine knowledge and scholarly background on the part of TTP leadership explains their campaign of brutal violence, which finds no precedent in the history of religious jihadi thought in South Asia. The campaign that has claimed more than 80,000 civilian lives in Pakistan cannot be termed as 'Islamic' militancy fighting to impose *Sharia* in Pakistan. The religious orientation, self-proclamations of terrorists, and immense media coverage constructed an image of 'Islamic' militancy emanating from Pakistani border areas with Afghanistan, which is not just jeopardizing Pakistan's internal security situation but also threatening regional and international security environment. This religious orientation of sheer violence committed by terrorists inspired a critical reassessment of the post-9/11 terrorism in Pakistan to determine how far this can be regarded as religious one.

Based on documented information on terrorism, *jihad*, Islamic rulings on warfare, South Asian intellectual history over the subject of *jihad*, and terrorists' profiles, this study concludes that considering post-9/11 terrorism in Pakistan as a 'religious' rebellion demands a serious re-evaluation as this phenomenon neither corresponds to the religious teachings of Quran nor to the practices and commandments of the Prophet Muhammad. Thus, in theory and practice post-9/11 terrorism in Pakistan falls under the pure ambit of terrorism than *jihad*.

Foregoing discussion to understand the concept of *jihad* reflects that theoretically, it is a subject of intense investigation and interpretation due to diverse meanings attached to it. In the light of Islamic scholarship over the subject, it by no means pertains to terrorism. It has also been established that *Jihad* by all means is a prerogative of Islamic states and not of individuals or private groups. On the other hand, terrorists' reliance on religion was for their own personal and group benefits in terms of gaining legitimacy and public sympathy, and personal projection at a particular time of history. Therefore, with reference to diverse Islamic scholarship, militants' claims and practices of terror labeled as 'Islamic' is a misleading notion and should be analysed with a critical lens since concept of *jihad* is in absolute contrast to what is projected and committed by the terrorists.

