

ORF OCCASIONAL PAPER #18

NOVEMBER 2010



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Ashok Kumar Singh

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**OBSERVER RESEARCH FOUNDATION
NEW DELHI**

About the Author

Ashok Kumar Singh is Programme Co-ordinator at the Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi. A graduate from St. Stephen's College, Delhi, Singh did his LLB from the Faculty of Law, Delhi University. He has been a software developer, multimedia programmer and has developed country and regional data bases.

Understanding 'Jihadism' in Pakistan

It is easy to dismiss Pakistan as a 'failing state'. Indeed, Pakistan today is a strange, shadowy world where disorder is rapidly gaining ground. The threat emanating from Pakistan has now been greatly magnified by the fact that semi-autonomous actors from Pakistan's fragmented society have both the capability and the willingness to contest for control of the Pakistani State, as well as to carry their conflict out into the larger world. However, an outright condemnation of Pakistan does not lead us towards a solution. It may be better to try to work towards a comprehensive understanding of the problem.

Pakistan as a state may or may not be the problem; it may or may not survive the coming months and years. The territory will remain, however. The people will remain and, more importantly, their problems and predicaments will remain. It is these aspects that need to be addressed.

More than a decade ago, the Pakistani scholar Eqbal Ahmed wrote that there exist *"indications that we might be at the threshold of the outbreak of organised violence aimed at system change. If it does occur, it is unlikely to be selective in the manner practised earlier by the secular revolutionary movements in China, Vietnam, Cuba, or the Algerian struggle for independence. This lack of selectivity shall be ascribable to the fact that the perpetrators of revolutionary violence in Pakistan are likely to be religious and right wing organisations which have not set theoretical or practical limits on their use of violence. In the countries where Islamists have so far engaged in violence with revolutionary objectives, i.e. with the objective of system change, they have tended to be quite indiscriminate in its use".* Contemporary evidence does not offer us any reason to differ from this assessment. Our concern then must be to try to understand this disorder that is gaining strength in Pakistan.

Too often, we tend to look at Pakistan from the perspective of International Relations or of Security. We tend to adopt a state-centric view. Existing analyses have made extensive documentation of the key actors and trends within Pakistan and, within these, searched for the possible causes of *Jihadism*. Thus excellent studies are easily accessible on the Pakistan Army, the rise of sectarian groups or ideologies and the failure of Pakistani education, or even its nationalism.

Most analysts today tend to agree that there is a problem with Pakistan. Beyond this, however, when it comes to characterising and defining the problem, opinions begin to diverge. This disorder in Pakistan has variously been referred to as *Terrorism* (War on Terror); *Talibanisation* (from the experience in Afghanistan); *Islamism* (in the sense of the political utilisation, including distortion, of Islam); *Islamic Fundamentalism* (within this, we need to distinguish between Traditionalists [anti-modern], Literalists and the newer cohort of Activists); *Jihadisation* of Pakistan; or *State Failure*. Yet these labels capture only a part of Pakistan's current reality. As much as they seek to describe the phenomenon, they also represent the particular perception and the vantage point of the observer, thus failing to be holistic in their conclusions and recommendations.

The phenomenon that most grabs our attention today is the gradual build-up of what can best be called 'belligerent opponency'. It is not just one small marginal group that is being nihilistic; large swathes of the Pakistani population, covering a cross-section of all walks of life, seem to have worked themselves into a mood where reasonable, 'settled' behaviour seems completely alien. One of the recurrent analytical problems, moreover, seems to be what we can call the 'changing face syndrome': at different points in time, everything and everyone in Pakistan seems to be a part of the problem. In such a situation, any policy prescription directed at any one aspect of the dysfunction would tend to have failure already built into its design.

What is happening in Pakistan is often described as 'the unfolding of a *Jihad*'. In reality however, it may be something else, and its relationship to the idea of *Jihad*, to religion or even to tradition, may be only superficial.

The word '*Jihad*' comes from the Arabic root-word '*JHD*', loosely translated as *effort* or *struggle*. Even in the political domain the term *Jihad* can, at best, be stretched to include a war only in the sense of a struggle against an oppressor.

In today's world, however, some groups of Muslims across the world who seek political change have crafted an ingenious artifice. By their reasoning, the regimes in their own countries are oppressive and stand in the way of the emergence of the larger Muslim Nation or '*Ummah*'. These local regimes (the 'Near Enemy') are propped up by the support of the West (led by America). Therefore, by extension, America becomes the 'Far Enemy' and a legitimate target for *Jihad*. A similar set of distortions is deployed against other countries like Israel, India, Russia, and the Western European countries.

However, the modern-day *Jihad* narrative does not stay limited to this perceived culpability in oppressing Muslims. Several disparate themes are pulled in and inter-woven into this narrative. Western moral values and ways of life are all made out to be threats to the Muslim way of life. Any discussion about 'the oppression of Muslims' becomes one on 'threat to Islam'. Effectively, this is little more than a two-pronged strategy: Firstly, to create an impact on the ability and willingness of 'outside' powers to support the 'oppressive' local regimes; and secondly, to consolidate the position and support base of those depicted as 'defending' Islam itself. What is most important, however, is that somewhere along the line, the rational, limited political strategy becomes a self-perpetuating, amorphous body of hate. It is this latter stage that we will refer to as '*Jihadism*'.

We must distinguish the term '*Jihadism*' from 'Islamism' which is more in the nature of an attempt to rediscover Islam in modern life. Moreover, we need to distinguish *Jihadism* from Terrorism which is, at best, a tactic or an instrument. Equally, we distinguish *Jihadism* from *Jihad* itself, which we understand to be a religio-cultural construct denoting a struggle (internal or external) that may or may not be societally negative. Thus, Jihad may, under some circumstances, be one possible manifestation of *Jihadism*.

In this paper we will assume that the label '*Jihadism*' refers to a composite—though not homogenous—social phenomenon that begins with the vision of an alternate state in contrast to the prevailing structures. It then continues into believing that its model—and thus its own influence—must be exported globally. Towards this enterprise, *Jihadism* is at ease with the idea of using religion to construct its identity, and of using violence to achieve its objectives. Thus, *Jihadism* is a disruptive system framed in a particular religious context. It represents an alternate model of society which is supported by a large constituency of those who cannot hope nor desire to make any headway in the established, Westernised model of society. This alternate model of society, however, must not be confused with a traditional Muslim society. Behind the facade, *Jihadism* is simply a path to contesting the established elites and wresting power. An Islamic society based upon *Sharia* Law is the most natural and convenient rallying cry available to it. The primary objective, however, remains a power grab, followed by efforts to consolidate that power. To this end, *Jihadism* creates a highly selective, and therefore distorted, mix of doctrine, tradition, and modernity.

Our effort will be to develop an understanding of how *Jihadism* works as a system, to examine whether some part of the common understanding about the phenomenon may need to be supplemented, and to see how the system's workings might condition the unfolding of future challenges.

It is important to do this because a phenomenon like *Jihadism* is only the outward manifestation of activities and interactions taking place within the depths of a larger system. We cannot come to grips with the phenomenon without understanding why, and how, it thrives. Moreover, even if one could eradicate *Jihadism* itself (for example through military action), so long as the system continues to work the way it does, the problem will keep re-emerging—with a different label, perhaps. *Jihadism* cannot simply be “dealt” with; it must truly be put to rest, in every sense of the word.

Methodology

While studying any particular society, or any given aspect of a particular society, social scientists proceed from a defined image of what a society is in the first place, how it is structured, and how it works. At the base of all such images is the idea that society is a collective of all the individuals who comprise it.

Early thinkers began with the idea of a so-called 'social contract'—where individuals, imbued not only with all their natural rights but with rationality, come together to form groups and societies for their common good. In return, these individuals concede some of their rights to such groups or society. Eventually, political economists enhanced this paradigm by suggesting that society could perhaps be better understood by examining the material bases upon which a particular society is predicated. Thus, typically, an agrarian society as it existed in Medieval Europe would give rise to feudal structures and an Industrial society would be associated with a class-based stratification, that is, comprising the Capitalists and the Proletariat. The material base (mode of production) thus determines the super-structure (Society, culture, etc.). With time, however, the superstructure would begin exerting a reverse influence upon the modes of production—essentially working against the introduction of change.

Such frameworks provide us with a deeper understanding of how societies develop and change over time. However, they remain uni-dimensional in that they present a fairly deterministic cause-and-effect model in explaining social phenomena. Moreover, the way in which society is sectioned in these models, creates an image of relatively undifferentiated, monolithic groups and forces. Even society, as a whole, begins to look relatively singular since the Feudal Lord and the Serf, the Capitalist and the Labourer, or an Entrepreneur, all partake of a common culture—albeit from different vantage points.

Contemporary societies tend to be more complex and more fluid. How do we begin to make sense of societies that are characterised by multiple modes of production? Are ideologies and belief systems intrinsically dependent upon modes of production? What happens when Individuals, even within a society, are cloaked in fundamentally differing cultural contexts? What happens in multi-cultural, multi-ethnic contexts? And how do we explain belief systems that seemingly emerge from nowhere?

Thinking about Systems Thinking

It was Herbert Spencer, the British philosopher and sociologist, who introduced the idea of Society as an Organism. The American sociologist, Talcott Parsons, meanwhile, brought in the idea of Society as a System. These, and several other related efforts, represent the full-fledged sociological-ethical discourses which are not included in this paper. We will limit ourselves to borrowing and synthesising some of the ideas from the larger domain of sociological thought and trying to see if it can help us better understand the phenomenon of *Jihadism* in Pakistan.

Since we plan to view *Jihadism* as a system, let us first look at the implications of this idea. In trying to understand and deal with problems with a particular component, scientists have sometimes tried to think of the entire system in a holistic manner. By standard definition, 'Systems thinking' is "*a framework that is based on the belief that the component parts of a system can best be understood in the context of relationships with each*

other and with other systems, rather than in isolation. The only way to fully understand why a problem or element occurs and persists is to understand the part in relation to the whole²."

Thus, the given system is thought of as being the sum total of the constituent sub-systems and of the interactions amongst the various parts and, between these systems or sub-systems and the environment. Any problem occurring somewhere in the system is thought to result from an imbalance when some of its sub-systems interact. Once it comes into existence, the problem develops a volition and momentum of its own. Accordingly, the solution to that problem may or may not lie within one particular part but in a larger set of inter-related and inter-acting systems.

This approach has its origins in the study of the mechanical world and deals well with understanding even complex mechanical systems. Social scientists have made comparable endeavours in the application of Systems thinking to their own domains, with the main thrust being to shift from viewing a problem separate from society and move towards thinking of a problem as being a sub-system within the larger social system.

Systems thinking is, however, notoriously difficult to apply to the universe of human society. This is primarily because it is difficult to model a human individual or collective, particularly in terms of cognitive abilities, behaviour, and emotions. Additionally, the very idea of a 'system' might imply a *priori* design and a rationally calculated construction, both of which may or may not be present in human societies. Critically also, in human societies, a problem may come into existence due to a particular pattern of interaction between other parts but, soon enough, begins to assume an independent existence to become a new part in the larger system.

Quite obviously, a human society would be somewhat different from a mechanical system. Yet for the purposes of analysis we still need to isolate

its salient attributes, components, and phenomena, to create an 'ideal'. Perhaps we could begin by trying to think of societies as 'organic' or 'living' systems. A very rough, partial analogy might be that of a suburban back-garden: That garden, its gardener, the plants, and the small living beings in it, the water system and features, together form the composite organic 'system'. The unique character that a particular garden exudes, results from the 'parts' that it possesses and from the way in which these parts work together. Thus, we see a number of discrete organic sub-systems coming together and interacting in unique ways to form a larger composite system and imparting to it a particular character and behaviour.

Extending this line of thought to sociology allows us to view societies as being made up of different parts or systems. Societies are not static; they evolve over time, and so do their parts. These parts are not atomistic, either; they could be complete systems in themselves, or they could be individuals or groups or, less tangibly, they could be ideologies, whatever phenomenon is capable of creating an impact on the larger system. As these parts interact, sometimes they give rise to new phenomena.

It would be interesting to try and understand what process drives the genesis of these new phenomena. It was the social psychologist, Floyd Henry Allport, who first put forth the idea that Individual behaviour differs from the behaviour of that individual in a Group³. If we were to apply this idea to a much broader context than it was originally intended for, we could say that the *Individual Man* and *Man in Society*—though the same individual—differ sufficiently to be two distinct beings. Continuing this thought, as individuals begin to come together into collectivities, these collectivities (groups, movements, belief systems or, in very rare cases, even an Individual) gradually assume an independent existence and become autonomous entities or phenomena. The interaction and the temporal balance between these various entities, both old and new, can create an impact on the means of production or the

ideological colour of a given society and can even change the character of the entities themselves. These disparate entities either coalesce or are circumstantially placed in proximity, and either cooperate or conflict with their neighbours, and thus come to form a unique pattern that manifests itself as a particular society at a particular moment in history.

But things are not completely random; there is a method to this chaos. Each entity, however different, will display certain common attributes. Each has consciousness of its identity (particularly versus the 'Others') and a will to live, grow and replicate. And, to that end it has a particular rationality. Each has, in varying degrees, an urge for power. Each has a type of behaviour and certain abilities. We can think of these entities as packages of identity, behaviour, beliefs, and will.

At this point, it is important to emphasise that Systems thinking is only a tool to help us think about social problems in a slightly different, more holistic manner, and supplement the understanding provided by conventional theoretical frameworks that are available. Systems thinking can enable us to look for inter-relationships across the entire system, and to examine how the behaviour of one segment of the system can create unforeseen and subtle impacts on other parts of that system.

Thus this is the broad framework in which we shall try to view the phenomenon of *Jihadism* in Pakistan. We will see *Jihadism* as a system—organic system—as one of the sub-systems operating within the larger Pakistani system. The nature and working of the various sub-systems, along with the interactions between them, may help us better understand the contours of Pakistan's disorder.

'Organic' Systems

What then, is an 'organic' system? An 'organic' system can be a living thing or a social group or an entire society. When viewed as a system, it exhibits certain discernible attributes, most important of which are the following:

- (1) An organic system exists within **a universe**, of which it is aware and which provides the enabling—or otherwise inhibiting—conditions which determine the system's existence. The system also derives from its Universe, the idioms for self-definition and for interpreting the surrounding reality.
- (2) At a functional level, an Organic system will have **a structure**. Thus, functionally, an organic system will have an Identity, a Purpose, a Renewal function, and an Implementation Function (or Method).
- (3) We assume that our system will be imbued with certain basic **abilities**—cognisance, interpretation and the physical capabilities (or organising capabilities) that seek to realise its desired states.
- (4) Finally, in a situation where multiple systems co-exist, each of them will form some **relationships** with other sub-systems in its proximal universe. These relationships will be collaborative or competitive in nature and will exist primarily to extract utility from the Universe or its other sub-systems. Ostensibly, however, the system may also be providing a benefit to the external environment.

From our discussion of the attributes of an organic system, we can see that this kind of interactions between the various sub-systems i.e. the domain of relationships is obviously the primary arena of conflict (or cooperation).

In trying to understand the phenomenon of *Jihadism* in Pakistan, therefore, we will think of Pakistan as being a Universe comprising of several smaller systems and parts. As these various systems interact, they work to take the larger system forward, but at the same time, they give rise to new problems and phenomena which, over time, develop into systems in their own right. *Jihadism* in Pakistan is one such emerging system: it is not an aberration but a necessary outcome of the way in which the entire system and its parts have worked together.

The Pakistan Context

For the purposes of this paper, we will try to look for these attributes in (and around) the phenomenon of *Jihadism* as it thrives in Pakistan. This will later inform our assessment of the threats and their possible manifestations. Management strategies, if not solutions, would logically follow from this assessment.

As we visualise Pakistan we find that it is a geographical entity that contains several social forces. Some of these social forces (or sub-systems) can be identified as the following: the religious groups; the military complex; the feudal structures; tribal and ethnic identities; civil society; and modernism and tradition.

Throughout Pakistan's history, these social forces have been variously cooperating or conflicting with one another. These patterns of inter-relationships play out in the various domains or theatres of Pakistani system, including the social polity, the economy, the social domain, ethics, and behavioural norms and education. This ever-changing kaleidoscope of interactions and relationships is driven by the possession and use of certain mechanisms, like Collaboration-Coercive force, Legitimacy-Ideology and Charisma.

Before we look at Jihadism as a system, we need to look at Pakistan as the universe within which *Jihadism* exists and we will see how the inter-relationships between the various features of this universe feed into the *Jihadi* system. They bring it into existence, nurture it to strength, and then gradually give way to it.

The Pakistani Universe

Pakistan has a population currently estimated at 173 million, of whom nearly 97% are Muslim. It is the fifth largest nation in the world. Pakistan is the second most populous Muslim country in the world, and the second largest Sunni population (after Indonesia) as well as the second largest Shia country (after Iran). It has the seventh largest army in the

world. It is ranked somewhere around 45th to 50th in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and somewhere between 130 and 150 in terms of per capita GDP. Its public debt as a percentage of annual GDP is roughly 50.6 percent.

The people of Pakistan

Pakistan is made up of an extremely rich and diverse mix of Punjabis, Pathans, Baloch, Sindhis, and a host of other ethno-linguistic communities, most of whom have roots in particular geographical areas.

Spatially, Pakistan's population is distributed quite unevenly amongst its various provinces. The table below is based on data from Pakistan's 1998 census. It gives an idea about the distribution of the country's population, level of urbanisation, as well as the areas of the most rapid growth.

Table 1: Pakistan–Province wise population

Province / Region	Area (SQ KM)	Population		%age	Growth
		1951	1998		
N.W.F.P.	74521	4,556,545	17,743,645	13.41	389.41
Rural		4,051,800	14,749,561		364.02
Urban		504,745	2,994,084		593.19
FATA	27220	1,332,005	3,176,331	2.40	238.46
Rural		1,332,005	3,090,858		232.05
Urban			85,473		
PUNJAB	205345	20,540,762	73,621,290	55.63	358.42
Rural		16,972,686	50,602,265		298.14
Urban		3,568,076	23,019,025		645.14
SINDH	140914	6,047,748	30,439,893	23.00	503.33
Rural		4,279,621	15,600,031		364.52
Urban		1,768,127	14,839,862		839.30
BALUCHISTAN	347190	1,167,167	6,565,885	4.96	562.55
Rural		1,022,618	4,997,105		488.66
Urban		144,549	1,568,780		1085.29

Source: derived from data at:

http://www.statpak.gov.pk/depts/pco/statistics/pop_by_province/pop_by_province.html accessed on 4th October, 2010

The most striking demographic feature of Pakistan is that Punjab province, which is about 25 percent of the country's land area, accounts for more than half (55 percent) of the population.

However, these relative imbalances need not necessarily be a problem, as comparable differences can be seen in most societies across the world. The problem in the Pakistani context emerges due to the way these ethnic identities play out in the various domains. As modern alternatives have not fully emerged, recourse to feudal and traditional identities remains a potent social fact. As these identities travel through the fabric of the nation, they acquire stakes in the newer sectors of economy and society, and are thereby strengthened.

The most obvious manifestation of such ethnic divides is in the recruitment to the Army: most recruits come from specific geographical areas, mainly northern Punjab and NWFP.

On the whole, as we have seen in the data above, Pakistan's population remains largely rural (67%). However, it is also notable that the urban centres in Sindh and Balochistan have grown massively in size over the years. The inordinately high figures for urban populations in Sindh and Balochistan are not statistical anomalies, but rather are the result of large waves of migration. The first of these waves, at the time of the creation of Pakistan, saw a large number of non-Punjabi migrants from India moving into the cities of Sindh in search of livelihoods. Subsequent waves of migration saw large numbers of people pushed out from Afghanistan moving into the cities of Balochistan due to their proximity, and into Sindhi cities like Karachi because these remained the commercial hubs.

Demographically, Pakistan is also relatively young, as a sizeable 60 percent of the population is below 24 years of age⁴. Moreover, the country's sex ratio hovers close to overall South Asian ratios, which has a large male component. If not carefully planned for, a large, youthful, and male population cohort can have extremely disruptive effects on a nation's social stability.

One country where this link has been seen between demographics and social stability is Iran. We can postulate that the Iranian revolution of 1979 may have been significantly caused by the existence of an overly large youthful element in the population at a time when economic development failed to meet its needs and aspirations. In point of fact too, around the time that the revolution occurred, it is estimated that 70 percent of Iran's population was less than 30 years of age and the annual rate of growth of the population was around 3.3 percent.

Demographically, Pakistan today seems located at a roughly similar spot in its demographic transition. An adequate discussion of the significance of the age structure of any population can be found in the published literature⁵. One observation, however, will suffice to bring home the potentially disastrous consequence of an unmanaged, youthful age pyramid: As theorised in a 2007 report by the non-governmental group, Population Action International: *“As a group, countries with very young population age structures are extremely vulnerable to political instability. Six of every seven new outbreaks of civil conflict (80 percent) that emerged between 1970 and 1999 occurred where 60 percent or more of the population was under age 30.”*⁶

Urban Agglomeration

As we noted above, some areas in Pakistan have witnessed an explosion in the numbers of city dwellers. Karachi for instance, is well on its way to becoming one of the largest cities in the world. In many societies across the world, urbanisation has been associated with modernisation, particularly in the realm of traditional values. This is because, however these cities and urban centres have originated, they acquire over time the infrastructural attributes that set them apart from earlier, more traditional agglomerations.

In Pakistan, however, the rural-urban divide itself does not communicate much. In the absence of organised efforts to upgrade them, the urban

centres are not much more than “high density rural regions”⁷. In such a context, the anticipated breakdown in particular traditional structures results not in a process of modernisation, but instead in the emergence of retrograde, pseudo-traditional structures. Thus the pressure created by change upon the Tradition sub-system ends up benefitting the emergence of trends that strengthen *Jihadism*.

One of the by-products of urbanisation, for example, seems to have been the weakening of *biradari* (the traditional kinship structures) networks. This process has also been seen in most cities across the world. In Pakistan, however, there was a lack of alternate social networks—like work networks, friendship networks and social welfare networks—that would have taken the place of kin-based structures, like they did in other cities, particularly in the West. The void left by the breakdown of *biradari* was therefore filled by the newly re-vitalised local mosque. As Abbas (2007) wrote: “Migration [from rural areas to cities] results in a unitary family system which leads to many anxieties and fears. Hence, they find refuge in religion and become frequent visitors to the mosque...”⁸ This religion, however, did not necessarily reflect the traditional religious practice of the community. Rather, it was something palpably and qualitatively new. Urbanisation in Pakistan thus merely served to aggravate the pull of a peculiarly distorted form of tradition, instead of becoming a liberalising factor.

In cities, too, the urban mullah had greater autonomy than his rural counterpart who was more dependent upon the local *zemandar* (the local land holder). He therefore showed a greater tendency to be sucked into the proliferating religious and sectarian organisations and their conflicts. The mullah, therefore, often became the medium for communicating the *Jihadi* agenda; the mosque congregation is, quite understandably, radicalised.

The urban centres of Balochistan and Sindh have contributed a sizeable number in the participation of people in *Jihadi* activities. While skewed

patterns of urbanisation were the primary engine towards this radicalisation, additional factors played their part: for example, these areas saw the most explosive urban growth in the recent few years and, it was these areas, too, that saw the maximum number of new (Gulf-funded) Sunni mosques built as a bulwark against the perceived danger from a Shia Iran.

Economy and Occupations

Official statistics show that Pakistan's economy has progressed over the last several years. At present, however, Pakistan's economy is experiencing a problematic phase. Most of these problems are structural; in financial terms, the State has often been able to manage with its resources due to large quantities of foreign aid.

The critical thing to note about Pakistan's economy is its structural inequity. This economic gulf is aggravated by the manner in which the other systems operating in Pakistani society tend towards appropriating and fencing off large chunks of the economic domain for themselves. In the context of a traditional society, we would expect the feudal system to operate in this manner and, surely enough, it does precisely this. Yet even the modern sector does not seem to provide the way out. The Army for example, has insinuated itself into the entire economic fabric of the country. There thus exists a tiny sliver of the population that 'owns' Pakistan and, at the other extreme, are the mostly undifferentiated populations that struggle to merely eke out a subsistence-based living. Nominally, there is a 'middle class' population comprising of small traders and a salaried segment of the population. However, being numerically small and economically dependent upon other sub-systems, Pakistan's middle class does not offer an effective basis for the formation of a strong civil society that could contest either with the entrenched feudal (or feudalised) order or, with the emerging *Jihadi* ethos.

The way Pakistan's economy has developed creates a huge population of those whose existence is both marginal and precarious, whose prospects

for an improved welfare are non-existent, and who have time on their hands. At the same time, globalisation and the new media have bombarded this population with images emanating from an unattainable, westernised world. In the absence of real alternatives, this large pool of people who have little or no stake in the system becomes available for radicalisation and, eventually, recruitment into *Jihadism*.

The table below records data from a limited sample of those who participated in *Jihadi* activities.

Table 2: Occupation distribution of Jihadi sample⁹

Labor	27.90
Landowner	1.40
Tenant	24.00
Skilled	11.20
Services	1.20
Students	12.60
Businessman Shopkeeper	8.30
Unemployed	6.00
Retired	7.50

Source: Abbas, Sohail. Probing the *Jihadi* mindset, (2007)

The picture that begins to emerge is that of the unemployed and underemployed comprising the bulk of those who participate in *Jihad*. They are the ones, after all, who have few prospects in life. This pattern hews close to that seen amongst other secular, insurgent models.

Religion, in itself, is a slightly less important factor in the process of *Jihadism*, at least compared to what popular accounts make it out to be.

Polity

It is well-known that the Pakistani polity has been dominated by a small coterie led by the Pakistani Army. Power in Pakistan has revolved around the Army and civilian governments. These civilian governments, however, have also been consistently subservient to Army diktats. Within the civilian domain, too, politics has remained constrained by the stranglehold of feudal elements.

Effectively, therefore, popular participation has remained limited mainly to street demonstrations. The existing local political system works as the private domain of a fairly small elite oriented towards westernisation. The absence of political expression and participation for the lower middle class and the middle class causes even them to look favourably upon the possibility of an alternate system. A similar process was visible in Southern Punjab, in areas like Jhang, where aggressive sectarian identities were adopted by the *“urban Sunni middle classes, which could see in sectarianism a powerful tool with which to break the hold of the Shia landed elite over local politics”*¹⁰.

Moreover, since a large majority of the people are effectively excluded from this essentially westernised system—partly because of their not being westernised—any alternate system that they visualise to create space for themselves, will necessarily tend towards anti-westernisation.

Failing Law and Order

Given Pakistan's essentially authoritarian structures—the Army, the Family, and Tradition, in general—one might expect it to be a largely peaceful and orderly society. Yet for a variety of reasons, this is a false assumption. Criminal networks related to smuggling and narcotics have proliferated in recent years. Sectarian groups have virtually become a law

unto themselves, frequently engaging in armed clashes. Karachi and Hyderabad in Sindh have seen the emergence of the MQM (Mohajir Quami Movement) which frequently precipitated armed confrontations with other ethnic groups, like the Pathans, and with the Pakistan Army itself.

At the heart of this generalised tendency of groups in Pakistan to resort to armed confrontation with the State is not only the perceived 'otherness' of the State, but also the fact that society has increasingly taken on an armed character. While many of Pakistan's ethnic groups have traditionally bore arms, over time, small arms of all kinds have begun to proliferate across the country. In other words, Pakistan is a picture of widespread disorder and insecurity.

This anarchic background makes it much easier for *Jihadism* to conduct its various activities of procurement, recruitment, and concealment. At another level, widespread disorder serves to delegitimise the establishment and is therefore welcomed, if not fomented, by *Jihadism*.

Education

Every society features a system of education that socialises the young into the ethos of that society and, at the same time, provides them with the skills required to become productive.

Within Pakistan, there are broadly the following types of education systems: the State school system; the Private school system; the Mosque schools; and the Religious Seminaries (*Deeni Madaris*). It is critical to note that more than being parallel systems, these are illustrative of the contests that exist in the educational domain amongst its sub-systems.

The discussion about the education system in Pakistan tends to focus mostly on the madrassas or Religious seminaries. In a context of widespread poverty where even state-subsidised education is out of reach

for a large number of families, the madrassas stepped in, offering stipends together with a so-called 'religious' education. Obviously, however, the content of such education soon departed from the religious texts and came to be subverted by the generally hate-filled agenda of the particular sectarian group that happened to be running a particular madrassa.

Yet in the larger scheme of things, the problem may not be limited to the madrassa system. In absolute numbers, as a survey by Harvard University and the World Bank points out: "The madrassa sector is small compared to educational options such as public and private schooling..."¹¹ Then again, if we are looking for their actual impact on the radicalisation of young Muslims, data from a sample of Jihadis suggest the following: "*The literacy rate as well as the school attendance in formal educational institution of jihadis is higher than the national average in Pakistan....our data... suggests that education and jihadism are positively correlated*"¹².

Obviously then, there must be a larger dynamic at work. What is it about the system of education that fuels negativity?

The problem is not so much in the divide between the formal, state sector versus the madrassa system; it is in the skewed, hate-driven curriculum. Thus, as Abbas quotes a *Jihadi* captured in Afghanistan: "*I think all the school books prepare us to be good Muslims. They teach us how to be good Muslim and they tell us how to fight non Muslims*"¹³. A Report by the US Congressional Research Service puts it this way: In terms of the content and tone of what is taught in the two systems of education, there are "*few differences between public (government-funded) school and madrassah syllabi with regard to the levels of intolerance that are assuming dangerous proportions*"¹⁴.

From where do these distortions in the system originate? We may find the answer if we look at the various other parts of the larger system. The feudal system worked to keep the masses uneducated and tradition-

bound. The army-and-traditional-politician-driven polity sought to leverage religion for its own agenda and therefore gave a narrow, negative slant to the curriculum. Effectively, this transfers some of the internal unrest towards the outer boundaries of the system. The religious and sectarian outfits, for their part, had their own agendas and identities to reinforce so they, too, bent education to their own ends. More than the negative agendas of the various sub-systems of Pakistan, however, this distortion became possible because the link between education and getting a job in the modern economy seems to be very weak in the Pakistani case. It is this space left open which the other sub-systems sought to capture and use for their own purposes.

Religion

Pakistan is a predominantly Muslim nation, with the 1998 census pegging the percentage of practicing Muslims at around 97 percent of the population. Hindus, Christians, Parsis, and others make up a tiny percentage. Of the Muslim majority, around 80 to 85 percent are estimated to belong to the Sunni persuasion, while the rest are thought to be Shia.

Traditionally, religion was the domain of the Maulvi and the Pir. Especially in the largely rural Pakistani context, the maulvi was mostly economically dependent upon the local landlord. At the same time, the maulvi was an individual more than he was part of a group, if he was even linked to one; the relationship was more in the nature of a loose affiliation. The Pir had greater autonomy since his income depended upon donations from his *murids*. The Pirs therefore, popularised a more tolerant and accommodative form of Islam. More than the mullah, the Pirs participated in politics, though such participation was not religious in nature.

At the popular level, the Pakistani people tend to be fairly religious, in the meaning of observing rituals regularly. This religiosity, however, has

never translated into any significant knowledge or understanding of the sacred texts and commentaries. Moreover, for most Pakistanis, their understanding of Islam was closely interwoven with their particular cultures and the popular tendency has been to see the local (for example, tribal) traditions emanating from Islam.

Effectively then, the ideas of *jihad* being a Quranic duty were historically alien to the main body of all these cultures. For the *Jihadi* system to have flourished, this belief had to be injected from outside, with the medium being the Mullah. The impetus and opportunity for this to happen came from the other sub-systems. The Army, in its effort to legitimise its hold on political power, sought the help of religious groups in rallying support to its cause by pushing a national ideology predicated upon demonising the 'Hindu other'.

However, religion in the Pakistani context does not provide the expected sense of community. This largely owes to the existence of competing sects. According to Abbas: *“The reality is that on the religious front, they consider all the other sects inferior to theirs; all other ethnic groups not as high bred as they are, their village to be the very best etc. It may be said that it is through maintaining their prejudices that they are able to bear and live with their feelings of inferiority”¹⁵.*

The larger, geo-political context must not be missed, too. As the Iranian Revolution unfolded, so did the threat of a resurgent Shia nation. Financial support from the Gulf states then began pouring in for Pakistan's religious organisations. At that stage, the idea of a religious 'Other'—initially thought of as Hindu-India—soon came to be broadened to include even other Muslim sects. Pakistani society thus descended into virulent Sunni-Shia sectarian strife.

Idioms for Self-definition

We have seen how the larger environment (the universe from the systems point of view), seems to have afforded certain enabling conditions for *Jihadism* to come into existence and to flourish.

We will now try to see what else the *Jihadism* system derives from its universe.

As we have seen, the Pakistani context is overwhelmingly Sunni Muslim. For the masses, especially the rural component, their understanding of religion was heavily mediated through their local tribal traditions. Pashtun communities for example, have very strongly held ideas about personal and family honour—and the role of women. Moreover, as we have seen earlier, there are sizeable constituencies in Pakistani society that were positioned against Westernisation primarily because that avenue was closed to them by the pre-existing elites. Thus, in Pakistan, it was only Tradition—or something that could pass off as such—that could offer a comfortable recourse.

Separate from the Westernisation aspect, a large percentage of the Pakistani population hold strong anti-American opinions. A recent Pew report demonstrates that amongst Pakistanis, only 15 percent in 2007 and 19 percent in 2008 held a favourable opinion of America¹⁶. America is not the only 'Other'. Given the tribal, traditional structures prevalent in much of Pakistan, all outsiders are promptly labelled as 'Other'. It stands to reason then, that whatever system this cohort joins and whatever image it constructs of itself, that system or image will tend to be coloured by these traits.

Idioms for interpretation of surrounding reality

Just as the universe provides the basis of identity construction to the system, so too does it provide the system with the basic idioms with which the latter proceeds to interpret its surrounding realities. In other words, the tendencies prevailing in the universe tend to condition how a system understands and relates to outsiders.

One would normally hesitate to generalise about the psychology of a large population. A local clinical psychologist, however, has studied Pakistani society adequately to be able to observe thus: "*In the Pakistani*

*society, people are born with 'friends' and relationships.... since most of the relationships are imposed... relationships with the outsiders or 'aliens' could be considered risky, dangerous and thus undesirable*¹⁷.” Even if we exclude the elites and perhaps some of the middle-class groups, we are still left with a huge population that tend to be distrustful of outsiders.

Empirical analyses also suggest that Pakistan, more than most other countries, tends to portray itself as a 'victim' to various 'villains', whether Indian deviousness, British treachery, or American fickleness. *Jihadism* picks up all of these cues and weaves an even more xenophobic narrative of the demonic 'Other'.

Upon the break-out of anti-Soviet *Jihad* in Afghanistan, narratives of *Jihadi* prowess were quickly constructed, telling and re-telling the story of how the *Jihadis* had overcome a superpower. Similarly, the state inspired narratives that spoke of America's abandonment of Pakistan after its own purpose had been served. Over time, both these streams became interwoven and, with the American action against the Taliban, a powerful narrative gained currency. This picked on the accounts of American fickleness and perceived softness. For example, a common refrain amongst the Taliban—sometimes seen scrawled on the village walls in North West Pakistan as a warning to collaborators was, “...*the Americans have the wristwatches, but we have the time... The Americans may stay for five years, they may stay for ten, but eventually they will leave, and when they do, we will come back....*”

At a closer, more mundane level, we have the generalised phenomenon of anti-westernisation sentiment. However, on its own, this sentiment rarely translates into anti-modernity. *Jihadism* picks up this cue from the universe and weaves it into its own narratives. However, it also sees and identifies western images and influences as a danger to its power structures. Therefore, one of its first actions was to ban satellite dishes and literally smash television sets. Not radios, though, nor motor

vehicles and Kalashnikovs. Thus the *Jibadi* antipathy to Western technology was highly selective and instrumental.

A Structural look at Jihadism

As we have seen above, the universe provides the basic idioms from which the component system constructs its identity. Given the basic nature of the larger population, *Jihadism* predicates its identity upon “Muslimness” (of the puritan, Wahabbi kind), anti-Westernisation, and a xenophobic anti-Other stance, which has Anti-American and anti-India strands.

Purpose

The *Jibadi* system's foremost desire is to capture power; first, in smaller geographical areas, and then the entire Pakistan. This desire to capture the State is presented in the narrative of demands for a 'more Islamic' state that is governed according to the Sharia.

Sohail Abbas, in his 2007 study of captured *Jihadis* (those captured post the Afghan Jihad), demonstrates that by the time such narrative percolates to the level of the individual *jihadis*, it gets converted into a yearning for the 'Glory of Islam'. Below is a breakdown of responses given to Abbas:

What did you want from *Jihad*?¹⁸

Glory of Islam	73.70
Gain of Power	5.10
Expression of Anger	5.10
Other diverse motives incl. Adventure	16.20

The system also sends out very clear and focussed messages to its constituents as to its objectives.

Aims of participation in Jihad¹⁹

1. Harm Americans	39.40
2. For rights of Muslims	21.20
3. Bring Muslims on Right path	10.10
4. To Visit	17.00
5. For <i>shahadat</i> alone	10.30

Obviously, as the focus of *Jihadism* shifts over time, it is likely that the objectives will also change. However, it is worth noting the distribution of these responses. The 39.4 percent above represents an instrumentality, one that could change and, with time, could be Pakistan or India. The roughly 31 percent (items 2 and 3) represents the core objective of the movement, and this will broadly remain constant. The figure of 17 percent for the item “To Visit” is interesting in itself, as it points us to the important fact that a lot of people in the current Pakistani context simply have nothing better to do and are available to be co-opted into whichever system targets them.

The most significant figure, however, is the low 10.3 percent for *shahadat*, as it goes contrary to the widely held belief amongst analysts that *Jihadis* are motivated primarily by the desire to die for *jihad*. Quite obviously, this suicidal urge is only one of the less important factors driving *Jihadism*.

Thus, while *Jihadism* predicates its ideology upon striving for the glory of Islam, it also weaves in a range of other strands into this ideology.

At the level of perceptions, one widely held belief seems to have been that the West (represented by America) is out to destroy the Muslims, their religious beliefs and their way of life. In an interesting fashion, even historical encounters between the West and Muslims are narrated in a manner that serves to reinforce this belief.

The American action against the Taliban is thus seen as vindication of the belief that the West wishes to destroy Islam. America's intentions, however, are not seen as being limited to Afghanistan but as forming a part of a larger onslaught on Muslims. A captured *Jihadi* told Abbas: “*If the west was successful in Afghanistan, they would come to Pakistan also and pollute our society with their values based on obscenity, lack of respect for the elders, and Islamic values*²⁰.”

Interestingly, available anecdotal evidence does not suggest a similar perception of threat from India. It appears that India is seen as a devious state which never reconciled itself to Pakistan's existence and will therefore do its utmost to prevent Pakistanis (and Muslims) from flourishing. However, India's perceived deviousness apart, there is a sense of contempt for the country's capabilities.

For a large constituency in Pakistan, the belief seems to have been that Muslims defeated one superpower and are on the way to defeating the other. As a number of analysts have commented, this has been an empowering narrative further fuelling the *jihadi* mindset.

However, the more significant aspect of this narrative has been the belief that if it could be done in Afghanistan, the model can be replicated elsewhere. Thus the belief in ideas like those voiced out by one of Abbas' interviewees, who said: “*People like us are in power in Afghanistan.*” The same *Jihadi* also said, “*Our time had come and any hurdle in its way needed to be demolished....*²¹” Here we see the narrative of empowerment turning inwards onto Pakistan itself; the real tussle is for control of the Pakistan state. This is the framework in which we should view the current demands for imposition of Sharia law. These demands arise less from the 'desires' of a local population and more from the *Jihadi* system's efforts to reinforce its power.

At a more global level, the aspiration seems to be for revitalising the lost unity of the Muslim *ummah*. The distant hope is that the scattered

elements of Muslim strength would somehow coalesce and the Muslims would become a great nation (that they once were).

According to our understanding of an organic system, it will try to grow and extend its life. In a social system, this will mainly be through the induction of new members into the system. To this end, we see *Jihadism* as a system that is involved in two processes, namely, Radicalisation and Recruitment.

A commonly held image is one of highly charged and motivated *Jihadi* fighters eager to rush into *Jihad*. This may not be quite accurate even at the level of the individual. Abbas writes about his interviewees: “When asked as to what, in their childhood, they wanted to be when they grew up, ... 80 % had wanted to be doctors, engineers, teachers, civil servants, army officers, players, businessmen and even local leaders.... four percent said that they had wanted to be religious scholars, mullahs or *Jihadis*...”²²

Thus the individual, inherently or by religious orientation, is not prone to becoming radicalised. This radicalisation is a slower, more acquired attribute, and its working needs to be understood.

So how do individuals get radicalised into *Jihadism*?

Radicalisation

One possible source of radicalisation could be deeply held religious beliefs in the proximal family. Still, researchers have not found any evidence of 'excessive' religiosity amongst the families of *Jihadis*. Obviously, the families of the *Jihadis* may well have been religious; but they are not overly so in the sense of aggressively want or striving to harm or destroy 'others'. Moreover, in spite of Pakistan being essentially a traditional society, the family had in fact been losing ground and relative influence in recent years.

In terms of motivation for Jihad, the *Jihadis* themselves have attributed significant influence to external sources like the *mullah*. What *Jihadism*

seems to have achieved is to have set up informal, relatively unstructured networks for the dissemination of its ideologies and propaganda. A captured *Jihadi* told Abbas: “Each mullah would have his people going door-to-door, telling everyone the vivid details of the miseries of Afghans²³.”

Importantly then, due to the way in which the various sub-systems were working in Pakistan, these mullah networks were able to by-pass the traditional family structures.

The narratives delivered through these networks tapped into the raw fears and sentiments of a simple, ill-informed populace. The same interviewee said, *“Imagination too would be let loose—what would happen if the Taliban were defeated? They [the West/Americans] would forcefully convert the whole population to Christianity, would not allow women to wear the burka, and there would be drinks all over. Someone would add that through nasbandi (vasectomy) they would make men impotent so that Afghan Musalmans are eliminated. There would be dancing halls, cinema houses, clubs, where Muslims would be made to dance..... The stories were horrifying; my blood would boil each time I heard them. My determination for going to jihad increased²⁴.”*

Naturally, while those attending the mosque would become the first targets for radicalisation, the mullah network was also making a door-to-door campaign to whip up sentiment. The hate-filled exceptionalism built up by Pakistani textbooks only served to further fuel this negativity. In a more recent instance (in Pakistan's Tribal Areas), Jihadism is now reaching out to a larger audience using channels on mainstream FM radio.

Another critical impetus towards radicalisation of beliefs appears to have come from the workers returning from the Gulf States. Abbas quotes a Jihadi who said, *“I was very impressed with the way my mother, sisters and brother, together with all the cousins and uncles, would flock around my elder*

brother, Akbar, on his return from Saudi Arabia.... We listened to him with rapt attention when he talked about how the Saudis lived and their belief system... Learning from them the correct path of Islam, we started going to the masjid of the Ahl-e-Hadis²⁵.”

Thus *Jihadism* seems to have had a rather on-and-off relationship with traditional systems. Moreover, contrary to our expectations, radicalisation may not have been the necessary outcome of tradition; radicalisation appears to have taken place *inspite* of tradition.

Recruitment

From Radicalisation, *Jihadism* moves to actual recruitment. It is important to remember that at this stage, *Jihadism* is perhaps more of a generalised 'mood' or wave of sentiment and belief than a single coherent organisation. While there have been many different channels for recruitment of new members into the *Jihadi* system, the primary agent seems to have been the local mullah, both in villages and cities.

Anecdotal evidence from *Jihadis* provides us with some insights into the actual build-up to the recruitment of a new member. One Jihadi recounts: “*Some time later, my friend took me to a house and I met a young religious person.... his house was full of pictures of injured young children and women. He also showed photos of those who gave their lives in the way of Islam. Then there was the account of all the miracles that happened in the battlefield and how these jihadis were helped by divine powers²⁶.”*

Jihadism has been successful in recruiting members because of several key elements in its narrative. Firstly, it posits *Jihad* as a religious duty and then holds out the rewards; anyone who dies in jihad becomes a *shabeed* (martyr), and someone who survives, becomes a *ghazi* (roughly translated, a warrior for the glory of Islam). Secondly, by over-emphasising the role of destiny, the *Jihadi* narrative weakens the individual's room for making choices. Finally, Jihadism encourages a break from traditional structures by informing the potential jihadi that in

deciding to join the *Jihadi* enterprise, he need not consult or seek permission from his family.

Moreover, in seeking to extend its life span, *Jihadism* has also been seen deploying a clever and interesting strategy—that of franchising.

Education

Often, the state/organisation can be seen to be investing heavily in education; this is an instance of skill-building. When we look at the Jihadi sub-system in Pakistan, we find that the nature of education being imparted is somewhat differently oriented. Typically there is a heavy component of Quranic studies, teaching selections from the Quran by rote together with heavy doses of *Jihadi* indoctrination. This tends to be supplemented by military or insurrectionist training. There is a much lower component of any of the 'standard' education subjects like arithmetic, geography, or sciences.

Yet if we look at it from the systems viewpoint, this is not a default; rather, *Jihadism* is imparting a particular type of education and indoctrination only partly because that is what it inherently believes in. More importantly, as a system, it is imparting that education which is most relevant for its purposes.

Abilities and Relationships

Even in the presence of enabling conditions, and given any semblance of structure, there is little that a system can accomplish without being able to understand and relate to its environment. It is these perceptions, distortions, and relationships that condition the future trajectory of the system.

Of course, at some level every individual (involved in *Jihadism*, in this case) builds or acquires an understanding of his environment. However, it is important to differentiate between the creation of an opinion (a leader function) and the mere adoption of that opinion (a follower function).

Traditionally, in Pakistan, religious frameworks were communicated in a highly abbreviated version to the masses by the *mullah* (or the *Pir*). Moreover, these would tend to be heavily interwoven with local traditions. The mullah, in turn, would have inherited his beliefs from his predecessor and teacher or from the larger sect to which he belonged. Importantly, because this process was slow and diffused, it necessarily allowed for local variations and thus had a degree of built-in pluralism.

However, in the late 1970s, several new trends came into operation. Money from the Gulf states began pouring in, particularly meant for the more hardline religious organisations. Zia's Islamisation drive came into operation in this period. These trends had the effect of organisationally strengthening religious groups and increasing the general level of religious paranoia. The obvious result was widespread sectarian blood-letting.

The net effect of these developments was to pull the mullah more closely into a network, and religious teaching and practice in Pakistan began to be more centralised. With this centralisation came the homogenisation of religious identity and narratives very obviously, at the cost of local traditions and variations. Perceptions and distortions formulated at the centre would now quickly flow to the periphery.

This change in the cognitive and interpretive processes contributed greatly to the accelerated growth of *Jihadism* in Pakistan.

Cognitive distortions

The mullah clearly had an important role in the radicalisation process. In his newfound role as mediator for disseminating a more centralised agenda, the mullah was also equipped with a structured narrative that worked to distort reality. Psychologically, the technique used has been described by Abbas as “*taking away their sense of reality by ... deliberately depreciating the importance and value of the present world*”.²⁷

This process is similar to the cynical indoctrination of pliable followers. Oft repeated distortions—combined with the absence of a critical, rational process of evaluating these assessments—has meant that even the so-called 'leaders' would often get caught up in these cognitive distortions. The narrative they spun often assumed the form of self-evident truth that they themselves, eventually, started believing in.

Effectively then, there was a transformation in the way in which cognitive and interpretative functions operated in Pakistani society. From being diffused and distributed, these functions, and the resulting narratives, became homogenised and centralised. Obviously, distortions (whether natural or deliberate) now had much greater reach and power.

In actual fact, how do these cognitive distortions play out?

One of the most obvious manifestations where these distorted narratives have manifested themselves is in Jihadism's evolving perception of the 'Other'; thus, for example, the perceived weakness of, first India, and then America. The journey of popular Pakistani perceptions of America provides a particularly valuable insight into Jihadism. The initial anti-American position was possibly the outcome of the ruling elite's attempt at negotiating a better geo-political deal for itself. However, once this stance entered the public domain, it gained a momentum of its own and was soon appropriated by Jihadism into its own narrative.

More specifically, this kind of self-perpetuating narrative of myth results in even legitimate threat perceptions by the system degenerating into phobias. As this process unfolds, the system begins to oscillate between self-delusion and a xenophobic sense of persecution.

One consequence is an exaggerated perception of one's own capabilities. This mentality was first seen to emerge in the Pakistan army's confrontation with India. Subsequently, a similar self-perpetuating set of myths seems to have recreated this type of perception in the Jihadism and in the larger Pakistani body politic. For the Jihadis, the first confirmation

seems to have been the defeat of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan which, to their mind, was achieved mainly by the efforts of the Jihadis. Once they started believing that they could defeat one super-power, it became easy to believe that they could defeat the remaining super-power. This belief conveniently ignored the fact that the Jihadis could not have won against the Soviet Union without substantial aid and support from a number of States (most notably, the US and Saudi Arabia). We can see that since the doctrinal narrative builds up a certain inevitability about the success of the cause, it is natural for the constituents to begin believing that victory can be snatched even in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds.

At yet another level, we see the pattern of negotiation peculiar to Pakistan: 'spiral' bargaining, when bargaining results not in a deal but instead in escalated demands. It is difficult to pin-point the exact origins of this phenomenon but two factors may have contributed to this pattern. Firstly, it may be the case that the surrounding cultural ethos in some parts of Pakistan did not give rise to the idea of a binding contract. Secondly, and more pertinently, since Jihadism builds a narrative based upon a strict and absolute contrast between the 'Self'—seen as being morally correct—and the despised 'Other', it follows that any agreement or deal will be seen as a temporary compromise and not as a binding agreement.

Relationships

The more critical element, however, is the kind of capabilities that Jihadism possesses and the relationships that it builds; essentially, what can Jihadism actually do, and how? This can be best understood in the context of its objective and audience.

Jihadism sets out as its objective the recreation of a Muslim society as ordered by Quranic law. For Jihadism, this is not necessarily limited to any geographical entity, as the ultimate aim is to bring together all

Muslims into a re-vitalised *Ummah*. It also wants to liberate oppressed Muslims the world over. Towards this end, Jihadism needs to address itself to a range of audiences, namely, its members, potential recruits, potential collaborators, potential supporters, the enemy, and the bystander. In this framework, as Jihadism sets about trying to appropriate power, it builds capabilities and relationships and implements its various strategies.

Interestingly, Zia ul Haq's extensive Islamisation drive may or may not have had substantial, secular causation. What it did have were a number of significant impacts upon the larger society's relationship towards Jihadism. Amongst other measures, Zia radically altered the school textbooks and imparted a distinctly religious colouring to the Army. These measures had the effect of dramatically legitimising the narratives that Jihadism was to begin using. In this manner, Pakistani society in general became much more receptive to *Jihadism*.

In the initial, formative phases, *Jihadism* was unable to break into the power structures through its participation in the electoral processes. Therefore, it was comfortable adopting the role of a client to the Pakistan state (essentially the Pakistan Army) as a means of negotiating a back-door entry into power. Successive Pakistani governments used the resources and machinery of Jihadism to achieve their aims—in Kashmir, in East Pakistan, and in Daud's Afghanistan. An essay (2003) in *The Washington Quarterly* observed: "*Paradoxically, it has almost always been the state, especially the Pakistani army, that has allowed most radical Islamic groups to function on a wider stage—equipping and training them when necessary and providing overall political and strategic guidance for their activities. Arguably, therefore, in Pakistan, radical groups have been more of a tool of the state than a serious threat to it*²⁸."

In return, *Jihadism* negotiated small gains for itself—such as the ability to hit out at their competitors; consolidating its own identity by marginalising other groups like the Ahmadis, Christians and Shia; being

allowed to operate freely even when other political activity was banned; and the access to huge resources. At this phase, the relationships that nascent *Jihadism* entered into were temporary and opportunistic.

Geographical Bases

At this stage, strategically, *Jihadism* tries to consolidate power bases in some geographical areas and then gradually expand its influence. The initial attempt took the form of the incursion into Afghanistan by the Taliban. This enterprise was an equal collaboration between the Pakistani State and *Jihadism*.

Things began to change following the Afghan *Jihad*. By the time the *Jihad* against the then Soviet Union ended, several of the *jibadi* groups had developed sources of funding that were independent of the Pakistani State; thus, they began to acquire increased autonomy of action from their erstwhile masters. This stage marks a striking change with power increasingly gravitating from the Army to the *Jihadis*. After the 9/11 attacks in America, the ground shift deepened as the Taliban were faced with American military action and Pakistan's co-operation with America. At this time, *Jihadism* felt confident enough to take on America and Pakistan. *Jihadism* began to challenge the State-Army combine and entered into multiple contests with it.

Under the rubric of "*The Essence and Demands of the Sharia*," al-Suri, the Al Qaeda theoretician, lists obligations of government policy that conforms to the mujahid interpretation of Islam: the universality of Islamic law in religious and mundane affairs; the legitimacy of the ruler judged by this standard; and conduct of foreign relations according to the doctrine of *al-Wala wal-Bara* (Friendship and Enmity), which regulates relations on the basis of religious propriety alone²⁹. This ideological challenge to the Musharraf regime was taken to the popular level as the mullahs mobilised popular opposition to the Pakistani government, accusing it of betraying the Afghans.

A Base in Pakistan

Effectively uprooted from Afghanistan, *Jihadism* now began to look for alternate geographical safe havens. Pakistan's Tribal Areas (known as FATA–Federally Administered Tribal Area) adjoining the Afghan border were a possibility. They offered easy access and proximity to Afghanistan and relative immunity from State action since the Pakistan state had historically stayed away from them.

Accordingly, *Jihadism* enters into multiple contests (with American forces and with Pakistan) to consolidate its hold in this region and uses it extensively as a springboard for attacks into Afghanistan and into Pakistan. Interestingly, the Taliban/Al-Qaeda are not truly native to this region. They ally themselves with local sympathisers, insinuate themselves into this area and then proceed to consolidate their hold through collaborations, propaganda (which is carried out through FM radio) and intimidation.

Moreover, despite its apparent preoccupation with a particular geographical area at a given time, *Jihadism* does not lose track of Kashmir and India, or even of the larger Pakistani theatre.

A Diffused, Distributed, Virtual world

Beyond this, however, we must remember that the way the distributed Jihadist networks function, their apparent focus on a particular geographical tract is merely an opportunistic choice. It does not preclude parallel activities to develop different kinds of operating platforms in other areas.

It was probably the Afghan *Jihad* which set in motion the *Jihad* machinery. More importantly, it created the 'network effect' within *Jihadism*. This loose pattern of issue-based collaboration between different *Jihadi* organisations was based on a broad commonality of objectives and included sharing of resources, and sometimes personnel,

thereby magnifying the effectiveness of each individual organisation. This network effect came to be deployed mainly in Afghanistan but it was also available to be deployed against India. Whether by inspired design or accidental choice of tactics, the organisational choices initially made by the Al-Qaeda network have had the effect of creating unusually resilient and broad-based terror networks and organisations.

What this means for the future

We have seen that Pakistan, with its large, ill-educated, under-employed and youthful population—combined with the burden of an unreformed feudal context and the sheer weight of an inordinately large Army—is succumbing slowly but surely to radicalisation and anarchy. A broad-based and diffused *Jihadism* is the face of this predicament.

Jihadism's deportment at this stage might offer some insight into its trajectory in the immediate future.

The broad tendencies that analysts have seen in military-led Pakistan over the years will continue to be visible under the *Jihadi* rubric. Thus brinkmanship, self-deception and paranoia will remain visible, as will the tendency to assume different forms depending upon the audience being addressed.

Pakistan's ruling elite has remained acutely aware of the difficulty in militarily forcing concessions from India. Therefore, it has consistently sought to address external audiences. Initially this took the form of projecting itself as the victim of India's unfair strategies—thus attempting to transform the Kashmir dispute into a mortal threat. Over time, this grandstanding morphed into the way Pakistan has attempted to play the nuclear card—its oft repeated threat that conflict with India can rapidly degenerate into a nuclear exchange. The spectre of nuclearisation does not seem to have stopped Pakistan's own initiation of armed conflict with India, or India's military response. The nuclear card seems more of a ploy addressed towards the West. However ill-thought these strategies

may be for the long term, the noteworthy effect is that they have tended to introduce an extreme, maximalist set of positions into the general discourse. *Jihadism* picks up these same positions and weaves them into its own narratives, doing so without any semblance of responsible constraint.

In terms of its relationships, *Jihadism* has often been opportunistic but never accommodative. Similarly, its agenda is uncompromising; there is no middle ground. Under adverse conditions it might soft-pedal, perhaps even negotiate. Beyond that is nothing.

Systemic tendencies

At this time, all the various systems within Pakistan will tend towards strength consolidation and the end-result will not only be intra-system conflict but the enhanced capabilities will continue to be projected outwards.

At the same time, since the large constituency for Jihadism already exists, the other systems in Pakistan will tend towards co-opting such constituency. This will naturally lead to these systems themselves assuming much of the *Jihadi* colour. The trend of Islamising the Army initiated by the Zia regime does not appear to have been reversed. In fact, as the men and officers recruited in that period have reached senior positions, the broad swath of sympathy for *Jihadism* and its objectives appears only to have gained ground in the Army ranks.

Strategies and Tactics

In its conflicts with Pakistan, America and India, Jihadism will seek to delegitimise the enemies and to constrict their capabilities. To this end, it will use terror indiscriminately to inflict physical infrastructural damage, impose costs, and erode state credibility. Given the known Al-Qaeda familiarity with Internet technologies and the Inter-Services Intelligence's (ISI) known efforts in hacking, it is possible that these

competencies could coalesce under the Jihadism rubric. The Mumbai attacks of 2008 offer a good example of carefully evaluated targeting.

For the foreseeable future, Jihadism will remain engaged in consolidating its hold over Pakistan. This will take the form of co-opting personnel from the Pakistan Army and playing the role of power broker in the forming and un-seating of governments. Geographically, it will continue its efforts to capture and consolidate safe havens as it has done in FATA.

In areas that do or might fall under its influence, Jihadism will tend to deploy strict codes of social conduct as a means of political control. Thus, the ostensibly 'religious' law imposed by Jihadis in areas coming under their influence, serves the system by transferring the adjudicative and coercive machinery from an autonomous judiciary to within the jihadi system. By closing down the satellite channels and television, Jihadism effectively shuts down independent access to information and to ideological alternatives to itself. By limiting women's rights, Jihadism seeks to reinforce tradition and patriarchal structures thereby precluding unwelcome systemic change. Since Jihadism comes packaged with an ideology and with control structures, it will tend towards opposing democracy and individual rights.

American pressure in the so-called Af-Pak region will not do away with the threat. It will not even result in the transfer of the threat from one set of targets to another. It simply aggravates the larger mood of opposition to the Pakistani state and to America. Instead of containing Jihadism in a territorial confine, it works to create a 'Diaspora' effect within Jihadism.

International Spill-over

Beyond Pakistan, Jihadism will tend to focus on Afghanistan, Kashmir, and the rest of India, in that order. Its expansion into Central Asia and China will probably continue to remain blocked.

The first target will still be Pakistan. Once its immediate security is assured within all or parts of Pakistan, Jihadism will tend to do two

things: First, to consolidate its own platform, it will become increasingly strident and vicious towards India and towards local Western (particularly American) interests. Secondly, it will leverage its unique networking model to extend itself into Yemen and Somalia, both of which offer unique opportunities—Yemen by way of its demography and Somalia by its anarchy.

Pakistani Jihadism may also increasingly tap into the Pakistani diasporas. This could manifest itself in two different areas: It could be operationalised in European cities, and amongst the massive population of Pakistani migrant workers in the Gulf.

Does this, then, mean that there is something inevitable about the rise of Jihadism? Not really.

Do unto others before they do it unto you.

In the immediate term, Jihadism has to be viewed as a terrorist insurgency. At this stage, there are no compromises or negotiations. Security personnel will know that security can never be 'bought'—you cannot really negotiate with challengers who themselves confess of their wish to topple you. At this stage then, police action has to beat back the growing tips and Intelligence has to be used to identify and uproot clandestine networks.

Equally important is for states to ensure that the results and gains desired by Jihadism will be denied—at any cost. If one of the objectives of Jihadism is to undermine the confidence of a segment of the population, then states must not allow their actions to aggravate the situation.

Liberal and democratic states sometimes find themselves in a quandary when faced with systems like Jihadism. This is due to the fundamental tension between being democratic, liberal and being a 'hard' state—this creates a 'soft' zone wherein the Jihadis can operate with impunity. It is this idea—that a challenger can act with impunity—which must be torn

down. The basic principle must be laid down that irresponsible acts will attract consequences. It is a myth that those involved in Jihadism have nothing to lose. They do. And the higher up the ladder you go, the more so. Therefore, it will be important to ensure and make known that involvement with terrorism (and not just the perpetration of a terrorist act) will attract the imposition of costs—massive, personal, and painful costs.

Longer Term

It is a widely accepted notion in the international community of nations that security and development share a symbiotic relationship. As former United Nations secretary-general Kofi Annan proclaimed in 2005: “In an increasingly interconnected world, progress in the areas of development, security and human rights must go hand in hand. There will be no development without security and no security without development³⁰.”

We know that development could, and must, be one of the strategies for tackling radicalisation. Yet development alone will not suffice unless it also addresses the issue of inequitable distribution of wealth and power. Unfair regional imbalances have already once torn Pakistan apart – they need to be rectified urgently in the shape of a fair and consensual Federal framework. Similarly, in the education system, while changes in textbooks and the curriculum are essential, they alone will prove to be temporary unless attention is paid to making education relevant to the economy. Financial aid, too, may be a mere palliative unless it is very closely targeted and monitored. Thus, as we look at the various aspects of the Jihadi phenomenon, it becomes clear that for any solutions to be viable, they must address the entire problem and the system as a whole.

Conclusion

Beyond the immediate phase, it is obvious that for *Jihadism* to be reversed, Pakistan must undertake a structural overhaul. This will involve, at the very least, the tearing down of feudal systems and the

autonomy of the Army. Cosmetic tinkering with apparent causes will not serve the purpose. The process has to be slow and painful, involving systemic change. This is a huge task, indeed, and one in which the international community will need to come together to play a constructive role. The cost of inaction may yet be too high for anyone to afford, least of all, for Pakistan's people.

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Observer Research Foundation
20, Rouse Avenue, New Delhi-110 002
Email: orf@orfonline.org
Phone: +91-11-43520020 Fax: +91-11-43520003
www.orfonline.org