



MEI Report

# Sunni Deobandi-Shi`i Sectarian Violence in Pakistan

*Explaining the Resurgence Since 2007*

Arif Rafiq

*Photo Credit: AP Photo/B.K. Bangash*



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# Contents

<b>I. Summary.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>II. Acronyms .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>III. The Author.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>IV. Introduction .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>V. Historic Roots of Sunni Deobandi-Shi'i Conflict in Pakistan .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>VI. Sectarian Violence Surges since 2007: How and Why? .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>VII. Current Trends: Sectarianism Growing.....</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>VIII. Policy Recommendations .....</b>	<b>105</b>
<b>IX. Bibliography .....</b>	<b>110</b>
<b>X. Notes .....</b>	<b>114</b>

# I. Summary

- Sectarian violence between Sunni Deobandi and Shi'i Muslims in Pakistan has resurged since 2007, resulting in approximately 2,300 deaths in Pakistan's four main provinces from 2007 to 2013 and an estimated 1,500 deaths in the Kurram Agency from 2007 to 2011.
- Baluchistan and Karachi are now the two most active zones of violence between Sunni Deobandis and Shi'a, with roughly equal numbers of fatalities as a result of confirmed and suspected sectarian attacks in 2013. Last year, nearly 75% of Sunni Deobandi-Shi'i sectarian deaths occurred in Baluchistan and Karachi.
- The resurgence of sectarian violence in Pakistan is the result of:
  - the post-September 11 convergence of al-Qa'ida and the anti-Shi'a Lashkar-e-Jhangvi;
  - the escape or formal release of key Lashkar-e-Jhangvi operatives from prison;
  - the fusion of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi with the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan as the latter emerged and spread, particularly in the Kurram Agency and Karachi;
  - the allowance of the Punjab provincial government for the ostensibly-banned, anti-Shi'a Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat organization to operate with impunity;
  - and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi's cooperation with military-backed and/or anti-state militias or militant groups in Baluchistan.
- Anti-Shi'a sectarian violence is an inherent part of Sunni Deobandi militancy, a phenomenon built by the Pakistani state and its allies in the 1980s and 1990s, which split post-September 11 into pro-state and anti-state factions and is both combatted and sustained by Pakistan's civilian and military

leadership. Sunni Deobandi sectarian groups have a privileged status in Pakistani society, operating with relative impunity.

- Sunni Deobandi militant groups are the driving force for Pakistan's growing sectarian violence. Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan seek the official declaration of Pakistan's Shi'a as non-Muslims and work to exterminate large numbers of Shi'a to make the remaining population subservient. While the Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat organization also seeks to make Shi'a second-class citizens in Pakistan, it makes greater use of political activities and street agitation to press for its demands.
- Shi'i militancy is essentially retaliatory, but it has been aggressive in the Kurram Agency and Karachi, where, with the probable provision of material support by foreign actors, it has added fuel to the fire through the killing of innocent Sunnis with no direct affiliation with sectarian groups. Members of the Shi'i community deny the existence of militants in their community, but nearly 150 Sunni Deobandis were killed in Karachi in suspected and confirmed targeted killings in 2012 and 2013.
- Pakistan is increasingly polarized along sectarian lines. Sectarianism appears to be spreading deeper into Pakistani society, with a latent impact on mainstream political parties and in the media. Increasingly, Shi'a are choosing to live in enclaves, if not ghettos, in Quetta and Karachi or are fleeing to other countries. At the same time, peace talks with the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan that began in 2013 and continued into the spring of 2014 contributed to a greater sense of marginalization among Pakistani Shi'a as well as Sunni Barelvis.
- Sunni Deobandi and Shi'i activists and militants are increasingly adopting a transnational sectarian narrative, seeing themselves as part of a regional Sunni-Shi'i war. Sectarian conflict in Bahrain, Iraq, and Syria is now a heavy component of the sectarian discourse in Pakistan. There is anecdotal evidence of relatively modest numbers of both Sunni and Shi'i Pakistani nationals fighting in Syria.

## II. Acronyms

ANP – Awami National Party

ASWJ – Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat

BLA – Baluchistan Liberation Army

BMDT – Baluch Musalla Difa Tanzeem

BRA – Baluch Republican Army

CID – Crime Investigation Department

FATA – Federally Administered Tribal Areas

FC – Frontier Corps

GHQ – General Headquarters, Pakistan Army

HDP – Hazara Democratic Party

HUJI – Harkatul Jihad al-Islami

HuM – Harkatul Mujahideen

IJI – Islami Jamhoori Ittihad

IMU – Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan

ISI – Inter-Services Intelligence

ISO – Imamia Students Organization

JDC – Jafaria Disaster Cell

JI – Jamaat-i-Islami

JuD – Jamaat-ud-Dawa

JUI-F – Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (Fazl)

JUI-S – Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (Sami-ul-Haq)

Lel – Lashkar-e-Islam

LeJ – Lashkar-e-Jhangvi

LeT – Lashkar-e-Taiba

MDM – Muttahida Deeni Mahaz

MQM – Muttahida Qaumi Movement

MUB – Muttahida Ulema Board

MWM – Majlis-e-Wahdat-e-Muslimeen

MYC – Milli Yakjehti Council

PkMAP – Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party

PML – Pakistan Muslim League

PML-N – Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz)

PML-Q – Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid)

PPP – Pakistan Peoples Party

SIC – Sunni Ittihad Council

SMP – Sipah-e-Muhammad

SSP – Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan

SUC – Shia Ulema Council

TJP – Tehreek-e-Jafaria Pakistan

TNFJ – Tehreek-e-Nifaz-e-Fiqh-e-Jafria

TTP – Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan

### III. The Author

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A frequent contributor to print and web publications, Rafiq writes regularly for *The Diplomat*, *Foreign Policy*, and *The National Interest*. He has contributed to the *Daily Beast*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *POLITICO Magazine*, and *The New Republic*. From 2011-2013, Rafiq was listed by *Foreign Policy* as one of its top 100 foreign affairs commentators on Twitter. He received an MA in Arab studies from the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service.

## IV. Introduction

In both general and more informed discussions in Pakistan and beyond, sectarian violence in Pakistan between Sunni and Shi'i groups is almost without exception referred to simply as Sunni-Shi'i violence. But such a characterization is a misnomer. Two of Pakistan's three major Sunni subsects, the Ahl-e-Hadis, and to a lesser extent, the Barelvis, may have antipathy toward the Shi'a, but rarely express such sentiments through violent activity. Instead, since the 1980s, it is segments of the Sunni Deobandi community and Ithna Ashari Shi'a (or Twelvers) that have been at war with one another and have developed an infrastructure and discourse—aided by governmental forces in Pakistan, Iran, and Saudi Arabia—that is designed to combat the other side. Smaller Shi'i sects, such as the Dawoodi Bohras and Imami Ismailis, have been victims of Sunni Deobandi violence, but have no significant involvement in militant activity.

This report aims to explore the causes of the surge in sectarian violence between Sunni Deobandi and Shi'i Muslims in Pakistan since 2007, identify the networks behind it, and offer solutions for rolling back the surging tide.

Much has been written on the history of conflict between Sunnis and Shi'a in the Muslim world, as well as tensions between Sunni Deobandis and Shi'a in South Asia both prior to and after the formation of Pakistan. These secondary sources inform the next section of this report, which provides a brief overview of the history of Sunni-Shi'i conflict in Islamic history and the divide between Sunni Deobandis and Shi'a in Pakistan.

Next, the report examines the contemporary surge in Sunni Deobandi and Shi'i violence, focusing on the most active zones of conflict between the two groups since 2007: Punjab, Baluchistan, the Kurram Agency and nearby regions, and Karachi. Other areas, such as Chitral, Gilgit-Baltistan,<sup>1</sup> and parts of interior Sindh, are not discussed in detail due to the relative paucity of violence involving the two sects in these areas since 2007.

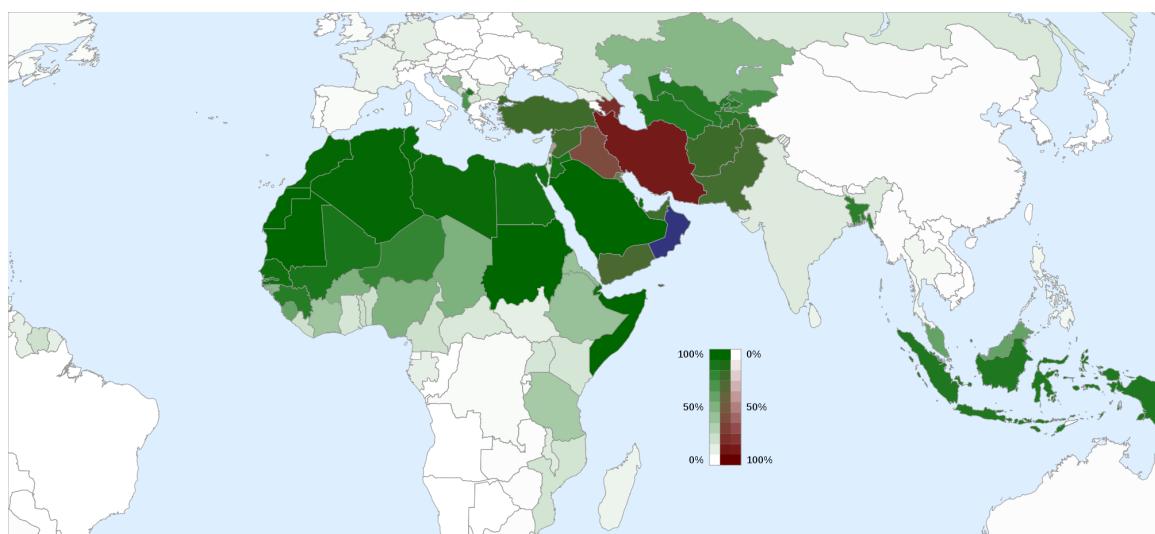
The report then identifies five trend lines in Pakistan's Sunni Deobandi-Shi'i sectarian conflict, which, with the exception of one, are all negative. Finally, the report concludes with a series of recommendations, mainly for the Pakistani government, that will help it reduce and eventually eliminate the scourge of Sunni Deobandi-Shi'i Muslim violence.

# V. Historic Roots of Sunni Deobandi-Shi'i Conflict in Pakistan

## The Ideas that Divide

The death of the Prophet Muhammad in 632 AD sparked a dispute in the young Muslim community over the question of who would serve as its legitimate political and spiritual leader. One faction (later to be known as Ahl al-Sunna wa-l-Jama'a, or the People of the Way of the Prophet and the Community) supported the candidacy of Abu Bakr, a close companion (*sahabi*) of the Prophet Muhammad, arguing that consensus (*ijma'*) of the early Muslim community would hold sway over political and religious matters.<sup>2</sup>

Another faction (Shi'at 'Ali, or the Partisans of Ali) believed that Ali ibn Abi Talib, the Prophet Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, was his rightful political and religious successor. From their standpoint, those who held lineage from the Prophet's family (Ahl al-Bayt) via Ali and his wife, Fatima (the Prophet's daughter), have the rightful claim over both political and religious authority. Decades later, these groups would crystallize with the formation of two major sects, known, respectively, in the English-speaking world as the Sunnis and Shi'a. Over the course of history, Sunnis would remain in the majority in the Muslim world, with Shi'a as minorities save for in Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Iran, and Iraq.



**Image 1 - Sunni and Shi'i Populations in the Muslim World (green=Sunni; burgundy=Shi'i; blue=Ibadi);**  
Source: Wikimedia Commons

## The Prophet's Companions or His Progeny?

Sunnis and Shi'a share key elements of 'aqida (religious creed), including the belief that the Prophet Muhammad is the last of God's prophets and that the Qur'an is the revelation of God. But they have fundamentally different views not only on who should lead the Muslim community but also on who has the right to interpret religious tradition and to what extent. Their narratives of Muslim history after the Prophet Muhammad's death are diametrically at odds with one another. The divergences are so powerful that Sunnis and Shi'a use the symbols and terms reflecting this primordial conflict within Islam from fourteen centuries ago against one another today.

Sunni Islam looks back at the era of the Prophet and the first four political successors, or caliphs—known as al-Khulafa al-Rashidun (the Rightly-Guided Caliphs)—as Islam's golden era, using both historical anecdotes as well as scripture to describe this generation as exemplary.<sup>3</sup> Traditional Sunnism often cites hadith (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad) that emphasize the piety, status, and authority of the Prophet's companions. Examples of such traditions include: "My Companions are like stars. Whichever of them you use as a guide, you will be rightly guided"<sup>4</sup> and "Verily, my community will not agree upon error."<sup>5</sup>

In contrast, Shi'i Islam views the period after the Prophet's death as one of injustice and decline, and claims that a righteous order will not be established until the return of the messiah (*al-mahdi*) in the End Times. Shi'a cite their own corpus of hadith, which overlaps to some degree with that of the Sunnis, to make the case for the *wilaya* (authority) of Ali. The most notable tradition is the Hadith al-Ghadir, in which the Prophet says, "For whom I am their master (*mawla*), Ali is their master."<sup>6</sup> The Shi'i religious worldview is dominated by the belief in the denial of the rightful leadership (*imama*) to Ali and his progeny, who were killed by "usurpers"—a pejorative that is often applied to some of the Prophet's companions revered by Sunnis.<sup>7</sup> A fundamental element of Shi'i doctrine is *tabarra* (disassociating from the enemies of the Ahl al-Bayt), which can involve the cursing (*l'ana*) of the first three caliphs; one of the prophet's wives, Aisha; and several other of the Prophet's companions not among the Ahl al-Bayt.<sup>8</sup>

For devout Sunnis, the cursing of the Prophet's companions—especially if done publicly—is an incendiary practice and has been cause for sectarian clashes during Muslim history. For example, in the early twentieth century, there were Sunni-Shi'i riots in the United Provinces in British India over the Shi'i practice of *tabarra* and the reactionary Sunni practice of *madh-e-sahaba* (praise of the Prophet's companions), which sometimes involved directing verbal invectives at Shi'a.<sup>9</sup>

There is perhaps no more important time in the calendar for Shi'a than the first ten days of the Islamic month of Muharram. On the tenth day of Muharram ('Ashura), Hussain, the son of Ali, grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, and third of the Shi'i imams, was martyred in the city of Karbala, located in what is now Iraq. It is a day that many Sunnis also mark, and for Sunni and Shi'a alike, Yazid, the sixth caliph, who crushed Hussain's revolt, is an arch-villain whose name is invoked as a metaphor to describe oppressors even today. Despite the common recognition of Hussain's sacrifice—and the tragedy surrounding his death and those of his relatives and companions—the Battle of Karbala is so seminal to the Shi'i narrative and self perception that persecuted Shi'a in Pakistan today see those attacking them as descendants of Yazid (*awlad-e-Yazid*).

### Sectarianism in South Asia: More than Just Sunni and Shi'a

In addition to an overlapping Sunni-Shi'i divide, intra-sectarian divisions have also emerged over the centuries. These intra-sectarian divisions are particularly salient in South Asia, whose Muslim population is highly diverse. Nineteenth-century reform movements within Sunni Islam in British India produced two major Sunni subsects—the Barelvis and the Deobandis—and a minor one, the Ahl-e-Hadis, who are similar to the Salafis or so-called Wahhabis of the Arab world. Most Shi'a in South Asia are from the mainline Ithna Ashari (Twelver) variant. Smaller, relatively prosperous, Shi'i subsects include the Imami or Nizari Ismailis (known colloquially as Aga Khanis) and the Dawoodi Bohra.<sup>10</sup>

**Table 1 - Major Sunni and Shi'i Subsects in Pakistan**

Sunni Islam		Shi'i Islam			
Hanafis		Ahl-e-Hadis	Twelvers	Seveners	
Barelvis	Deobandis	-	-	Imami Ismailis	Dawoodi Bohra

### Blurred Lines and Overlapping Traditions

Inter-sectarian polemics—sometimes resulting in violence—have been common throughout Muslim South Asia's history, but so have heterodoxy and coexistence. Sectarian identities were often ambiguous in South Asia. In contrast to Gulf Arab states, Sunni Islamic culture in South Asia is, like that of the Shi'a, infused with reverence for Ali and the Ahl al-Bayt. For example, today, the Pakistan Army's highest award, the Nishan-e-Haider, is named after Ali. In Pakistan and elsewhere in the subcontinent, Sunni Barelvis and Shi'a both attend many of the same shrines and often pay tribute to the same saints. Even Hindus in India have taken part in Muharram processions, with some becoming devotees of Hussain.<sup>11</sup> And Islamic devotional Qawwali music—popular with Sunnis, Shi'a, and even non-Muslims in the region—is replete with lyrics and themes praising Ali and the Ahl al-Bayt. A verse in "Man Kunto Mawla"—which relates the aforementioned tradition of the Prophet Muhammad: "For whom I am their master/Ali is their master"<sup>12</sup>—was penned by the thirteenth-century Sufi poet, Amir Khusro, a Sunni, and sung in the late twentieth century by the popular Qawwali singer Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, also a Sunni. Given heterodox and overlapping traditions, it would be incorrect to depict Pakistan's sectarian divide as a simple binary drawn in blood. The ties that bind many Sunnis and Shi'a together are as many as the factors that divide them.

### Pre-1979: Pakistan's Non-Sectarian Muslim Nationalism

The movement to establish Pakistan sought to transcend intra-Muslim sectarian divisions, adopting a highly inclusive conception of Muslim nationalism. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, was a Shi'i Muslim, yet he and his sister, Fatima, would publicly describe themselves simply as Muslims.<sup>13</sup>

Jinnah's All-India Muslim League sought to become a catch-all party for the subcontinent's Muslims. The recognition of intra-Muslim divisions would have weakened Jinnah's case that India's Muslims constituted a separate nation of their own, distinct culturally, historically, and socially from the Hindu majority. These distinctions would also have allowed the Muslim League's chief rival, the Congress Party, to divide the Muslim vote bank. As a result, Jinnah and the Muslim League largely ignored the rising tensions between Sunni and Shi'i Muslims in northern India during the late 1930s.<sup>14</sup>

The Pakistan movement was supported by leaders of the Barelvi community, a segment of the Deobandi leadership, and had strong backing from the Shi'i Twelver community, Imami Ismaili Shi'a, and the heterodox Ahmadiyya.<sup>15</sup> The most severe resistance to the idea of Pakistan came from religious fundamentalists from two Deobandi groups—the Majlis Ahrar-e-Islam (known as the Ahrar) and the Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind—as well as the Jamaat-i-Islami.<sup>16</sup> These organizations, which opposed the Muslim League, subsequently instigated post-partition sectarian riots through the anti-Ahmadiyya Tehreek-e-Khatm-e-Nubuwat (Movement for the Finality of the Prophethood). The Pakistani state largely adopted Jinnah's brushing over of intra-Muslim divisions and espoused a non-sectarian Muslim nationalism. Pakistan's official census has never differentiated between Sunnis and Shi'a. However, the census and other public identification documents would later discriminate against the Ahmadiyya community.

Sunnis and Shi'a lived together in relative amity in Pakistan's early decades. Tariq Khosa, who served for 40 years in law enforcement in Pakistan, said:

When I started my service in 1973 the only aggressive exchanges we saw in the sectarian context were between Deobandis and the Barelvis, and we would try to control them. The maximum that used to happen was that there would be aggressive exchanges over the loudspeakers during Friday prayers, but weapons were never used.<sup>17</sup>

Khosa said that "irritants would crop up" during Muharram processions, but they would be resolved then and there by local police officials.<sup>18</sup> The problem of systemic sectarian violence, he argued, is a direct consequence of decisions at the highest levels of power in Pakistan to abet religious militants and order law enforcement to take a hands-off approach toward these actors. Ultimately, it is the state of Pakistan that amplified the voice of sectarian militants and brought them from the margins of society into the mainstream—and corridors of power.

Shi'i protest movements emerged in the 1950s and 1960s to press for their sect's representation as Pakistan began to develop a legal framework to govern inheritance and implement some Islamic laws.<sup>19</sup> But these protest movements did not reflect widespread Shi'i fears of Sunni majoritarianism. Shi'a sought to have their Jafari school of jurisprudence, which differs in many ways from the Hanafi school that predominates among Pakistan's Sunnis, apply to them in matters of personal law.

Today, some Shi'i activists offer a revisionist narrative of their persecution in Pakistan, claiming that it began in 1963, when dozens of Shi'a were killed in riots in Khairpur and Lahore.<sup>20</sup> This is an ahistorical reimagining of the past likely induced by a sense of being embattled as their community faces a relentless onslaught from Sunni Deobandi sectarian militants today. The current violence between Sunnis and Shi'a in Pakistan is very much the product of governmental decisions made decades after Pakistan's founding and a perfect storm that hit the region in the late 1970s into the early 1980s.

## A Perfect Storm Hits

The roots of systemic violence between Sunni Deobandis and Shi'a in Pakistan originate not in Pakistan's founding as a Muslim state, but in the government's succumbing to pressure to adopt a more exclusive definition of Muslimness, beginning in the 1970s. In 1974, the parliament of Pakistan, under the leadership of Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, caved in to the Tehreek-e-Khatm-e-Nubuwat and passed the second amendment, which declares members of the Ahmadiyya community as non-Muslim.<sup>21</sup> Though some Shi'a did participate in the anti-Ahmadiyya movement,<sup>22</sup> the decision of the state to interject itself into matters of sect and excommunicate the Ahmadiyya planted the seeds for Sunni Deobandi groups to target other groups that had been regarded as part of the Muslim fold. Bhutto's secular government put Pakistan on the path away from an inclusive conception of Muslim nationalism and legitimized efforts to make defining who is a Muslim a matter of public policy. In a 1989 address in Peshawar, Haq Nawaz Jhangvi, the founder of the anti-Shi'a Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), recognized that the excommunication of the Ahmadiyya provided a powerful precedent, stating:

Shi'ism will be brought before the [National] Assembly for debate in the same way Qadiyaniat (Ahmadiism) was. It will not be left alone...[The courts or assemblies should decide] whether they are a Muslim sect or not.<sup>23</sup>

Ultimately, the confluence of three nearly concurrent events gave birth to the phenomenon of sectarian violence in Pakistan today: the 1977 coup by General Zia ul-Haq and his subsequent Sunni-tinged Islamization program; the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran and moves by Tehran to export its ideology to Shi'i communities elsewhere; and the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the development of a vast Sunni, later Sunni Deobandi, jihadi infrastructure inside Pakistan.

In June 1980, General Zia ul-Haq promulgated the Zakat and Ushr Ordinance, which mandated automatic deductions of the *zakat*, the Islamic alms tax, from all Muslim citizens of Pakistan. The move angered Pakistani Shi'a, whose Jafari school of Islamic jurisprudence has different requirements for alms collection than that of the Hanafi school followed by most of Pakistan's Sunnis. The next month, Mufti Jafar Hussain held the largest rally Islamabad had seen up to that point, shutting down the most sensitive area in the city near the parliament and other major government offices. One source claims that the protest's leadership asked Ayatollah Khomeini to intervene, who then sent a private message to Zia, "urging him to be fair in dealing with Shi'i concerns."<sup>24</sup>

Subsequently, Mufti Jafar met with Zia, who announced that Shi'a would be exempt from the automatic zakat and ushr deductions. This demonstration of Shi'i power jarred Pakistan's Sunni power elite. Even today, several Sunni politicians and security officials, all of whom have opposed Sunni sectarian groups, pointed toward this as the catalyzing moment behind sectarianism in Pakistan. The name of Mufti Jafar's group, the Tehreek-Nifaz-e-Fiqh-e-Jafria (The Movement to Establish Jafari Jurisprudence, or TNFJ), was seen by many Sunnis not as an attempt to apply the Shi'i Jafari *fiqh* (school of Islamic jurisprudence) toward members of that community, but to impose the group's brand of Islam on Pakistan's Sunni majority.<sup>25</sup> A Sunni politician from southern Punjab asked the author, "How could one impose Jafari *fiqh* in a Sunni country?"<sup>26</sup>

In addition to an increasingly assertive Shi'i population at home, the military regime in Pakistan also felt threatened by Iran's positioning of itself as the guardian of Pakistani Shi'a. Zia's foreign minister, Agha Shahi, a Shi'a, "sought to dissuade Iran from meddling in Pakistan's domestic affairs, and to enlist its support in pacifying the Shi'a."<sup>27</sup> Instead, Khomeini is also said to have conveyed to Zia that should he continue to "mistreat" Pakistani Shi'a, he would

do to him what he had done to the Shah.<sup>28</sup> Iran also adopted a more pronounced role inside Pakistan, which some saw as an effort to radicalize Pakistani Shi'a and bring them into Tehran's orbit. A politician based in southern Punjab said that following the Islamic Revolution in Iran, "even a minor Shi'a mullah would have an Iranian guard with him."<sup>29</sup> He also claimed that Iranian diplomats would distribute food to Shi'i processioneers.<sup>30</sup>

After the Islamic Revolution, Shi'i Islam in Pakistan became influenced by Iran in formal and informal ways. Allama Arif Hussain al-Hussaini, a Khomeiniite cleric, took over the TNFJ in 1983 after the death of Mufti Jafar, who was a traditionalist. Al-Hussaini, who was declared Khomeini's official representative in Pakistan,<sup>31</sup> put the TNFJ on a revolutionary trajectory, urging his followers in a 1984 address in Karachi to "chant slogans in favor of Khomeini, who gave you and me the courage to get out into the streets for our rights."<sup>32</sup> Khomeini, he said, "raised [to prominence] the slogan of Islam in Iran," making Pakistan's Shi'i youth "determined to implement Islam" in their country.<sup>33</sup> And in July 1987, he warned: "Shi'a will topple the government in Islamabad if it helps the United States to launch anti-Iran operations from Pakistan."<sup>34</sup>

Prior to 1979, Shi'i Islam in Pakistan had been dominated by ritualism influenced by local culture and was oriented toward India's Lucknow and Iraq's Najaf as poles of learning. After the Iranian revolution, Iran's Qom became the new training ground for Pakistan's Shi'i ulama.<sup>35</sup> The assertion of Shi'i identity and interests came through groups—such as the TNFJ and the Imamia Students Organization (ISO)—that aligned themselves with, and in many cases were directly backed by, Iran. Some, though not most, Pakistani Shi'a adopted Khomeini as their *marja-e-taqlid* (source of emulation). A broader segment of the Shi'i population adopted the symbolism and rhetoric of Khomenism. Anti-American and anti-Israeli slogans were chanted at many Shi'i mosques after Friday prayers, and posters of Khomeini were distributed.<sup>36</sup> In 1987, the TNFJ also called for the formation of a "Popular Islamic Army" with mandatory military training for all able-bodied males—a proposal seen by some Sunni leaders as a dangerous appropriation of Iran's revolutionary populism.<sup>37</sup>

As elements of organized Shi'i Islam in Pakistan veered toward Khomeinism and adopted Tehran's worldview, including its anti-Americanism, Sunni Islam in Pakistan too was transformed by a U.S. and Saudi-allied military regime Islamicizing (or in the view of some, Sunni-izing) the country and developing a vast local Sunni jihadi infrastructure to fight wars not only in Afghanistan and

Indian-administered Kashmir, but also at home. Riyadh offered billions in financial assistance not only to the Sunni militants fighting the Soviets in Afghanistan,<sup>38</sup> but also to Sunni religious seminaries and organizations across Pakistan that had grown exponentially during this time.

## The Rise of Organized Sectarian Actors

In 1985, the anti-Shi'i Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP)<sup>39</sup> was formed by Maulana Haq Nawaz Jhangvi, a Deobandi cleric associated with the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) party. Jhangvi had led earlier localized efforts against the Ahmadiyya and Barelvis. He received some backing from the Zia regime, which sought to use him as a bulwark against the Shi'a. Tariq Khosa, the former director-general of the Federal Investigation Agency, said that he had arrested Jhangvi as he was giving an anti-Shi'a speech during Muharram in 1980. His superiors in the Jhang police force informed him that they had received a call from Zia, who ordered Jhangvi's immediate release.<sup>40</sup> Another veteran Pakistani police official also pointed toward support for Jhangvi from the highest levels, stating:

"There was a dictator in Pakistan calling the shots. People at the helm thought there should be a counterforce. And that is how the SSP was born."<sup>41</sup>

Jhangvi's rhetoric was dually anti-Shi'a and anti-Iran. He positioned himself as a player in the sectarian wars that were taking place in Pakistan and the broader region. In his public speeches, Jhangvi would, for example, not only detail his "evidence" that Shi'a were disbelievers (*kuffar*), and push for the state to enact legislation to apostatize them, but he would also allege that Khomeini's Iran was sending Shi'i literature to Pakistan that would ridicule the Prophet's companions (*gustakh-e-sahaba*).<sup>42</sup> Additionally, Jhangvi's speeches reflected fears that the impact of Khomeini's revolution would also spill into Pakistan's Sunni community. He warned other Sunnis—likely those belonging to the Jamaat-i-Islami party<sup>43</sup>—against partnering with the Iranian regime, which often spoke of *ittihad bainul muslimeen* (unity between Muslims). Jhangvi suggested that some Sunnis could be closet Shi'a practicing *taqiyya* (dissimulation) in order to trick Sunnis into adopting Shi'i ideas and practices under the garb of Sunnism.<sup>44</sup>

While the Ahl-e-Hadis subsect of Sunnism in South Asia corresponds best with the Salafism that dominates the anti-Iran Gulf Arab states, it lacked the requisite numbers and leadership to serve as a bulwark against Shi'ism in Pakistan.

Instead, Deobandism, both as an ideology and militant phenomenon, became the principal opponent of Shi'ism in Pakistan. In 1985 and 1986, Deobandi madrasas in both India and Pakistan—some funded by Saudi Arabia—produced fatwas apostatizing (*takfir*) the Shi'a.<sup>45</sup> The SSP also refashioned Sunni Deobandism as a counterpolemic to Shi'ism, centering on the reverence of the Prophet's companions in a manner that seemed to mimic the Shi'i attachment to the Ahl al-Bayt. The SSP, for example, called for the commemoration of the martyrdom of Umar ibn al-Khattab, the second Sunni caliph, who was killed on the first of Muharram—the same month in which the Shi'a mark the martyrdom of Hussain.

The SSP and TNFJ, later renamed as the Tehreek-e-Jafaria Pakistan (TJP), would both use a mix of politics and violence to achieve their respective aims. In 1988, the SSP and TNFJ took advantage of the democratic opening following the death of General Zia and participated in the general elections, though neither performed well. The SSP emerged as an electoral force in subsequent election cycles, becoming a legitimate electoral contender in a few constituencies and developing a sizable vote bank in others that could be leveraged in deals with other parties. In 1990, the SSP's Isar ul-Qasmi won the party's first National Assembly seat. When he was assassinated in 1991, his successor, Azam Tariq, took his place. In parliament, Tariq tabled a *Namoos-e-Sahaba* (Honor of the Prophet's Companions) bill that would outlaw blaspheming the Prophet's companions. The TJP saw its best electoral performance in 1994 in the heavily Shi'i Northern Areas (since renamed as Gilgit-Baltistan), where it won six seats in the local assembly.<sup>46</sup> But it generally entered into electoral alliances with the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), never quite managing to overcome the latter, whose Shi'i leadership fused populist socialist rhetoric with Shi'i symbolism and narratives.

After 1988, both Sunni Deobandi and Shi'i militants also expanded their violent activity in Pakistan even as they remained involved in formal politics. Pakistan had seen bouts of sectarian violence in the years before, including Sunni-Shi'i clashes in Karachi in 1983,<sup>47</sup> the Kurram Agency<sup>48</sup> and Lahore in 1986,<sup>49</sup> and Gilgit-Baltistan in 1988.<sup>50</sup> But the assassination of the TNFJ leader Allama al-Hussaini—presumably involving army captain Majid Raza Gillani, an aide to General Zia<sup>51</sup>—planted the seeds for a pattern of targeted killings of each side's leaders. There were also pitched battles in sectarian hotbeds, such as Jhang, and in mixed-sect areas, such as the Kurram and Orakzai Tribal Agencies. In 1990, Haq Nawaz Jhangvi, the SSP's founder, was assassinated in an attack his

supporters attributed to Shi'i groups. In response, the SSP is believed to have killed Sadiq Ganji, the Iranian consul general in Lahore, the next year.<sup>52</sup> Jhangvi's successor, Isar ul-Qasmi, was also killed a year later.

By 1994, both Sunni and Shi'i sectarian groups were preparing for an escalation in violence. In that year, Sipah-e-Muhammad (SMP), a militant offshoot of the TJP, was formed by Mureed Abbas Yazdani and Ghulam Raza Naqvi. The SMP's establishment is commonly attributed to disaffection with the relatively quietist approach of the TJP's leader, Allama Sajid Naqvi. But a former senior Pakistani federal law enforcement official believes that the SMP was formed with the consent of the TJP leadership to offer the latter deniability of violent activity and the ability to continue to remain politically active.<sup>53</sup>

The same official argues that this approach was also adopted by the SSP when, in 1996, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), a militant offshoot of the group, was formed by Riaz Basra, Akram Lahori, and Malik Ishaq.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, the creation of LeJ was attributed to disagreements with the SSP leadership, but the retired Pakistani law enforcement official, while acknowledging some difference of opinion between the SSP and LeJ, cautioned against absolving the SSP for the LeJ's formation. He said that the two groups thrive off of one another: the SSP, he said, "depends on the militant activities of the LeJ" while LeJ "depends on the SSP's support network and ideological base."<sup>55</sup> Supporting the notion that the SSP was pivotal in the emergence of the LeJ, a southern Punjab politician points toward a methodical escalation of violence by the SSP.<sup>56</sup> He alleges that the group began a heavy arms buildup prior to the formation of LeJ, claiming that "truckloads of weapons were trafficked to them through a Tablighi Jamaat gathering" in 1994.<sup>57</sup>

By the late 1990s, the SSP not only consolidated its position as a force to be reckoned with in the urban areas of Jhang and neighboring districts in Punjab, but it became a national force able to leverage its rank-and-file as a bully pulpit in all four provinces. The SSP, in conjunction with LeJ, morphed into a powerful criminal syndicate, hate group, political party, and terror organization. And what began as a counter to Iran and Pakistani Shi'i activism fused with a broader Deobandi militant network and began countering the state. By the 1990s, Deobandism eclipsed other sects in Pakistan, amassing a vast, powerful infrastructure consisting of several regional political parties, a domestic sectarian militant group with nationwide reach, leading jihadi groups operating in Afghanistan and Kashmir, and thousands of madrasas and seminary students.

Though Deobandis are believed to be a minority in Pakistan, today there are approximately 9,500 Deobandi madrasas registered across Pakistan, compared to 6,500 associated with other Muslim sects.<sup>58</sup> With the growth of anti-state Deobandi jihadism in Pakistan post-9/11, the end result of Pakistan's support for Deobandi militancy is a principal-agent problem that continues to today.<sup>59</sup> The proxies (the agents) eventually developed their own set of interests. Many now act autonomously of or in opposition to the sponsor (the principal).

## Sectarian Crackdown: The State Shows Its Mettle

By 1997, LeJ's war, in the words of a veteran Pakistani police official, "blew out of control," with approximately 193 deaths due to sectarian violence that year—more than a twofold increase from the previous year.<sup>60</sup> Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and his brother, Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif, launched a crackdown on the terror outfit—a crackdown that the group would resent years later after the brothers were ousted from power.<sup>61</sup>

Sectarian terror attacks dropped in 1998 and 1999 during the midst of the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) (PML-N's) operations against LeJ, but the group, emboldened by a safe haven in Afghanistan provided by the Taliban, audaciously tried to kill Nawaz Sharif on January 3, 1999. Fortunately for Prime Minister Sharif, the bomb laid along his motorcade route in Lahore blew up prematurely.<sup>62</sup> Chief Minister Sharif responded by ordering punitive action against LeJ in Punjab, which involved several dozen extrajudicial killings.<sup>63</sup>

Iran, according to one expert on sectarianism in Pakistan, "stopped financing Pakistani Shi'a in 1996," seeing it as counterproductive and potentially even causing "a backlash of Sunni militancy fueled by Pakistani Sunni extremists in Iranian Baluchistan."<sup>64</sup> But Shi'i militancy continued to remain potent, killing SSP leader Zia-ur-Rehman Farooqi along with 22 others in 1997 in a bomb blast at a courthouse in Lahore.

As it strengthened operations against LeJ, the Pakistani state also invested its resources into pushing for reconciliation between Sunnis and Shi'a. According to a former senior Punjab police official, the Punjab government at the time was able to bring major sectarian leaders together. A parallel initiative, the Milli Yakjehti Council (MYC), organized by leading Islamist parties, formed a 17-point code of conduct. But the body "could not take off," according to the former

police official. Far more effective, he said, was the Punjab government's Muttahida Ulema Board (MUB). Sunni and Shi'i sectarian leaders, the former Punjab political official said, softened their views toward one another over time:

"First they would not even shake hands. Then they ate together. And then they prayed together."<sup>65</sup>

At the MUB, Sunni and Shi'i sectarian leaders agreed to ban 63 books deemed offensive.<sup>66</sup> Forty-three of the books were Shi'i, while 20 were Sunni. The Sunni and Shi'i ulama also signed a united code of conduct and were very close to reaching a broad compromise, including on the amendment of laws. But Prime Minister Sharif was overthrown by Pervez Musharraf in October 1999, and, according to the former Punjab police official, the military government did not take any interest in moving the MUB initiative forward.<sup>67</sup> The MYC, however, did continue to meet separately, and in February 2001, SSP and SMP leaders reportedly agreed to restrain themselves.

In August 2001, General Musharraf banned Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and Sipah-e-Muhammad. The next year, he also banned Sipah-e-Sahaba and the Tehreek-e-Jafaria Pakistan. Both groups, however, continued to operate under new names, with the former calling itself the Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat (ASWJ). Still, Musharraf's crackdown on the SSP/ASWJ was severe. A Jhang-based politician opposed to the SSP/ASWJ and LeJ recalled with great pleasure, "That was the time when we f---ed them."<sup>68</sup> The military came into Jhang, closed down the SSP's headquarters, and forbade the display of weapons.<sup>69</sup> The Jhang-based politician said that the military "did a great job in Jhang," recalling that an army colonel by the name of Fawad walked into a local police office and, in a display of strength, said, "Gentlemen, we have taken over."<sup>70</sup> Musharraf did allow the SSP's leader, Azam Tariq, to run for office while in prison. He was allegedly convinced by Ijaz Shah, an Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) official who later headed the Intelligence Bureau under Musharraf, to go soft on the SSP.<sup>71</sup>

Still, during the Musharraf era, SSP activists and major LeJ leaders were imprisoned.<sup>72</sup> And during this time, the SSP's political hold over urban Jhang, its heartland, began to erode. The Sheikh family, principal foes of the SSP/ASWJ, defeated the SSP/ASWJ candidate in a municipal election in 2001. And beginning in 2004 it defeated the SSP/ASWJ candidate in three successive elections for the NA-89 seat in Jhang. A member of the family said that in 2004 the Sheikhs "used anything and everything to defeat the SSP"—including force. The family further promised constituents of all faiths that it would bring an end

to killings by the SSP/ASWJ, enable residents “to sleep at night” in peace, stop the frequent curfews produced by violence, and provide protection from extortionists linked to the terror group.<sup>73</sup>

## Sectarianism Now Deeply Rooted in Pakistani Politics and Society

Musharraf’s crackdown on the SSP/ASWJ was severe, but not comprehensive. He failed to address the roots of sectarianism in Pakistani society, leaving these groups to persist as latent threats that would resurge years later. Both the SSP/ASWJ and LeJ continued to exist in Punjab, Sindh, and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, as well as in their newfound safe haven in Pakistan’s Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Following the arrest of the LeJ’s then-leader Akram Lahori in 2002, the group appears to have operated on a more decentralized level. Indeed, Lahori, who was strangely allowed to speak to the press in July 2002 at a court appearance after being arrested on murder charges, foretold this move himself. Lahori said that there would be no new salaar (commander) for LeJ and that the group would instead “work at [a] city level in different cities of the country and not on a national level.”<sup>74</sup> A senior Quetta police official confirms this, stating that LeJ has had “no clear command structure” since September 11.<sup>75</sup>

Musharraf’s attempts toward Islamic reform may have been sincere, but they were half-baked and self-defeating. He appointed reformists Javed Ghamidi and Khalid Masud to the Council of Islamic Ideology and frequently espoused his own vague vision of an Islam reconciled with modernity, which he termed “enlightened moderation.”<sup>76</sup> But his intelligence services remained wedded to the use of Deobandi militancy as an instrument of state policy. His regime often backtracked from reform initiatives when faced with pressure from conservatives and Islamists. Musharraf’s much-touted madrasa reform project—billed as an effort to modernize the country’s Islamic seminaries—was stillborn. By 2008, only \$4 million out of the \$100 million allotted for reform was spent.<sup>77</sup>

What Musharraf and those who followed him faced was a cancer decades in the making that could not be cured without addressing its root causes. No single party is to blame. A military regime aided and helped the SSP grow; the military intelligence services gave birth to and fed militant Deobandism; foreign governments and local actors provided financial support to sectarian hate and

terror groups; and a wide array of mainstream political parties and politicians have allied with sectarian groups for political gain.

Sectarianism is now an indelible part of Pakistani politics and society, having penetrated public opinion.<sup>78</sup> The SSP/ASWJ, LeJ, and other religious militants have become part of the predatory economy, including extortion and land grabbing.<sup>79</sup> And sectarian militants maintain links to militants waging war against the Pakistani state and those supporting it as well.

Today, sectarianism is a significant electoral driving force, albeit in select constituencies. It has yet to become a national electoral issue. But at the local and provincial level, sectarian forces are power brokers with the capacity to tilt an election. Since 1988, Pakistan's mainstream political parties have not only allied with sectarian political parties, but they—with the exception of Shahbaz Sharif's provincial government in the late 1990s—have also failed to demonstrate a willingness to push through a sustained effort to cleanse Pakistan of this phenomenon. But, in a telltale sign of where the political winds have shifted, a decade later the pragmatic Sharif would align with the SSP/ASWJ in Punjab.

While the center-right PML-N is the political party most commonly recognized for allying with the SSP/ASWJ, a broad segment of political parties, through decisions made by individual candidates or by the party leadership, has partnered with the SSP/ASWJ. The electoral alignments between mainstream, non-Islamist political parties or politicians and sectarian outfits are generally opportunistic, not ideological. These arrangements, owing in many ways to the hyper-localized nature of Pakistani politics and the limited electoral reach of sectarian and Islamist parties, have yet to materialize beyond the constituency or provincial level.

Historically, the SSP/ASWJ is a by-product of Deobandi politics in Pakistan.<sup>80</sup> It grew out of the Deobandi political party, the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI), which has now split into three factions. The SSP's founder, Haq Nawaz Jhangvi, was the Punjab vice president of the JUI and ran on a JUI faction's ticket in 1988.



Image 1 - Location of ASWJ Conferences and other Events (2013). Source: Google Maps and Author.

Today, the SSP/ASWJ maintains ties to all three JUI factions, but is closest to the Sami ul-Haq faction (JUI-S). The most powerful JUI faction, the Fazlur Rehman group (JUI-F), maintains a distance from the ASWJ and has adopted a more pragmatic approach toward sectarianism, allying with the Iran-backed Shi'i Ulema Council (SUC) led by Allama Sajid Naqvi. The JUI-F has also sought Shi'i votes in the Dera Ismail Khan home constituency of its leader, Maulana Fazlur Rehman. According to a Sunni politician in Jhang, Haq Nawaz Jhangvi wanted to take the JUI on a more sectarian bent, but Maulana Fazlur Rehman rejected his request.<sup>81</sup> The Jhang politician said that Fazlur told him that the sectarian issue is simple for him: the great Islamic jurist Imam Abu Hanifa said that there

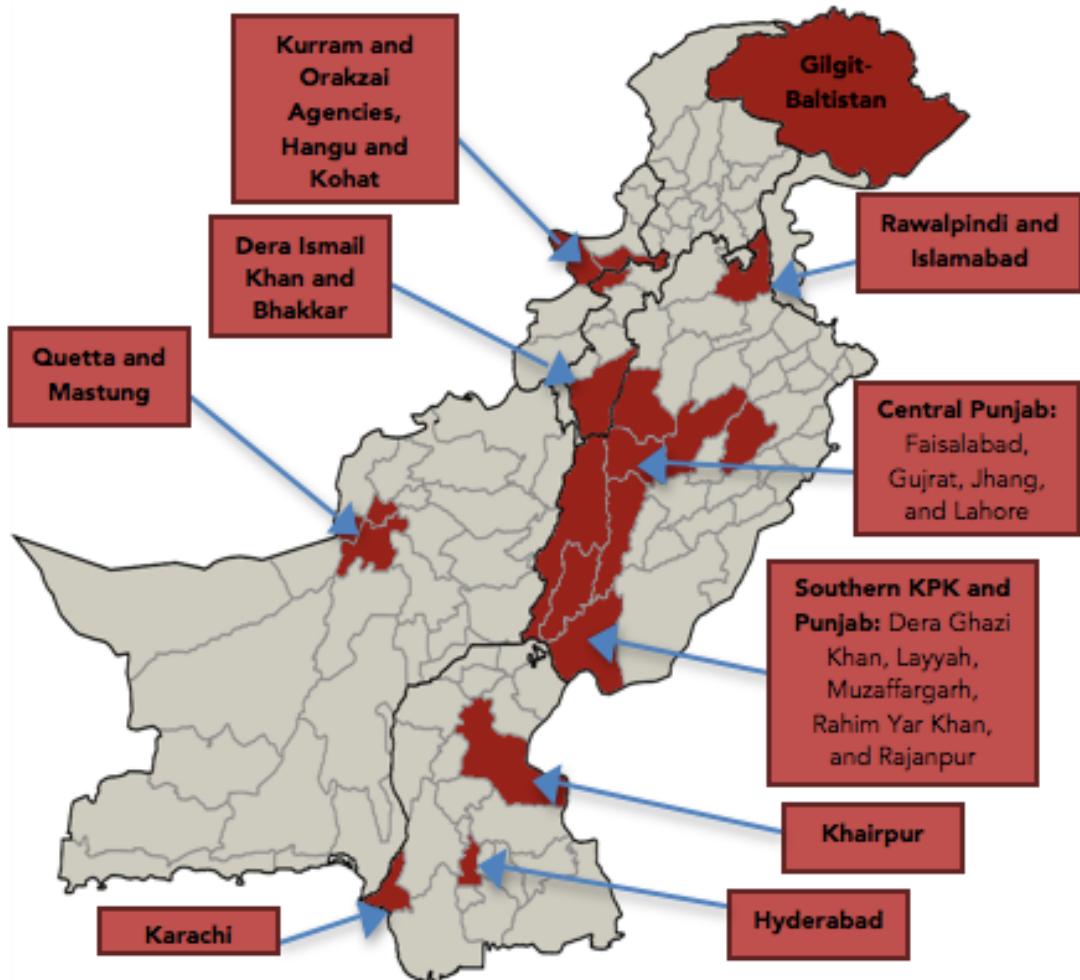
are ten characteristics of a Muslim, and just having one is sufficient for being a Muslim.<sup>82</sup>

While the distance between the SSP/ASWJ and JUI-F has grown, mainstream political forces have continued, and even bolstered, ties with the former. Pakistan's largest political parties, the PML-N and the PPP, as well as the military, have made political partnerships or deals with the SSP/ASWJ.

In 1990, the SSP was part of the Islami Jamhoori-Ittehad (IJI) electoral alliance constructed by the ISI and led by current Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and the unified Pakistan Muslim League.

The IJI disbanded, freeing Islamist parties to make alliances with the PPP and other parties. After the next elections, in 1993, the SSP—running on a Muttahida Deeni Mahaz (MDM) ticket along with the Deobandi JUI-S—joined the Punjab provincial government led by the ostensibly secular and pro-Shi'a PPP. Sheikh Hakim Ali, a senior SSP leader, served in the PPP's Punjab provincial cabinet "despite having eight murder cases registered against him."<sup>83</sup> According to Vali Nasr, the PPP allied with the SSP in order to deny the PML an opportunity to partner with the party.<sup>84</sup> A Sunni politician from Jhang whose family has opposed the SSP/ASWJ alleged that the Pashtun politician Aftab Sherpao—then a member of the PPP and a close advisor to the late Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto—"helped the SSP become part of the Punjab cabinet in 1993."<sup>85</sup>

To its credit, the PPP did not embrace the SSP's anti-Shi'a rhetoric. But, in exchange for political support, it did adopt a soft approach toward SSP officials involved in murder and other criminal activities. The PPP failed to charge major SSP leaders with crimes despite dozens of First Information Reports (initial complaints of criminal offenses registered with the police) having been lodged against them.<sup>86</sup>



**Image 3 - Major Zones of Sunni Deobandi-Shi'i Sectarian Violence in Pakistan. Source: Author.**

That the PPP, whose major leaders have been Shi'i, and whose rhetoric and symbolism appropriates from Shi'ism, could ally with the SSP shows the extent to which such a radical party had been mainstreamed. At the same time, it also demonstrates the political opportunism of both the PPP and the SSP. Both parties were capable of allying with parties whose ideas they detested and with which they were diametrically opposed. During this time period, pragmatic political considerations furthered the distance between the SSP and PML-N. In the next election cycle, in 1997, the SSP's then-chief Azam Tariq ran against the PML candidate in the NA-68 constituency. During this election, the PML gave election tickets to many Shi'i notables. The result was that "Shi'a landlords created sectarian bridges and protected Shi'a interests in the PML."<sup>87</sup>

## Lashkar-e-Jhangvi Converges with al-Qa'ida and the TTP

Even as the ASWJ has maneuvered to enter mainstream politics, LeJ has increasingly converged with al-Qa'ida and the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)—two anti-state groups that had been ascendant in Pakistan until 2010 and remain active terrorist forces today. The trilateral partnership has been quite complementary: LeJ provides al-Qa'ida and the TTP with access to Pakistan's urban areas, particularly in Punjab; Pashtun Deobandi militants (previously in Afghanistan and now in FATA) provide LeJ with a safe haven from which to operate; and al-Qa'ida leaders and operatives offer LeJ militants expert training as well as a grand strategy and broader narrative to anchor their militancy.

The bonds between LeJ and al-Qa'ida and Pashtun Deobandi militants have intensified in recent years. But not only do LeJ's ties with these groups predate the September 11 attacks, SSP/ASWJ's ties with al-Qa'ida predate the formation of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi. The nexus between al-Qa'ida and SSP/ASWJ was forged in the 1980s, when the latter received "specialized training" from the former, according to a former senior law enforcement official.<sup>88</sup> It was in this time period that the seeds were planted for a convergence of Deobandi and transnational takfiri jihadism, a literalist brand of jihadism that excommunicates many, if not most, Muslims and as a result sanctions violence against them. These bonds deepened during the 1990s. For example, Ramzi Yousef, the architect of the first World Trade Center attack, had the phone number of Azam Tariq, the SSP's third amir, in his phone book when he was arrested in 1995, according to a Jhang-based politician.<sup>89</sup> Yousef was connected to the SSP by blood. His father, Mohammed Abdul Karim, was a member of the group,<sup>90</sup> and his brother-in-law, Dawood Badini, is currently a senior commander of the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi in Baluchistan.<sup>91</sup> Like Yousef, Badini is the nephew of Khalid Shaikh Mohammed.

Prior to the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, LeJ occupied a privileged position during the reign of the Afghan Taliban. The Afghan Taliban not only afforded LeJ a safe haven from which to train and to retreat after conducting attacks in Pakistan, but it also actively defied Islamabad's requests to take action against the sectarian terror group. LeJ fought alongside the Afghan Taliban in Kunduz and elsewhere in Afghanistan; it also received permission from Afghan Taliban leader Mullah Omar to form the Sarobi training camp in Jalalabad and to establish rest houses, according to a former senior Pakistani law enforcement official.<sup>92</sup> Riaz Basra, the first chief of LeJ, lived in Kabul near Zainab Cinema, according to a senior Quetta police official.<sup>93</sup> Mullah Omar, the former senior

Pakistani law enforcement official said, was cognizant that LeJ was engaging in terrorism in Pakistan. And when Islamabad asked Mullah Omar “to expel, arrest, or extradite Lashkar-e-Jhangvi leaders,” he informed the militant group’s leaders so they could relocate themselves.<sup>94</sup> LeJ militants would sneak into Pakistan from Chaman and Jalalabad and retreat back into Afghanistan after conducting attacks, according to a senior Quetta police official who has served in counterterrorism postings elsewhere in Pakistan.<sup>95</sup>

### Figure 1 - Lashkar-e-Jhangvi: Our Objectives and Goals

- 1) Struggle for the establishment of Islamic Shariah government in Pakistan and the entire world and removing all obstacles toward it.
- 2) Declare Shi'a a non-Muslim minority.
- 3) Kill every person who blasphemes or insults the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), the Prophet Muhammad's pure wives, companions, the Qur'an, and the religion of Islam.
- 4) Kill every journalist, businessman, lawyer, bureaucrat, doctor, engineer, or professor who misuses his social position to tarnish the beliefs of Muslims or engage in any way in the preaching or publishing against the Islamic creed and beliefs.
- 5) Kill every person who helps the enemies of Islam with financial, military, residential, or any other way of assistance. Lashkar-e-Jhangvi recognizes that Shi'a are the biggest obstacle in the path of Islam and they make the greatest effort to corrupt and destroy Muslim beliefs. The Shi'a are the biggest insulters of the Prophet, the Prophet's pure wives, companions, books, and religion. For this reason, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi has made Shi'a its first and primary target. But alongside this, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi has conducted operations from time to time against other Islam-enemy sects in accordance with the time and sensitivity of the situation. But the core target and goal of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi has been and will continue to be Shi'a.

[Signed] Custodian of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi Asif Chotu

**Source:** "Lashkar-e Jhangvi: Our Objectives and Goals," *Bab-ul-Islam Forum*, <https://bab-ul-islam.net/showthread.php?p=36119&langid=3>.

What brought the Afghan Taliban and LeJ together was their militant Deobandism. A former senior federal law enforcement official said that Sunni Deobandi sectarian groups have an “ideological affinity” with the Afghan Taliban. As a senior police official in Quetta said, “The entire jihad of Afghanistan was fought by Deobandis.”<sup>96</sup> Indeed, the 2002 kidnapping and subsequent murder of *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl—which involved the collaboration of al-Qa’ida, Harakat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami, Harakat-ul-Mujahedeen, and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi operatives—demonstrated how Deobandi militant groups were well on their way to becoming a loose network with interchangeable parts, pegged together by al-Qa’ida.<sup>97</sup>

After the fall of the Afghan Taliban regime, jihadis who relied on Afghanistan as a safe haven resettled in Pakistan’s FATA, as well as many urban locales. Al-Qa’ida faced a severe crackdown in Pakistan in the initial years following the September 11 attacks. It was during this period that its relationships with other Islamist groups in Pakistan were tested and the bonds with LeJ cemented. Within the jihadi community in Pakistan, it is hard for al-Qa’ida to find a more reliable partner than LeJ. While members of Jamaat-i-Islami and Lashkar-e-Taiba give tips to Pakistani intelligence on al-Qa’ida, LeJ operatives have “never” betrayed al-Qa’ida, said an Islamabad-based Pakistani investigative journalist.<sup>98</sup> He claims that Ayman al-Zawahri, then al-Qa’ida’s second-in-command, visited Punjab in 2005 and met with Matiur Rehman, who has been described as LeJ’s operational commander.<sup>99</sup> If this meeting did indeed take place, it is an indicator of the deep trust between the two groups.

The resilience of this relationship could be attributed to a number of factors. One, LeJ began attacking the Pakistani state before other Sunni Deobandi jihadi groups. And to do so, it depended on the safe haven also enjoyed by al-Qa’ida in Afghanistan, which both lost after September 11. When al-Qa’ida and Afghanistan-based LeJ commanders fled into Pakistan after September 11, there was little drawing them together with Pakistani intelligence. Indeed, when compared to Sunni Deobandi militant groups oriented toward Afghanistan and India (such as Jaish-e-Muhammad or the so-called good Taliban groups based in FATA), the Pakistani intelligence apparatus has limited utility for anti-Shi'a militants. LeJ was an orphan in need of a sponsor. It found one in al-Qa’ida. Among Sunni Deobandis, it was perhaps the earliest adopter of takfiri jihadism.

With the killing of its leader Riaz Basra in May 2002 and the arrest of his successor, Akram Lahori, two months later, LeJ appears to have shifted toward a

looser command structure. According to the Islamabad-based investigative journalist, the “Deobandi youth were leaderless” and al-Qa’ida played the role of anchor and effectively “fused with Lashkar-e-Jhangvi.”<sup>100</sup>

LeJ became an integral part of the emergent Deobandi-takfiri jihadi nexus that has been responsible for most terrorism in Pakistan since 2007, forging partnerships with al-Qa’ida and the TTP and feeding both groups with high-level, dual-hatted operatives, such as Qari Mohammad Zafar and Qari Hussain Mehsud.<sup>101</sup> Many LeJ operatives, including Zafar—who was killed in a 2010 drone attack—fled to FATA as al-Qa’ida and similar groups faced a stiff crackdown in urban areas.

Over the years in FATA, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi operatives evolved far beyond sectarian motives and opportunistic alliances. For example, Zafar’s successor, Abu Zar Azzam, who—like Qari Hussain Mehsud—was educated at Karachi’s Jamia Farooqia madrasa, has become an outspoken jihadi preacher, calling for all-out war with the Pakistani state in audio and video releases disseminated by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, the TTP, and the Turkestan Islamic Party.<sup>102</sup> Between 2007 and 2011, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi fighters took part in major complex attacks in Punjab, including the attacks on the Sri Lankan cricket team.

At the same time, elements in the SSP/ASWJ may have links to the TTP and other FATA-based anti-state jihadis. A single source—a prominent politician from Jhang and rival to the SSP/ASWJ—informed the author that both the SSP/ASWJ leader Ahmed Ludhianvi and Malik Ishaq have been moving around Pakistan with armed men wearing t-shirts with the logos of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), which is one of FATA’s most hard-line militant groups.<sup>103</sup> The same source also claims that Muavia Azam Tariq, general secretary of the SSP/ASWJ in Punjab and son of the late Azam Tariq, is “now the link between the TTP and ASWJ.”<sup>104</sup> Furthermore, he alleges that the TTP’s chapter in the Bajaur Tribal Agency cooperated with the SSP/ASWJ to try to kill him in a terror attack. Finally, he claims that Dr. Imran, the SSP/ASWJ’s sector-in-charge in Jhang, was arrested recruiting for the TTP. However, press reports simply describe Imran as a former member of Jaish-e-Muhammad.<sup>105</sup> The author was unable to corroborate these claims with additional (and more independent) sources.

## VI. Sectarian Violence Surges since 2007: How and Why?

### A Changing Sectarian Frontier

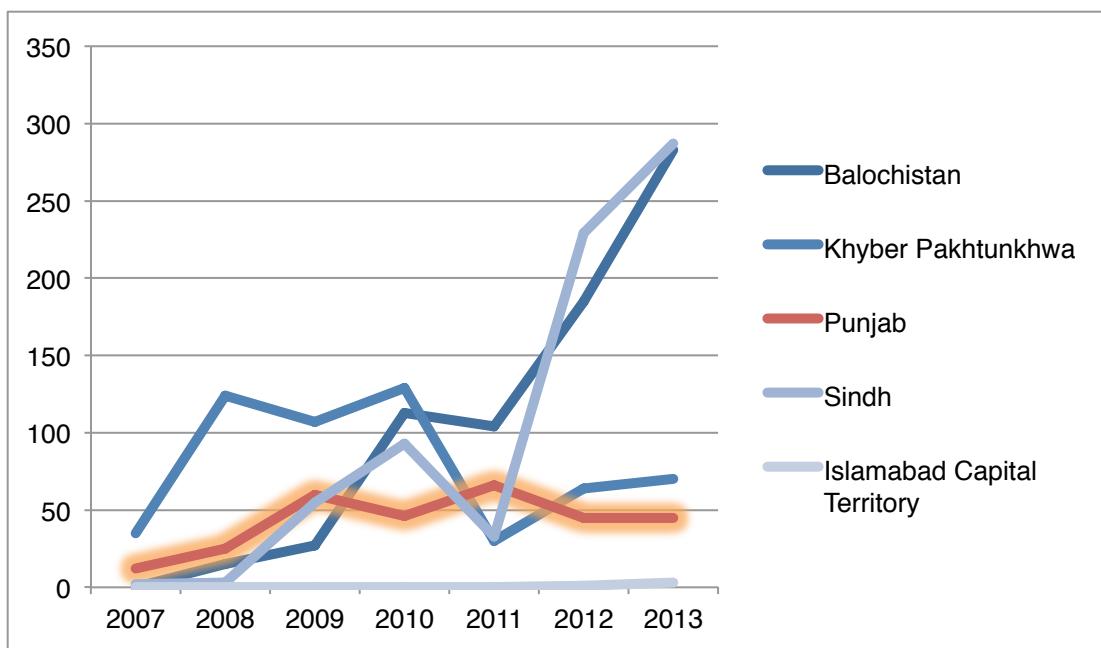
Pakistan's sectarian wars were born in Punjab, Pakistan's largest province, but they are now a nationwide challenge. Indeed, as demonstrated by the chart below, which consists of confirmed and suspected incidents of sectarian-motivated killings of Sunni Deobandis and Shi'a, violence between the two groups in Punjab has remained steady since 2007. But during the same time period, Baluchistan and Sindh (more specifically, Karachi) have eclipsed Punjab, becoming Pakistan's top two zones of Sunni Deobandi-Shi'i sectarian violence.

Not reflected in the chart are casualties from the sectarian war in the Kurram Agency, which took the lives of an estimated 1,500 people. News reporting on deaths in the Kurram Agency from the full-fledged war fought there between Sunni and Shi'i tribesmen, along with various Taliban groups, often did not include precise casualty counts, lumping together the number of deaths over time and failing to differentiate between sect or tribe. As a result of these inconsistencies, the number of deaths in the Kurram and Orakzai Tribal Agencies are not included in this chart.

The conventional reaction toward sectarian violence in Pakistan is to attribute it to a single network, such as the so-called Punjabi Taliban, or a single individual, like Malik Ishaq, the SSP/ASWJ and LeJ leader. However, while interprovincial networks are responsible for some of Pakistan's sectarian violence, most violence appears to be conducted by cells and networks from the immediate locale or surrounding region. It is ethnic Baluch militants who lead the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi's campaign against Hazara Shi'a in Baluchistan, longtime and new Karachiites (increasingly Pashtuns) who engage in attacks against Shi'a in the ethnically diverse Karachi, and Punjabis who conduct targeted killings of Shi'i doctors and notables in Punjab.

Sectarian violence between Sunni Deobandis and Shi'a generally takes place where members of both communities live in proximity, which describes much of Pakistan. Shi'a are spread out across Pakistan, though they live in greater concentrations in urban areas as well as in parts of the Kurram Agency, western Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, southern Punjab, and Gilgit-Baltistan. And Sunni Deobandism has mushroomed in Pakistan since the 1980s, bolstered by the migration of Deobandis into Karachi and the proliferation of Deobandi mosques, seminaries, and organizations.

**Chart 1 – Deaths in Suspected or Confirmed Sunni Deobandi-Shi'i Sectarian Violence by Province/Region (2007-13)**



**Source:** Author's working database comprised of suspected or confirmed incidents of Sunni Deobandi-Shi'i sectarian violence compiled from reports from the *Daily Times*, *DAWN*, the *Express Tribune*, and *The News*. The chart excludes Azad Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan, and FATA due to incomplete reporting. In the Kurram Agency, sectarian killings surged from 2007 until a ceasefire in 2011.

In the Kurram Agency, sectarian violence has had a strong communal component. But elsewhere, sectarian violence is perpetrated by militant networks within the Sunni Deobandi and Shi'i communities. In Baluchistan, these networks have leveraged the deterioration of the state's writ. In Karachi, they have either ridden the coattails of the Taliban or are a veritable component of Talibanization. Shi'i militants have responded in kind to violence from Sunni

Deobandi networks. And in Punjab, a permissive provincial government has contributed to the resilience of anti-Shi'i militant networks.

## **Faustian Bargains with the ASWJ in Punjab**

In May 2012, Maulana Muavia Azam Tariq, a senior SSP/ASWJ official in Punjab and son of the slain SSP leader Maulana Azim Tariq, addressed a rally in the central Punjab city of Sargodha in which he marked the end of the "difficulties" the group had faced over the "past ten years."<sup>106</sup> Muavia said that during the era of former President Pervez Musharraf, SSP/ASWJ members faced detention under the Fourth Schedule (a section of the Anti-Terrorism Act authorizing the monitoring of individuals suspected of terrorism), as well as arrest, imprisonment, and death. Musharraf, he said, sought to back the SSP/ASWJ into a corner, but now, "the situation has changed" as "He who is an enemy of Islam [i.e., Musharraf]," is now deemed "an enemy of the nation."<sup>107</sup> Triumphant, Muavia declared that the "sun is now rising" and the "destination is near."<sup>108</sup>

Muavia's words are a clear demonstration of the confidence and freedom felt by the SSP/ASWJ during the post-2008 tenure of Shahbaz Sharif as Punjab's chief minister. Today, the SSP/ASWJ operates essentially with impunity in the province, though it is ostensibly a banned organization.

## **The Punjab Government's Failed Attempt at Rehabilitating Malik Ishaq**

The most visible and controversial aspect of the PML-N's new approach toward the SSP/ASWJ was the release of LeJ co-founder Malik Ishaq in 2011 after 14 years of imprisonment. There is ample evidence to indicate that Ishaq was released as part of a deal between Shahbaz Sharif's provincial government in Punjab and the SSP/ASWJ, aimed at bolstering the ruling party and sparing the province from jihadi violence engulfing the country.

The Sharifs left Pakistan in December 2000, almost two years after LeJ attempted to kill Prime Minister Sharif during a crackdown on the terror group. In 2007, they returned to a Pakistan transformed by militant violence, facing an onslaught from a nexus of al-Qa'ida, the IMU, LeJ, and the TTP. Consistently, the PML-N has sought to disassociate itself from a war that was associated first with Musharraf and later with the army and the PPP. The most brazen display of

this was when Punjab Chief Minister Sharif appealed to the TTP to “spare Punjab” in 2010.<sup>109</sup>

Ishaq’s release can be attributed in part to the weakness of Pakistan’s judicial system. The country’s anti-terrorism courts have a notoriously high level of acquittals, largely due to the intimidation and murder of judges, prosecutors, and witnesses. Ishaq reportedly admitted in a 1997 interview with an Urdu-language daily that he had been involved in over 100 murders.<sup>110</sup> And he is said to have confessed to 11 murders during police interrogation.<sup>111</sup>

Despite the evidence against Ishaq, he had been acquitted in 34 homicide cases and granted bail in ten other cases by the time of his release in 2011.<sup>112</sup> During his 14 years in prison, numerous judges, police officials, and witnesses involved in his cases were murdered.<sup>113</sup> From behind bars, Ishaq is also alleged to have helped orchestrate the 2009 terrorist attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team in Lahore.<sup>114</sup> Several courageous individuals testified against Ishaq in court despite his attempts to intimidate them. In one instance, he warned a witness in the presence of a judge that “dead men don’t talk.”<sup>115</sup>

But the failure of Pakistan’s judiciary is only one part of the story. The PML-N, according to an Islamabad-based investigative journalist, the Punjab government “adopted a strategy of mainstreaming Malik Ishaq,” using SSP/ASWJ chief Ahmed Ludhianvi, with the hope that it would secure peace in Punjab.<sup>116</sup> Indeed, Ludhianvi is on record admitting that he met with Ishaq prior to his release, stating that Ishaq “promised me not to be violent if he is released.”<sup>117</sup> The PML-N had been attempting to placate Ishaq well before his release from prison. Ishaq’s family had been receiving a monthly stipend from the PML-N government in Punjab since 2008, a practice that continued at least until his release in 2011.<sup>118</sup>

Upon his release, Ishaq was garlanded with roses and escorted by Ludhianvi and Allama Tahir Ashrafi, a Deobandi cleric who has positioned himself as a moderate voice serving as a bridge between militant hard-liners and mainstream politicians. Indeed, a former senior Punjab law enforcement official—who says there is no formal deal between the SSP/ASWJ and the PML-N—said that he had arranged two meetings between Ashrafi, Ludhianvi, and Ishaq prior to the latter’s release from prison. These meetings were clandestinely “bugged and video-recorded” by Punjab law enforcement.<sup>119</sup> The recordings, he said, were compared with what Ashrafi and Ludhianvi informed the police in their

debriefings. The former Punjab police official said that he found that Ashrafi and Ludhianvi “were honest” in their debriefings.<sup>120</sup> Ishaq, the former Punjab police official said, “was keen to stay with the SSP” and was no longer a member of LeJ. He added that “Ashrafi and Ludhianvi took responsibility” for ensuring Ishaq would not be a source of trouble after his release.<sup>121</sup>

A year later, Ishaq was made vice president of the SSP/ASWJ.<sup>122</sup> Ghulam Rasool Shah, a close aide of Ishaq and senior LeJ official, was also released in 2010. Shah, like Ishaq, claims that he has no affiliation with LeJ,<sup>123</sup> though a Pakistani journalist alleges he has been directing some violence from Saudi Arabia.<sup>124</sup>

The SSP/ASWJ has been trying to make the case that Ishaq is a changed man. But rather than pulling the SSP/ASWJ away from violence, Ishaq appears to have continued to perpetuate it, at the very least through incitement and possibly also via direct orchestration. A review of Ishaq’s addresses after his release from prison indicates that he frequently speaks of his willingness to die. His speeches mainly involve allegations of Shi'a defaming the Prophet’s companions. However, a former senior Punjab police official argues that Ishaq’s incendiary rhetoric against Shi'a was part of an attempt to upstage Ludhianvi and gain control over the ASWJ.<sup>125</sup>

After his release, Ishaq was placed on a Pakistani terrorism watch list. He has been detained on a number of occasions for hate speech. In September 2011,

two months after being released from prison, Ishaq proclaimed that the “killings of the enemies of the Sahaba would continue.”<sup>126</sup> Later that month, SSP/ASWJ and LeJ members initiated a clash with Shi'a ahead of Ishaq’s arrival in the city of Rahim Yar Khan.<sup>127</sup> A year later, Ishaq visited the central Punjab city of Chiniot, where his incendiary speeches appear to have precipitated a spate of violence in the district over the course of the following months.<sup>128</sup> In 2013, the Punjab government again arrested Ishaq under 295-A, which outlaws religious hate speech.<sup>129</sup>

According to a former senior Pakistani law enforcement official, Ishaq was also imprisoned on one occasion “because he had encouraged attacks in Quetta.”<sup>130</sup> There are also allegations that Ishaq has directly orchestrated some attacks on Hazara Shi'a in Quetta. A February 2014 report on GEO News, citing sources in

the Punjab police, stated that Ishaq continues to maintain ties to an LeJ targeted killing network.<sup>131</sup>

By April 2014, with Ishaq in detention for over a year, Punjab government officials had become far less sanguine about the prospects for Ishaq's rehabilitation. Punjab Law Minister Sanaullah said in a television interview at the time that an LeJ operative admitted that the imprisoned Ishaq was connected to his cell, which had killed a rival SSP/ASWJ official, a Barelvi leader, and many Shi'a.<sup>132</sup>

Ishaq, like many SSP/ASWJ officials, has tried to maintain the best of both worlds—the one of violence and the one of politics. A former Punjab police official said that he "heard reports that [Ishaq] was considering contesting elections" in 2013 in a bid to join "the political mainstream."<sup>133</sup>

On February 6, 2014, the State Department added Ishaq to its list of Specially Designated Global Terrorists.<sup>134</sup> He remains under house arrest.

### **Mainstreaming the SSP/ASWJ**

The most visible impact of the release of Malik Ishaq has been an emboldened SSP/ASWJ. According to a member of the PML-N, Ishaq cut open the seals to the ASWJ's office in Jhang, which had been sealed since 2002 when Musharraf banned the SSP and launched a crackdown against the group.<sup>135</sup> This move, according to the PML-N member, indicated that the Punjab government gave a "free hand" to the SSP/ASWJ as part of a deal. The accommodation with the Punjab government "has allowed the LeJ and SSP to spread," claims an Islamabad-based investigative journalist.<sup>136</sup>

A movement to mainstream the SSP/ASWJ appears to have begun earlier than Ishaq's most recent release, however, with the 2009 attack on the army's general headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi. Militants associated with the LeJ laid siege to the facility for 19 hours.<sup>137</sup> During the siege, the Pakistani government took both Ahmed Ludhianvi and Malik Ishaq to the GHQ to negotiate with the hostage takers. It is unclear whether the army simply used the men as delay tactics in order to conduct a raid or whether it earnestly sought to use them to negotiate.

The GHQ attackers had reportedly demanded the release of a number of Deobandi militants, including Malik Ishaq. A former senior Punjab police official said that Ishaq had told the GHQ attackers that he was not ready to come out from jail under such circumstances, and that upon leaving prison he wanted to “kill militancy”—i.e., eliminate it.<sup>138</sup> However, a parliamentarian and opponent of the SSP/ASWJ said that he was told by another senior Punjab police official that both Ishaq and Ludhianvi were rebuffed by the attackers, who dismissed them as “government mullahs.”<sup>139</sup>

During an interview with the author, a former senior Punjab police official described Ludhianvi as a “good man.”<sup>140</sup> He then paused, appeared as if he was going to qualify his statement, but then simply moved on with the discussion. The former official also stated that Ludhianvi had pledged not to allow the chanting of the slogan, “Shi'a are infidels,” in his presence. His statements reflect a perspective among some authorities in Punjab that Ludhianvi is a relative moderate with whom the government can work to achieve a stable order. Ludhianvi is more mild compared to other SSP/ASWJ leaders, and is referred to as *safeer-e-aman* (ambassador of peace) by SSP/ASWJ activists. He was criticized in a January 2014 TTP video for allegedly favoring nonviolent methods.<sup>141</sup>

### **PML-N Partnering with SSP/ASWJ in the 2010 By-Elections**

As discussed above, Pakistan’s military, its two largest political parties, and smaller parties all have a history of working with the SSP/ASWJ. In March 2010, as tensions between the PML-N and PPP simmered in Punjab, senior officials from both parties met with SSP/ASWJ leaders to secure their support for their party’s respective candidate in the by-election for a Punjab Assembly seat from Jhang (PP-82).

Rana Sanaullah, then Punjab’s home secretary, met with then-SSP/ASWJ President Ahmed Ludhianvi, while the late Governor Salmaan Taseer, who was appointed by the PPP, met with the SSP/ASWJ secretary general, Khadim Dhillon, on a number of occasions.<sup>142</sup> Sanaullah openly admits that he met Ludhianvi “twice to secure votes for the upcoming by-elections.”<sup>143</sup> Ultimately, the SSP/ASWJ chose to endorse the PML-N candidate. And Ludhianvi campaigned jointly with Sanaullah for the PML-N candidate in Jhang’s PP-82 district.

The SSP/ASWJ has an important vote bank in a number of constituencies in Punjab and Sindh, and politicians from a broad segment of parties have courted it. Opportunistic electoral alliances, often restricted to a single constituency or cluster of constituencies, are common in Pakistani politics, bringing together groups that can often be virtually at odds with one another. Indeed, the SSP/ASWJ alleges that it had electoral alliances in 2008 with 26 National Assembly members affiliated with the PPP.

But the 2010 by-elections appear to have not simply been a stand-alone arrangement. Instead, they mark a key period in the efforts to mainstream the SSP/ASWJ in Punjab. A former senior Punjab police official who was serving in a main role in the province at the time disputes the notion of a “formal” (*pakka*) SSP/ASWJ-PML-N deal, stating that they only partner “at the time of elections.”<sup>144</sup> But the SSP/ASWJ has operated with great liberty since the PML-N resumed control over Punjab in 2008. A former senior federal law enforcement official believes the arrangement is more formal, stating:

The basic reality is that the SSP has a vote bank in almost every constituency. In some it is in the thousands and in others it is less. But local politicians make deals and have an informal liaison with them. Shahbaz Sharif—when he won the last by-election from Bhakkar—ran unopposed. The SSP candidate withdrew his papers. If the chief minister owes his seat to some extent to having some sort of arrangement with [the] SSP, I’m sure the SSP would have made certain demands.<sup>145</sup>

An Islamabad-based journalist and expert on sectarianism in Pakistan said that the Punjab police received “unwritten orders” from Shahbaz Sharif to lay off of the SSP/ASWJ.<sup>146</sup> Prior to this, the Punjab government had restricted SSP/ASWJ operations and the movements of its leaders, enforcing the Fourth Schedule of the 1997 Anti-Terrorism Act. This laxity, the journalist alleges, has enabled Deobandi madrasas to not only expand, but also increase their weapons stockpiles.<sup>147</sup>

## **2013 Polls and Thereafter**

As sectarian violence in Pakistan surged, politicians from a number of Pakistani political parties continued to court the SSP/ASWJ. In the 2013 polls, Pir Qutab Ali Baba, a Barelvi candidate with the PPP in Kamalia, endorsed the ASWJ’s Ahmed Ludhianvi.<sup>148</sup> The PML-N’s Aqeel Anjum made an electoral alliance with

the SSP/ASWJ, and the PML-N gave tickets to Abid Raza and Ebad Dogar, both linked to the SSP/ASWJ.<sup>149</sup> Raza, in fact, had been arrested in December 2003 for allegedly meeting with Amjad Farooqi, a so-called Punjabi Taliban figure involved in an attempted assassination of Pervez Musharraf.<sup>150</sup>

Ahead of the polls, the SSP/ASWJ Secretary General Khadim Dhillon said confidently, "We have thousands of voters in almost every constituency of the South and Central Punjab, and the PML-N leadership is destined to knock at our doors when the elections come."<sup>151</sup> The Election Commission of Pakistan, whose chief was jointly appointed by the PPP government and the PML-N opposition in 2013, allowed 40 SSP/ASWJ members listed under Pakistan's Fourth Schedule of the 1997 Anti-Terrorism Act to participate in the 2013 polls.<sup>152</sup>

The PML-N appeared to be distancing itself from the SSP/ASWJ in early 2013, ahead of the general elections. Malik Ishaq had been in detention from March 2013. Surprisingly, long-time SSP/ASWJ opponent Sheikh Waqas Akram joined the PML-N in March 2013.<sup>153</sup> The party awarded his father, Sheikh Muhammad Akram, a National Assembly seat ticket in the sectarian hotbed of Jhang in a faceoff with SSP/ASWJ chief Ludhianvi.<sup>154</sup>

Awarding a ticket to Sheikh Akram was no simple move. According to a major politician from Jhang, former head of Inter-Services Intelligence Hamid Gul had advised Prime Minister Sharif to give the NA-89 Jhang ticket to Ludhianvi.<sup>155</sup> The same source alleges that Ludhianvi had warned Sharif that if his party did not award a ticket to Ludhianvi, there would be "war" between the SSP/ASWJ and PML-N.<sup>156</sup> Sharif then reportedly said resolutely, "If there'll be a war, there will be a war."<sup>157</sup> Despite these threats, the PML-N embraced the historic foes of the SSP/ASWJ in a hotly contested race. Sheikh Muhammad Akram won by less than two percent.<sup>158</sup> Ludhianvi came in a close second and garnered over 50% more votes than he had in 2008.<sup>159</sup> The PML-N's movement away from the SSP/ASWJ continued into the early fall of 2013. In September 2013, the Punjab government cracked down on an SSP/ASWJ rally in the Nasir Bagh area of Lahore, arresting many of its activists.<sup>160</sup>

But by the late fall, the PML-N backtracked from its tougher approach toward the SSP/ASWJ, likely due to its perceived dependence on the group for talks with the TTP and for maintaining relative peace in Punjab. The PML-N government in Islamabad reached out to the TTP and possibly other militant commanders in North Waziristan through intermediaries in what can be

described as talks about peace talks. In late 2013, an Islamabad-based journalist informed the author that the PML-N had been using Ludhianvi to engage Asmatullah Muawiya, a Punjabi Taliban commander based in North Waziristan.<sup>161</sup> In January 2014, Pakistani journalist Saleem Safi revealed a list of peace negotiators approved by TTP leader Hakimullah Mehsud before his death, which included Ludhianvi.

The PML-N's use of Ludhianvi as a potential intermediary with the TTP explains the Punjab government's puzzling decision in November 2013 to invite Ludhianvi, as opposed to more moderate Deobandi figures, to a gathering aimed at cooling tensions after sectarian riots in Rawalpindi. According to an Islamabad-based journalist, Deobandi leaders Maulana Fazlur Rehman and Maulana Zahid Qasmi attempted to take a lead role in restoring stability after the Rawalpindi massacre, but the Punjab government instead brought in Ludhianvi as a key power broker. Ludhianvi's new privileged status affronted other Deobandi leaders, who likely felt that he was stepping on their turf. Maulana Tahir Ashrafi, who worked with Ludhianvi to secure Ishaq's release, accused the SSP/ASWJ leadership of "bartering dead bodies."<sup>162</sup> Days later, he tweeted that the Punjab government was being controlled by the "Ludhianvi mafia."<sup>163</sup>

This year, Ludhianvi appears to be reaping the fruits of the PML-N's dependence on him. In November 2013, a senior politician from Jhang had told the author that Ludhianvi was "desperate" for a national or provincial assembly seat and continued to lobby both the ISI and PML-N for one, seeking the disqualification of either Sheikh Muhammad Akram from the NA-89 seat or his niece Rashida Yaqoob Sheikh from the PP-78 provincial assembly seat.<sup>164</sup> In April 2014, an election tribunal disqualified Sheikh Muhammad Akram from the NA-89 seat. Instead of calling for a new election, it declared Ludhianvi the winner. The Election Commission of Pakistan subsequently issued a notification ratifying the decision. However, the Supreme Court suspended the notification and asked the tribunal to reevaluate its decision within three months.<sup>165</sup>

### **Punjab Truly Saved?**

When compared to Pakistan's three other provinces, Punjab has largely been spared from terrorist violence. This is especially the case with sectarian violence between Sunni Deobandis and Shi'a.<sup>166</sup> Factoring in the deep presence of

sectarian elements in the province, the relatively low levels of sectarian mass casualty attacks in Punjab stand out even more. Whereas Punjab was one of the main areas of sectarian violence in the 1990s, it has been eclipsed by Baluchistan and Karachi in recent years. While the province has not been violence-free, its comparatively lower levels of militant violence could be the by-product of détente between Sunni Deobandi militants and the PML-N, which (until the launch of the Zarb-e-Azb military operations in North Waziristan) had distanced itself from the war on terror and allowed the SSP/ASWJ and other banned groups the freedom to operate publicly. Punjab's police, as compared to the forces of other provinces, may also be better resourced and trained to handle militant groups.

In the short term, Punjab has been able to gain respite. With the relative absence of mass casualty terror attacks, the province continues to be Pakistan's most secure. Punjab has been able to push through large-scale infrastructure and energy projects and attract foreign investment, particularly from China.

But Punjab's temporary relief could be fleeting. An Islamabad-based expert on sectarian violence said that the cost of the PML-N's "peace" with Sunni Deobandi militants is that it "has allowed the LeJ and SSP to spread."<sup>167</sup> He also alleged that these groups are increasing their weapons stockpiles in the province. The author was unable to confirm these allegations, but they are consistent with public warnings from a broad spectrum of voices that Punjab's militancy threat has been deferred rather than eliminated.

The November 2013 Ashura riots between Sunni Deobandis and Shi'a in Rawalpindi and the subsequent killings by the TTP respectively demonstrate the province's vulnerability to unplanned sectarian clashes and the ability of the TTP to step in and escalate the sectarian war at will. Indeed, a former Pakistani senior federal law enforcement official said:

"Sectarian terrorism is inherent to TTP, LeJ, and JeM [Jaish-e-Muhammad]. It is primarily a Deobandi phenomenon. When they want to keep their cadres active, then the natural fallback position is sectarian."<sup>168</sup>

In December 2013, Ahmed Ali Intiqami, the FATA-based head of the TTP's Rawalpindi division, took responsibility for a terror attack on an *imambargah* (a place designated for Shi'i mourning rituals) in Rawalpindi and the killing of Allama Nasir Abbas, a fiery Shi'i preacher, in Lahore.<sup>169</sup> The next month, he released a video statement in which he proclaimed that Shi'a "only recognize

the language of the bullet.”<sup>170</sup> In a message directed at SSP/ASWJ activists, he said that “protests, strikes, and peace conferences will not destroy Shi‘i disbelief,” inviting them to the TTP’s training camps.<sup>171</sup> In 2014, as peace talks gained momentum, the TTP appeared to have backed away from sectarian attacks. But with the failure of the talks and the emergence of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan—Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (TTP-JA) splinter group, Punjab could be hit again.

The PML-N’s dealings with the SSP/ASWJ are shortsighted measures aimed at gaining respite from jihadis in the province and leveraging support from SSP/ASWJ in certain electoral constituencies. The government has no coherent mainstreaming program that would assimilate the militant group into a pluralistic framework. As a result, there is the danger that though Punjab has been relatively immune from militant violence in recent years, the political sphere could be radicalizing—and minorities are being given a clear message that their fundamental rights and personal security are unimportant to the state.

Though there is no indication that the Sharifs are sectarian actors, the privileges they have accorded to the SSP/ASWJ, a banned organization that wants the state to excommunicate Shi‘a and relegate them to second-class status, sends a message to Shi‘a in Punjab and elsewhere in Pakistan that they are on their own. The Sharifs’ general approach toward terrorism, designed to stave off attacks in a single province, reeks of Sunni Punjabi majoritarianism.

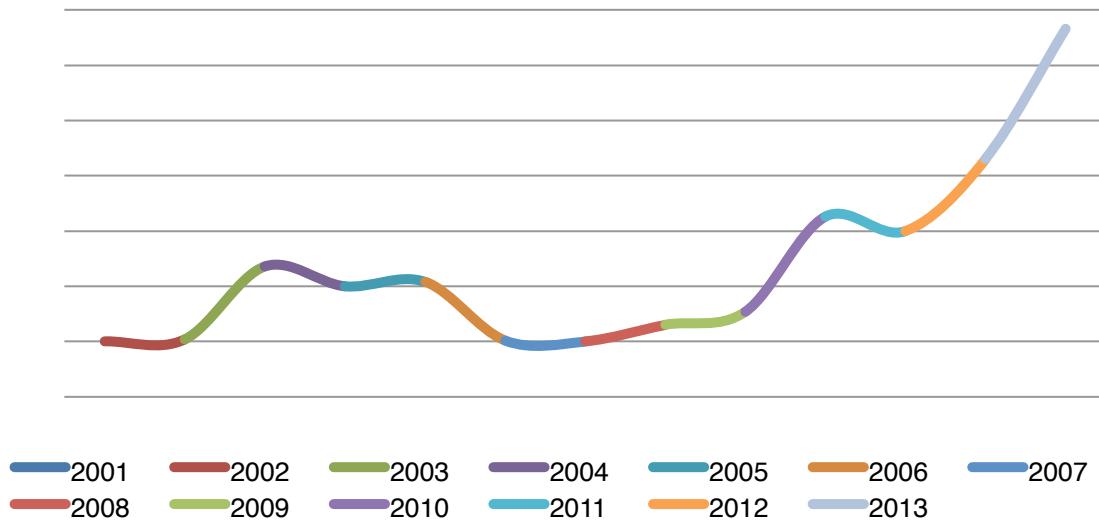
Above all, the Punjab government has demonstrated no capacity or will to translate a temporary reprieve from terror into a real peace dividend. While the Internal Security Policy released by the federal government envisions a national deradicalization program developed by the National Counter-Terrorism Authority, the group is stillborn.<sup>172</sup> Nor does the government appear to be willing to take a stand and draw moral red lines against hate speech and other types of sectarian activism that help feed a culture of religious violence.

## Baluchistan: Sunni Deobandi Sectarian Militancy Takes Root

Baluchistan is Pakistan’s newest sectarian battleground. Unlike other regions, sectarian violence in the province is a more recent phenomenon. Though a Hazara Shi‘i provincial assembly member was attacked in 1999 by sectarian terrorists,<sup>173</sup> systemic violence against Shi‘a emerged in the years following

September 11, beginning with a series of deadly attacks in 2003 by the local branch of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi. In the 1980s and 1990s, while sectarian violence flared in Punjab, Karachi, Gilgit-Baltistan, and the Kurram Agency, Baluchistan saw few incidents of sectarian violence. According to a senior police official in Quetta, Frontier Corps and Pakistan Army personnel would personally take part in Muharram processions until 2003, which is the year in which the province experienced its first suicide attack at an imambargah in Quetta.<sup>174</sup>

**Chart 2 - Deaths in Suspected or Confirmed Anti-Shi'a Attacks in Baluchistan (2001-13)**



**Source:** Author's working database comprised of suspected or confirmed incidents of Sunni Deobandi-Shi'i sectarian violence compiled from reports from the *Daily Times*, DAWN, the *Express Tribune*, and *The News*.

In Pakistan's public discourse, the resurgence of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi attacks against Shi'a in Baluchistan, particularly Hazara Shi'a, is often blamed on Punjab-based SSP/ASWJ and LeJ militants, most notably Malik Ishaq. It is possible that Ishaq directed attacks against Shi'a from prison; he has been accused of orchestrating the 2009 Sri Lankan cricket team attack while behind bars.<sup>175</sup> But the focus on Ishaq is inordinate, if not misplaced. It obscures the emergence of a militant Deobandi infrastructure in Baluchistan, of which LeJ is an integral part. Importantly, the LeJ leadership in Baluchistan is made up not of ethnic Punjabis, but of local Baluch and Brahui-speaking militants. While Ishaq may have had some involvement in terrorism targeting Hazara Shi'a, there is ample evidence that the anti-Shi'a killing campaign in Baluchistan is led by indigenous Baluch LeJ militants Usman Kurd and Dawood Badini.

### Lashkar-e-Jhangvi - Baluchistan: Native-Born Killers

The SSP/ASWJ and LeJ are phenomena that historically began in Punjab, but as we have seen elsewhere in Pakistan, they can be indigenized in other provinces. In Baluchistan specifically, both the SSP/ASWJ and LeJ have a local infrastructure that consists of ethnic Baluch militants. It is this nucleus of Baluch anti-Shi'a militants, led by Usman Kurd, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi's chief in Baluchistan, that drives the sectarian killing campaign in the province. As the figure above indicates, the first wave of anti-Shi'a attacks in Baluchistan began in 2003, when Malik Ishaq was in prison, and resumed in 2008, while he was still in prison.

There is conflicting evidence regarding Malik Ishaq's actual role in directing anti-Shi'a violence in Baluchistan. According to an Islamabad-based investigative journalist, the mastermind of the attacks against the Hazaras in early 2013 was from Rahim Yar Khan, from which Ishaq also hails, suggesting a personal connection between Ishaq and the plotter.<sup>176</sup> There are also claims that shortly after his release from prison in July 2011, Ishaq met with Usman Kurd.<sup>177</sup> A former senior Pakistani federal civilian law enforcement official stated that there were "intelligence reports [indicating] that when Malik Ishaq was released from prison that Usman Kurd came to meet him in Rahim Yar Khan, after which there were a large number of terrorist attacks on Hazaras in Baluchistan."<sup>178</sup> But he described these reports as unconfirmed and said that he is "not sure to what extent they are correct."<sup>179</sup> A Shi'i community leader in Quetta claimed that Ishaq's son would visit Quetta often, which could be an alternative way for Ishaq to direct attacks in the region, given that he has often been under temporary detention since his release in 2011.<sup>180</sup>

A senior Quetta police official who is perhaps best positioned to assess Ishaq's abilities to operate in Baluchistan stated that he does not think that Ishaq gives direction to the province's Lashkar-e-Jhangvi network.<sup>181</sup> He said that while "there is a considerable possibility that Ishaq may have played a role in providing funds," he "doesn't have much influence in Baluchistan."<sup>182</sup> Ishaq, the Quetta police official said, is a militant past his prime who "needs to retire."<sup>183</sup> He did concede that since his release Ishaq "was imprisoned because he had encouraged attacks in Quetta."<sup>184</sup> At the very least, Ishaq has played a role in inciting anti-Shi'a violence in Baluchistan since being released from prison in 2011.

The first wave of anti-Shi'a terror in Baluchistan began in 2003 and was led by Lashkar-e-Jhangvi militants Usman Kurd, Dawood Badini, and Shafiqur Rehman Rind. Badini, who works under Kurd, reportedly confessed to being involved in these initial attacks, including the June 8, 2003 mass shooting of Hazara police trainees; the July 4, 2003 complex attack on a Shi'i imambargah; and the March 2, 2004 complex attack on a Shi'i Ashura procession.<sup>185</sup> Sectarian violence in Baluchistan dropped considerably when Badini was arrested in 2003, and nearly—if not completely—came to a halt when Kurd was arrested in 2006.<sup>186</sup>

The second wave of anti-Shi'a terrorism in the province began after the three militants' escape from prison in January 2008. While Shafiqur Rehman Rind was rearrested on July 27, 2008, Kurd and Badini remain at large. Rind allegedly confessed to working with Kurd on seven targeted killings of Shi'a in Quetta during his short period of freedom in 2008.<sup>187</sup>

This LeJ network in Baluchistan is indicative of a broader provincial militant Deobandi network in the province that was decades in the making. Badini is the nephew of Khalid Shaikh Mohammad, the brother-in-law of Ramzi Yousef, and the son of a Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan member Maulvi Amir Hamza. According to a report on GEO News's crime investigation program, *GEO FIR*, Kurd was recruited into the SSP in the 1990s by Badini's father, who was described as the head of SSP in Baluchistan.<sup>188</sup> Kurd then went to Taliban-controlled Afghanistan for training, where he joined the LeJ.<sup>189</sup> After September 11, he returned to Pakistan, where he orchestrated the first wave of anti-Shi'a attacks in Baluchistan.<sup>190</sup> Pakistan's Federal Investigation Agency listed Ghulam Farooq, a Brauhi-speaking LeJ commander in Baluchistan, as one of its most wanted terrorists. It alleges that he had close links with Riaz Basra, LeJ's first chief, and founded LeJ in Baluchistan. Farooq, the report claims, is located in the Baluchistan Liberation Army's Kabo Ferrari camp in the Mastung district of Baluchistan.<sup>191</sup>

### **Lashkar-e-Jhangvi Support Networks in Baluchistan**

In Baluchistan, LeJ operates in a complex environment in which multiple wars are being waged: ethnic Baluch separatists battle the Pakistani state; the Afghan Taliban uses Quetta and border regions as safe havens through which to conduct its insurgency in Afghanistan; and, from Pakistani Baluchistan, Iranian

Baluch militants engage in a low-intensity conflict with the Iranian regime. As is the case with much relating to Baluchistan, it is unclear to what extent these conflicts overlap. But there is reason to believe that LeJ in Baluchistan relies on support networks from other actors inside and outside the province.

### ***SSP/ASWJ: The Public Face of LeJ***

In Baluchistan, much like elsewhere in Pakistan, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi relies on the SSP/ASWJ as a recruiting pool and support network to conduct terror attacks. A senior Quetta police official who has served elsewhere in Pakistan in counterterrorism roles described the relationship between SSP/ASWJ and LeJ at a national level: "It's very simple...SSP is the BA degree, [and] LeJ is the MA degree."<sup>192</sup> The same official added:

"...[E]very person who becomes part of LeJ was once part of SSP. What links them is ideology. People remain part of SSP until their LeJ identity [or affiliation] is made public."<sup>193</sup>

The SSP/ASWJ-LeJ divide gives anti-Shi'a Deobandi militants the plausible deniability to engage in both politics and violence. But the same Quetta police official also pointed toward direct SSP/ASWJ links to LeJ violence. He said that Rafiq Mengal, the SSP/ASWJ leader in Quetta, "is definitely" part of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi.<sup>194</sup> He added that the banned but publicly active and aboveground SSP/ASWJ "definitely" provides the underground LeJ with logistical support.<sup>195</sup> He also noted that periodically detaining SSP/ASWJ leaders helps "slow their momentum."<sup>196</sup>

From time to time, a previously unknown group claims responsibility for attacks targeting the Shi'a in Baluchistan. But the Quetta police official said that this is a deliberate LeJ tactic to fool Pakistani security officials by creating front groups, such as Jaish ul-Islam, to create the impression that a new group is involved in the violence.<sup>197</sup> While these different so-called splinter groups could reflect "temporary differences," he asserted that "their agenda remains the same."<sup>198</sup>

### ***Cross-Provincial Linkages***

Senior police officials in Karachi and Quetta agree that the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi networks in both cities likely provide support to one another. A senior Quetta

police official said that while he is unable to “point his finger,” he does see a “correlation between Lashkar-e-Jhangvi [activities] in Sindh and Baluchistan,”—specifically between Usman Kurd in Baluchistan and Karachi’s Usman Chotu and Naeem Bokhari groups.<sup>199</sup> A senior Karachi police counterterrorism official also said that there was a linkage between Usman Kurd, the LeJ-Baluchistan leader, and LeJ cells in Karachi.<sup>200</sup>

### **Baluchistan Police and Frontier Corps**

The escape of Usman Kurd, Dawood Badini, and Shafiqur Rehman Rind from an ostensibly high-security prison in Quetta’s cantonment area struck many observers as evidence of state backing for these men and LeJ in Baluchistan. How the men escaped from a secure prison has been subject to debate, if not conjecture, in Pakistan. Farhatullah Babar, a close aide to then-President Asif Ali Zardari, alleged in 2013 that the LeJ absconders had “clandestine support” from Pakistan’s security forces.<sup>201</sup> Indeed, some allege that Hazara guards at the prison were relieved of duty and replaced by other personnel shortly before their escape.<sup>202</sup>

Prison breaks, however, do not require support from on high. The Quetta police department has had a challenge with LeJ sympathizers in its rank-and-file, which police officials recognize both on and off the record. Working on intelligence provided by the ISI, Quetta police arrested two of its officers in May 2013, who—based on ISI surveillance—were shown to have been in contact with LeJ commanders in Baluchistan.<sup>203</sup> Ominously, an unnamed Quetta police official speaking with the Pakistani English-language daily *The News* said:

“I’m not scared of Usman Kurd...But I’m scared of one of my constables telling him what I’m up to.”<sup>204</sup>

It would be a mistake to describe the police forces as generally sympathetic to LeJ. Indeed, the terror outfit has attempted to kill a number of senior police officials as well as rank-and-file police personnel. A senior Quetta police official described a shoot-out with LeJ terrorists as very much a pitched battle that he, despite his age and seniority, led from the front in order to motivate his force.<sup>205</sup> He said:

"They [the police officers under his command] saw me single-handedly fighting militants...I barely survived...When they see their commander [battle the militants], they also want to fight and sacrifice."<sup>206</sup>

Interviews with members of Quetta's Hazara Shi'i community indicate a general distrust of the paramilitary Frontier Corps (FC), which is mainly composed of ethnic Pashtuns. A Hazara Shi'a who was injured in the 2010 Quds Day attack in Quetta accused Frontier Corps personnel of shooting at Shi'a during this and other attacks, perhaps to increase the number of Shi'i casualties.<sup>207</sup> But he also did acknowledge that private Shi'i security personnel were also shooting. Indeed, a more probable explanation is that both private and governmental security forces engaged in aerial firing in the aftermath of blasts.

Nonetheless, the 2010 blast victim also said that the FC, Quetta police, and LeJ are "all in this together," citing a November 2013 rally by SSP/ASWJ in Quetta in which protestors chanted, "Shi'a are infidels!" unabashedly in front of FC personnel.<sup>208</sup> For Hazara Shi'a, it seems as if local authorities are sitting idly as those who terrorize them are free to move about.

### ***The Military-Intelligence Establishment***

The Pakistani military has been accused of supporting Deobandi sectarian militants in its war against ethnic Baluch separatists. The army allegedly seeks to counter a secular separatist movement with religiously-motivated actors, including so-called death squads, such as the Baluch Musalla Difa Tanzeem (the Armed Baluch Defense Party), led by Mir Shafiq-ur-Rehman Mengal (usually referred to as Shafiq Mengal), an ethnic Baluch and son of a tribal notable and politician, Naseer Mengal.

Mengal's background, relationships, and goals are murky. Some allege that he is part of an ISI-sponsored militant Deobandi network that not only has links to Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, but also to other anti-state jihadis. According to an unnamed Khuzdar-based lawyer interviewed by Pakistan's *Herald* magazine, Mengal attended a Deobandi madrasa after dropping out of the elite Aitchison College.<sup>209</sup> The same source claimed that Mengal "has been involved in providing protection to many Taliban and al-Qa'ida operatives in Baluchistan" and works as a "subcontractor" for LeJ.<sup>210</sup> After the Frontier Corps cleared a Baluchistan Liberation Army (BLA) training camp in the Tootak area of Khuzdar, Mengal reportedly allowed LeJ to take over the location.<sup>211</sup>

A Baluch separatist publication, however, describes Mengal as a former member of Jamaat-ud-Dawa, which is an Ahl-e-Hadis organization. It claims that he had earlier received training to fight in Kashmir. In an interview posted on YouTube, Mengal uses religious terminology more common with Ahl-e-Hadis or Salafis, such as “*salaf*” (predecessors).<sup>212</sup> Shafiq Mengal’s sectarian affiliation is important, as Deobandi militants are far more likely than Ahl-e-Hadis militants to involve themselves in anti-Shi'a activities, let alone cooperate with Lashkar-e-Jhangvi. But the prevailing opinion among observers of the Baluch insurgency is that Mengal is a Deobandi and receives backing from the Pakistani state. According to a Baluch journalist, Mengal drives with the protection of the Frontier Corps, but he and others speculate that the state, specifically the FC, has distanced itself from Mengal recently.<sup>213</sup>

It is important to reiterate that though these militant actors may receive support from forces outside the province, they themselves are native to Baluchistan. Shafiq Mengal’s family comes from the prominent Baluch Mengal tribe, and his clan is a possible pro-establishment counterweight in the Mengal tribe to ethnic nationalist leaders such as Akhtar Mengal.<sup>214</sup> Shafiq Mengal’s brother ran for a National Assembly seat in the district in 2008 and 2013, but performed poorly in both races.

Baluch nationalists and other observers claim that to counterbalance Baluch separatists, the Pakistani military appears to rely on often dubious local actors to lead militias or perform subcontracted violent work.<sup>215</sup> The Pakistani military has vehemently denied such accusations.<sup>216</sup> The Baluchistan insurgency is a messy, complicated battlefield. Separatists have killed hundreds of non-Baluch, murdered notables and others who have sided with the government, and killed or threatened journalists. The state is also accused of engaging in extrajudicial killings and allegedly often relying on violent proxies who wear other hats as drug kingpins<sup>217</sup> or purveyors of sectarian violence. The connections are tenuous, but it is possible that the resurgence of sectarian violence in Baluchistan is in part an externality or an indirect consequence of the military’s support for certain militias.

While it is certainly possible that the military is supporting militias that are linked to the LeJ, many Shi'a see the army as an alternative to provincial and federal civilian governments that are unable or unwilling to confront LeJ. For example, in the midst of a deadly wave of LeJ attacks against Hazara Shi'a in Quetta,

members of the embattled community called for army rule over the province.<sup>218</sup> Other prominent Shi'i voices, most notably former Senator Faisal Raza Abidi, have gone further, calling for martial law across the country.<sup>219</sup>

### ***Baluch Separatists***

While some allege that elements of the Pakistani state are supporting militias linked to Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Pakistani security officials—with varying degrees of confidence—claim that LeJ receives support from Baluch separatist insurgents, namely the BLA.

Some observers might dismiss these accusations as cynical attempts by elements of the Pakistani state to discredit secular Baluch separatists by linking them to jihadis. But the current and retired law enforcement officials with whom the author spoke made these linkages in response to direct questions by the author. Their statements were not unsolicited. Additionally, these sources have been at the forefront in Pakistan's war against LeJ and other jihadi groups. Furthermore, Tariq Khosa, another former police officer cited in a secondary source below, is an ethnic Baluch and a critic of Islamabad's policy toward Baluchistan. The body of evidence linking the BLA and LeJ is weak. But if the claims are true, it may reflect opportunistic, localized partnerships between elements of both militant movements.

During his tenure as interior minister from 2008-2013, Senator Rehman Malik had claimed on several occasions as well that the BLA and LeJ were tied together, alleging that their links go back to 2007.<sup>220</sup> Malik has repeated the same claim as late as April 2014, a year after departing from government.<sup>221</sup> Similarly, a senior Quetta police official also stated that sectarian violence and the Baluch insurgency reappeared in the province around the same time after the killing of Baluch nationalist leader Akbar Bugti in 2006. In 2012, during Malik's tenure, Pakistan's Federal Investigation Agency claimed that Ghulam Farooq, a Brahui-speaking LeJ commander in Baluchistan, could be found at the BLA's Kabo Ferrari camp in the Mastung district of Baluchistan.<sup>222</sup> The Mastung district is also home to a sizable Deobandi madrasa and is where a number of major anti-Shi'a attacks by the LeJ have taken place. The SSP/ASWJ has also held public events there.

A senior Quetta police official was more cautious in linking the BLA and LeJ, stating that he could say “with confidence, not authority” that there is a nexus between the two groups in Baluchistan.<sup>223</sup> He pointed toward a number of instances, which he estimated to be about four or five, in which the LeJ and BLA conducted near-simultaneous terror attacks, apparently with the goal of distracting the security forces.<sup>224</sup> The Quetta police official also pointed toward the ethnic commonality between BLA and LeJ militants and said that the groups have shared hideouts, identifying the Kabo camp, to which a number of Pakistani officials also pointed. There is further circumstantial evidence to point toward a correlation between sectarian and separatist violence. After a lull in violence in Baluchistan toward the end of 2013, which a senior Quetta police official attributes to greater inter-agency coordination, a surge in terrorist attacks by the BLA and BRA in early 2014 occurred, coinciding with a resumption in mass casualty attacks and other terrorist violence by the LeJ as well as the Iran-focused Jaish al-Adl.

Tariq Khosa, the former head of FIA, wrote in *The News* that after the escape of Kurd, Badini, and Rind, the LeJ “has regrouped and developed a nexus with BLA and other militant outfits in the province to cause systematic mayhem.”<sup>225</sup> He too pointed toward “their hideouts near Mastung in Kabo and other Ferrari camps.”<sup>226</sup> Khosa wrote:

These camps [in which the BLA gives refuge to LeJ fighters] are located in...areas...out of the reach of Baluchistan police, thanks to power-hungry politicians and bureaucrats who have handed over 95% of the province to the rag-tag militias, called the Levies. A turf battle has been won by narrow-minded bureaucrats against the police.<sup>227</sup>

Both SSP/ASWJ and Baluch separatist activists mourned the killing of Sanaullah Siddique in Khuzdar, who was both a member of the Baluch Republican Army and SSP/ASWJ. Baluch tend to be Deobandi and are unlikely to have much commonality with ethnic Hazaras, whose population in the province has grown dramatically the past three decades.

But many observers of Baluchistan and Baluch nationalists dismiss the allegations of cooperation between the BLA and LeJ. A Baluch journalist now based in the Persian Gulf said: “Baluch separatists are totally secular. I don’t know a single Baluch separatist leader who has religious leanings.”<sup>228</sup>

In fact, he said that Dr. Allah Nazar Baluch, a separatist commander, alleges that LeJ is operating in the Awaran area of Baluchistan under the military’s protection

and wants them to leave the area.<sup>229</sup> Indeed, Baluch separatists generally regard Islamist movements in the area as military proxies tasked with diluting the influence of ethnic nationalism. The Gulf-based Baluch journalist told the author the story of a 14-year-old orphan who had once been in favor of Baluch separatists, but joined LeJ and trained at one of its camps in southern Punjab after being told that the BLA is opposed to Islam and was being funded by India's foreign intelligence agency, the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW).<sup>230</sup>

### ***Baluch Notables Allied with Mainstream Political Parties***

Other mainstream political forces, including Asim Kurd and Ali Madad Jattak, have been accused of having links with Lashkar-e-Jhangvi. These are Baluch notables who have sided with the central government and have joined one of the major national political parties.

A senior Quetta police official said that the September 10, 2010 bombing that took place at the home of Asim Kurd—then the provincial finance minister—might have not been an attack. Rather, it could have been an accidental bombing by an LeJ suicide bomber to whom Kurd may have been giving refuge<sup>231</sup> He noted that Asim Kurd comes from the same tribe as Lashkar-e-Jhangvi's Baluchistan chief, Usman Kurd.<sup>232</sup>

In February 2013, provincial security forces arrested Ali Madad Jattak, a Baluch politician affiliated with the PPP; at least one media source speculated that one possible reason for his arrest could be "links with the banned Lashkar-e-Jhangvi."<sup>233</sup>

### ***Support from Other Deobandi Networks?***

As a religious and social force, Deobandism is growing in rural Baluchistan as well as interior Sindh. In Khuzdar, where the Baluch Musalla Difa Tanzeem has been based, Maulana Qamaruddin, a Deobandi cleric from the JUI-F party, came in second in the last two elections. While elements of the JUI-F have spoken out against sectarianism in Baluchistan, a senior Quetta police official described them as "munafiqs" (hypocrites) and said that they "must pick a side."<sup>234</sup> Still, it should be noted that a JUI-F official in Khuzdar interviewed by Hamid Mir, a prominent Pakistani journalist, spoke out against these militias and emphasized that democracy is the solution to the region's problems.<sup>235</sup>

### **Net Effect: Hazara Ghettoization and Outward Migration**

The post-2007 onslaught against the Shi'i community in Baluchistan has had a

#### **Figure 2 - Lashkar-e-Jhangvi Baluchistan August 2011 Statement**

All Shi'a are worthy of killing. We will rid Pakistan of unclean people. Pakistan means "land of the pure," and the Shi'a have no right to live in this country. We have the edict and signatures of revered scholars, declaring the Shi'a infidels. Just as our fighters have waged a successful jihad against the Shi'a Hazara in Afghanistan, our mission in Pakistan is the abolition of this impure sect and its followers from every city, every village, and every nook and corner of Pakistan.

As in the past, our successful jihad against the Hazara in Pakistan and, in particular, in Quetta is ongoing and will continue in the future. We will make Pakistan the graveyard of the Shi'a Hazara, and their houses will be destroyed by bombs and suicide bombers. We will only rest when we will be able to fly the flag of true Islam on this land of the pure. Jihad against the Shi'a Hazara has now become our duty.

**Source:** Khaled Ahmed, "Hunting the Hazara," *Newsweek Pakistan*, March 11, 2014, <http://newsweekpakistan.com/hunting-the-hazara/>.

profound impact on ethnic Hazara Shi'a in particular. Increasingly, Hazara Shi'a are forced to live in what are effectively Hazara ghettos in Quetta; flee to Islamabad or Karachi, where they are relatively safer; or seek asylum abroad, often risking their lives in the process. It may be difficult to find a Hazara family that has not been impacted by Lashkar-e-Jhangvi's relentless killing campaign.

### **Flight**

Due to outdated census data—Pakistan's last census was conducted in 1998—and significant population shifts since, it is difficult to precisely determine the Hazara Shi'i population in Quetta and Baluchistan as a whole. A report in *DAWN* states that the Hazara population in Quetta had been up to 600,000 in recent years, and that 100,000 have fled the city.<sup>236</sup> Eighty thousand Hazaras have reportedly moved to the Rawalpindi-Islamabad area, Karachi, or Lahore.<sup>237</sup> Agha Raza, a member of the Baluchistan Assembly, told *DAWN* that around 1,400 people in the Hazara community had been killed and 800 injured by terrorists since 2001.<sup>238</sup>

Hazara families have been sending their sons abroad through legal and illegal immigration routes. The author spoke with a number of Hazara Shi'a injured in LeJ terror attacks. They, like other Shi'i Muslims in Pakistan, feel deeply rooted in the country, and leaving the country is a last option. A survivor of the January 2014 blast in Mastung said, "This is our country. This is our culture."<sup>239</sup> His elder brother, who was also injured in a previous LeJ attack, moved to Sweden three years ago, where he received asylum. They have cousins in Australia, a popular destination for members of the Hazara community. While many Hazaras from Pakistan and Afghanistan have succeeded in gaining conventional immigrant and asylum status in Australia, many choose a perilous boat journey that often involves being detained and resettled in Papua New Guinea.<sup>240</sup>

### ***Ghettoization***

As a result of the violence, members of the Hazara Shi'i community are now compelled to move into what are effectively ghettos in Quetta. Due to the risk of traveling outside these areas and the refusal of government service providers to access Hazara areas, Hazaras also have to develop satellite offices or remote instructional facilities in their Quetta enclaves.

After attacks on what militants presumed to be university buses directed toward Hazara Shi'i communities—including a June 2013 LeJ attack on a women's college bus<sup>241</sup>—the University of Baluchistan in Quetta stopped providing bus service to Hazara enclaves.

According to a report in *DAWN*, "non-Hazara parents decided to pull out their children from the transportation used by Hazara students. Moving with the Hazaras has become synonymous with inviting death."<sup>242</sup>

A Hazara Shi'i student at the University of Baluchistan said that the university justified its move by stating that Hazara areas are too dangerous for its employees.<sup>243</sup> The University of Baluchistan bus drops her off at the Police Lines area of Quetta, which is 40 minutes from her home in the Hazara-dominated Alamdar Road area.<sup>244</sup> From there, she and three other Hazara Shi'i girls walk 40 minutes each way to the bus stop.<sup>245</sup> Hazara Shi'a, she said, have also obtained a 1,000-yard plot for an in-house university in the Hazara community.<sup>246</sup> Additionally, Quetta police have made a separate Hazara Training Center in

Hazara Town.<sup>247</sup>

### ***Resentment of Hazaras?***

Hazaras in Pakistan are an upwardly mobile community with a strong sense of group solidarity. In Afghanistan, they have historically had troubled relations with the central government and Pashtun power brokers. In the post-September 11 era, Hazaras in Afghanistan have risen from the lowest rung of Afghan society to routinely placing among the top students taking university examinations.<sup>248</sup>

In Pakistan, the Hazara community consists of a population that has been native to the region since the nineteenth century, when many Hazaras fled Afghanistan after Amir Abdul Rahman's repressive efforts to consolidate his control.<sup>249</sup> These Hazaras settled in the Quetta area, with many joining the British Indian army and others establishing businesses. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 brought a massive influx of Afghan refugees into Pakistan, including Hazaras. Inflows from Afghanistan continued during the Afghan civil war years, particularly after September 11 and the spread of the Taliban, in which there were brutal clashes between the Pashtun Taliban and Hazara Shi'i resistance forces.

Pakistanis tend to have difficulty differentiating between Afghan and Pakistani Hazaras. Some also confuse ethnic Hazaras in Baluchistan for the Hazara administrative division in the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province. But ethnic Hazaras have long been integrated into Pakistani society. Gen. Musa Khan, a Hazara Shi'a from Quetta, served as commander-in-chief of the Pakistan Army from 1958-1966, governor of West Pakistan from 1966-1969, and governor of Baluchistan from 1985-1991. Two Hazara Shi'i victims of separate Lashkar-e-Jhangvi attacks interviewed by the author had grandfathers who served in the Pakistan Army.<sup>250</sup> According to a Hazara community leader, there are currently around 200-250 Hazaras serving in the officer corps of the Pakistan Army, including three brigadiers.<sup>251</sup> Hazara Shi'a have also held prominent roles in the Pakistan Air Force, including as air vice-marshal and one of its first female pilots.<sup>252</sup>

Hazara Shi'a are being killed for two major reasons: they are Shi'i and, due to their Asiatic features, are easy to identify. But ethnic dynamics in Quetta and neighboring Mastung are also an important secondary factor fueling the

targeting of Hazaras. A senior Quetta police official said that he has received no tips on sectarian terrorists from the general public, despite the reward money offered, suggesting that Baluchis and Pashtuns have animosity toward the Hazara.<sup>253</sup> When queried about the lack of tips for killings of Hazara Shi'a, an official with the Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP), the largest Pashtun nationalist party in Baluchistan, said, "I do not think that this conflict has an ethnic dimension," pointing out that nearly 200 Pashtun Shi'a have also been killed in Baluchistan's sectarian violence.<sup>254</sup> But in an unwitting recognition of his resentment of the Hazaras, the Pashtun political activist said that while "this violence has brought great destruction to the Hazaras in Quetta," the community "has also benefitted" in that over 5,000 Hazara families have allegedly migrated to Australia. Hazaras, he said, "only obtained visas because of this conflict."<sup>255</sup> He also estimated the Hazara Shi'i population to be 100,000-200,000,<sup>256</sup> which is far below the estimates of 500,000-700,000 given by various Hazara community leaders.<sup>257</sup>

Hazara community leaders recognize that there is an ethnic dimension to the conflict. Some are unwilling to speak on the issue,<sup>258</sup> but others, such as Abdul Khaliq Hazara, perhaps the most prominent Hazara community leader, openly point toward ethnic and related economic dimensions to the killing and ghettoization of Hazara Shi'a.<sup>259</sup> He said that Hazaras are not only targeted because they are "educated people," but also because they hold a "sizable share of government jobs."<sup>260</sup> More importantly, he said that Hazaras, until a few years ago, "were the second largest stakeholders in small businesses in the city after Pashtuns."<sup>261</sup> Abdul Khaliq Hazara claimed that Quetta's "other communities, such as the Pashtuns, have gained a lot out of this sectarian violence." Hazaras, he said, have been forced to sell commercial property outside their enclaves "at throw-away prices."<sup>262</sup> A senior Quetta police official also pointed to the Hazara challenge to Pashtun economic domination as one possible causal factor for the violence against them.<sup>263</sup> He said that the "Hazara influx has started to take a bigger share of the local economy," also alleging that members of the community use *ziarats* (Shi'i pilgrimages to Iran and Iraq) for smuggling.<sup>264</sup>

### ***Hazara Resilience and Culture of Remembrance***

Some members of the community resent Pakistani media coverage that simply presents them as victims. A survivor of the 2014 Mastung blast said that a

Pakistani television talk show host, who was also Shi'i, interviewed her father and focused on presenting the community as objects of pity. As her father expressed anger at the government's inability to protect his family—he lost a daughter and wife in the attacks—the host interjected and redirected the conversation back toward the narrative of pitying the Hazaras.<sup>265</sup>

The Hazaras have also displayed great resilience. Hazara Shi'a in Quetta persist in making land-based pilgrimages to holy sites in Iran and Iraq. For example, a 21-year-old survivor of the 2014 LeJ attack on Shi'i pilgrims in Mastung said that she has made four pilgrimages in her lifetime despite the persistence of LeJ attacks.<sup>266</sup> Hazara community organizations diligently aggregate the names of victims of sectarian violence.<sup>267</sup> In contrast, the Pakistani government fails to even correctly count the number of civilians killed in terror attacks. Indeed, Hazaras in Quetta and outside the region, including an international diaspora, have developed a profound culture of remembrance—and the narratives, iconography, and style are deeply intertwined with their Shi'i traditions.<sup>268</sup>

### **Foreign Hands Stirring the Pot?**

Pakistani government officials and public commentators frequently blame ethnic and religious violence in Baluchistan on a “foreign hand,” or *teesri quwwat* (third force). It is true that Baluchistan and Pakistan as a whole have a history of foreign involvement in domestic conflicts, including through the support of militant violence. There are indications that the conflict between Iran and the Sunni Gulf Arab states is playing out to some degree in Baluchistan, though it is not necessarily what gives momentum to the violence. Both the emergence of the Majlis-e-Wahdat-e-Muslimeen (MWM) party, which is likely backed by Iran, and possible Gulf Arab support for Sunni Baluch militants in Baluchistan are discussed in greater detail below.

### ***Iranian Hand in Shi'i Activism and Militancy***

There is reasoned speculation that Iran is backing the MWM party, a national group that has increasingly resonated with Hazara Shi'a in Quetta. Iran styles itself as the guardian of the world's Shi'i Muslims. In the cases of Bahrain, Iraq, and Syria, it has direct involvement in aiding Shi'i protest movements, militant organizations, and governments at odds with Sunnis. Baluchistan shares a porous border with Iran, and its capital, Quetta, is home to a persecuted Hazara

Shi'i community that also has a sizable presence in Iran. Iran operates one of Quetta's two foreign consulates. Hence the regular flow of Hazara Shi'a to and from Iran as well as Tehran's consular presence in Quetta provide Iran with an ability to support a neighboring Shi'i population that is the target of a mass killing campaign.

In Quetta, the MWM has largely been a political force. It won a provincial assembly seat in a Hazara area that had traditionally gone to the secular Hazara Democratic Party (HDP).

Abdul Khaliq Hazara, the HDP's leader, said:

If MWM leaders have not been getting support from Iran why would they hang pictures of Iranian rulers in every of their press conference and other gatherings. Have you ever seen them hanging Quaid-e-Azam's picture during their gatherings? They act on the Iranian agenda. They celebrate Yaum al-Quds, which is an Iranian day. Their slogans are similar to those of Iranians.<sup>269</sup>

There are indications that the MWM has been involved in violence in Quetta—and there is some speculation of Iranian support. A senior Quetta police official said that in 2012 his forces arrested a group of Shi'a who were responsible for the killing of 14 Sunni Deobandis from ASWJ.<sup>270</sup> These attackers allegedly came from Dera Ismail Khan, which is home to a sizable Shi'i community. They were aided by local handlers.<sup>271</sup> The police official said that "there are a lot of footprints of Iranian intelligence here, but there is no strong intelligence [linking them]."<sup>272</sup> He linked five or six murders of Deobandis to the MWM, saying that the militants operate under various names, such as Sipah-e-Muhammad and Lashkar-e-Mehdi.<sup>273</sup>

## **Kurram, Orakzai, Hangu and Kohat: The TTP and LeJ Fuel Sectarian War**

The Kurram and Orakzai Tribal Agencies in FATA and the Hangu and Kohat districts in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa form a segment of Pakistan's Pashtun belt in which local Sunni and Shi'i tribes have had periodic conflicts with one another over the decades. Since the early 1980s, tensions between the two communities have been exacerbated through the active involvement of external actors: Afghan refugees and militant groups, Sunni insurgent and sectarian

organizations, the Pakistani state, and elements connected to the Afghan and Iranian governments.

In 2005, proto-TTP militants began a presence in the Kurram Agency. Two years later, in the spring of 2007, dozens of Sunni and Shi'i tribesmen would die in clashes sparked by sectarian incitement. By the fall of that year, Taliban militants from neighboring areas entered the fray, motivated by sectarian hatred, tribal rivalries, and a desire to secure routes into Afghanistan. The war in the Kurram Agency would both be fueled by and spread into the sectarian conflict in the Orakzai Agency and the nearby Hangu and Kohat settled districts and be consumed by the growing TTP insurgency.<sup>274</sup> From 2007-2011, an estimated 1,500 people died in the sectarian strife.

### A History of Sectarian Conflict

The Kurram Agency is home to a number of Pashtun tribes, including the Bangash and Mangal, which are mainly Sunni, and the Turi, who are all Shi'i.<sup>275</sup> Most Bangash reside in the agency's Lower Kurram region, while the Turi live in the Upper Kurram area, which includes Parachinar, the agency's largest city. Prior to the start of sectarian conflict in 2007, nearly 80% of Upper Kurram was Shi'i, 95% of Central Kurram was Sunni, and 80% of Lower Kurram was Sunni.

The Bangash and Turi have had an on-and-off conflict that has generally been resolved by the local dispute resolution mechanism, the *jirga*.<sup>276</sup> Tribal and sectarian differences combined with competition over resources, such as timber, create an enduring conflict that has often involved smaller Sunni tribes as well as tribes from neighboring regions, such as the Afridis. Road networks also play into the rivalry, serving as leverage for both sides. The Kurram Agency is connected to Peshawar and the rest of Pakistan via the Sunni-dominated Lower Kurram area; residents of Lower and Central Kurram access Afghanistan through Upper Kurram.

The Bangash and the Turi have clashed in the 1930s and in 1973, 1982, 1987, and 1996. Like other parts of Pakistan, the Kurram Agency was transformed by the Sunni Deobandi and Shi'i radicalization of the 1980s. Mariam Abou Zahab, an expert on sectarianism in Pakistan, writes of the changes in the agency during that decade:

"Afghan refugees introduced a militant brand of Sunni ideology at a time when the Shi'a of Parachinar under the leadership of Allama Arif Hussain al-Hussaini were being radicalized by the Iranian revolution."<sup>277</sup>

The Kurram Agency was radicalized by forces east of the Indus River as well, with the growing presence of the SSP/ASWJ in Kurram and neighboring regions. A local journalist said that SSP leader Azam Tariq, who was killed in 2003, "was as popular in Kurram as he was across Punjab."<sup>278</sup> Today, the SSP/ASWJ has a local presence in the Kurram Agency through groups that are active alongside Iran-inspired Shi'i organizations, such as the Anjuman Farooqia.

The radicalization process of Sunnis and Shi'a in the Kurram Agency began in the 1980s, but it was in the 1990s that the scale of the violence metastasized. In 1996, Sunnis and Shi'a clashed once again. Taking place against the backdrop of the Afghan civil war and the spread of the Taliban, these clashes marked the advent of the use of heavy weaponry in the area's sectarian disputes. What catalyzed the 1996 sectarian battles is unclear. Some accounts link it to the killing of a Sunni college principal by Shi'a,<sup>279</sup> while others say the spark was a Sunni student's anti-Shi'a graffiti.<sup>280</sup> The sectarian mini-war in which both sides used "mortars, rocket launchers, and antiaircraft missiles against one another"<sup>281</sup> lasted several days and took the lives of around 200 people.<sup>282</sup>

### **Shi'a Resist the Taliban**

Tensions flared once again in 2007, beginning with clashes between Sunnis and Shi'a after some Sunnis—perhaps affiliated with the SSP/ASWJ—chanted anti-Shi'a statements during a joint Sunni-Shi'i celebration of the birth of the Prophet.<sup>283</sup> Video recordings of the anti-Shi'a slurs may have gone viral across the tribal agency—a precursor to both communities' more recent sharing of videos of sectarian carnage through mobile phone devices and social media.<sup>284</sup>

But the slurs may have simply been the spark that lit a powder keg. According to one press account, sectarian tensions had been building in the Kurram Agency as a result of the influx of militants from North Waziristan, who had been using the area as an alternative entry point into Afghanistan as a result of a peace deal with Islamabad.<sup>285</sup> Shi'i Turis objected to the presence of armed Sunni militants, while they (as well as other natives of the agency) had been prohibited from carrying weapons.<sup>286</sup>

Zia Abbas,<sup>287</sup> a resident of the Kurram Agency currently living in Islamabad, told the author that the seeds of the area's Talibanization were set in 2005 when various Sunni Deobandi militants—including Taliban from Swat and Waziristan and members of Mangal Bagh's Lashkar-e-Islam—came into the region.<sup>288</sup> The Waziris, he noted, attempted to shut down barbershops and music stores, which are initial signs of Talibanization.<sup>289</sup> Their strategic objective, Abbas argued, was to secure vital passageways in FATA that were historically not guarded by the government.<sup>290</sup> He also alleges that until 2007, the Haqqani network had training camps outside Parachinar.<sup>291</sup> Other accounts confirm pre-2007 Talibanization. For example, in 2005, Fazal Saeed Haqqani, who later joined the TTP, formed a Taliban group in Central Kurram.<sup>292</sup>

An estimated 40 people died in the initial clashes in 2007,<sup>293</sup> but the killing did not end there. Tensions flared once again in the fall, as hundreds of Daur, Mehsud, and Utmanzai Wazir militants from North and South Waziristan entered into the fray at the behest of their leaders Baitullah Mehsud and Hafiz Gul Bahadur.<sup>294</sup> With the involvement of the TTP and active support of other jihadis, the conflict in the Kurram Agency became more prolonged and brutal.

The major TTP protagonists operating in the Kurram Agency all had a record of sectarian violence. Baitullah Mehsud, the TTP founder, named Hakimullah Mehsud as the group's chief in the Khyber, Kurram, and Orakzai Agencies. Hakimullah, according to some accounts, took part in sectarian attacks in Hangu, where he briefly attended a seminary. The TTP's Qari Hussain Mehsud and Tariq Afridi, both formerly with Lashkar-e-Jhangvi,<sup>295</sup> commanded forces in the Kurram Agency. As with Karachi, the line between the TTP and LeJ in Kurram and the surrounding region is extremely blurred. Indeed, an Islamabad-based FATA expert said that in these areas, the "TTP is Lashkar-e-Jhangvi."<sup>296</sup> The TTP introduced a greater cruelty to the conflict, burning down Shi'i villages, killing Shi'i bus passengers, and conducting suicide attacks. Faqir Alam Mehsud, appointed by Hakimullah Mehsud to take over the Kurram Agency in April 2008, is said to have personally beheaded dozens of Shi'a.<sup>297</sup>

But by mid-2008, the Shi'i Turis were able to push back against the onslaught from the TTP and other jihadis, who expanded across other parts of FATA with great ease. According to a U.S. diplomatic cable, the Kurram Agency's Sunnis had a "slight upper hand" in 2007, which was reversed by a Shi'i offensive into Lower Kurram in which the Shi'a "won new ground."<sup>298</sup> On August 31, 2008, Shi'i Turi militants "captured several Sunni and local taliban [sic] strongholds in

the corridor” that had been carved out in late 2007 connecting the Kurram Agency to Khost, Afghanistan.<sup>299</sup> Shi’i militants, like their Sunni counterparts, targeted civilian populaces. A U.S. diplomat in Peshawar was informed by a local source that the Sunni “villages were burnt down and the habitants had fled.”<sup>300</sup> The displacement of Sunnis and the unwillingness of Shi’i leaders to guarantee their security upon return added further fuel to the conflict, which was then taken over by hard-liners.

The traditional leadership of the Shi’i Turis failed to prove its mettle during the clash and was supplanted by younger, more militant leaders. According to a U.S. diplomatic cable, a local pesh imam faced a challenge from the hard-line Adil Hussain al-Hussaini and was then forced to compete with him in incendiary rhetoric.<sup>301</sup> Al-Hussaini’s speeches may have incited Sunni-Shi’i violence in January 2009.<sup>302</sup> Two major Shi’i militias, Hezbollah and the Mahdi militia, also were likely backed by third party forces, as will be discussed below. A Shi’i Turi tribesmen downplayed the role of these two militias, stating that “they were just names made up by young men,” and were aided by Shi’i Turis who had served with the Frontier Corps.

In October 2008, Sunni and Shi’i tribal leaders signed a peace accord in Islamabad. But hard-line militants on both sides were not included in the deal. Shi’i Turi leaders also reportedly had a “secret” meeting with the TTP on the sidelines to discuss a safe passage to Khost.<sup>303</sup>

The peace deal brought a short respite for the agency. However, during the ceasefire period, both Sunni and Shi’i communities built bunker fortifications, preparing for the next round of conflict. Minority communities located in Sunni or Shi’a majority areas—such as the Sunni Mangals who lived in Shi’a-dominated Upper Kurram—were also extremely vulnerable to the wrath of the majority. Indeed, during the course of the conflict, a soft form of ethnic cleansing took place, with Shi’a migrating to Upper Kurram and Sunnis in Parachinar fleeing for Lower Kurram.<sup>304</sup> In between, the Sunni Mangals were stuck in Central Kurram.<sup>305</sup>

On June 16, 2009, Sunnis attacked Shi’i bunkers, mutilating the corpse of one Shi’i man.<sup>306</sup> Fighting between the two groups subsequently resumed, renewed with a new set of militant actors.

Military operations in other tribal areas pushed insurgents into the Kurram, Orakzai, and North Waziristan Tribal Agencies. Indeed, Tariq Khan, then the

commander of the Frontier Corps, said in 2010 that “anybody who’s anybody is now sitting in Orakzai. Everybody thought they’d be safe there. The terrain is pretty bad. The Uzbeks are there, and Arabs.”<sup>307</sup>

In 2009, forces loyal to Hakimullah Mehsud from South Waziristan and Tariq Afridi from Darra Adam Khel joined in the fight in the Kurram Agency, reinforcing the blockade of Parachinar.<sup>308</sup> Since 2007, Shi'i Turis from Upper Kurram had been denied access to Peshawar via their sole land route: the Thall-Parachinar road that passes through Sunni-dominated Lower Kurram. For much of November 2007 into 2011, Shi'i Turis in Upper Kurram were only able to reach Peshawar, the closest major Pakistani city, via a circuitous route through Kabul. What was once a four-hour trip by road became an 18-hour journey fraught with danger.<sup>309</sup> Travelers risked being kidnapped or murdered by Afghan criminals.<sup>310</sup> Some residents of Upper Kurram opted for expensive privately run Parachinar-Peshawar flights.<sup>311</sup> And later in 2011, the Pakistan Army began weekly helicopter service to Peshawar.<sup>312</sup> But the net effect of the blockade was that the cost of basic food staples rose by up to 300% in Upper Kurram, which also faced dangerous shortages of medicine that may have taken the lives of dozens of children and adults.<sup>313</sup>

The Pakistan Army began clearing operations in the Orakzai Agency in 2010, and then pushed its way into the Kurram Agency. A Shi'i Turi tribesman points to the army operations as a major catalyst for change. By February 2011, Sunni and Shi'i tribesmen from the Kurram Agency came to another agreement, similar to their 2008 accord, and they essentially abided by its terms. In July 2011, the Pakistan Army launched an offensive to open the Thall-Parachinar road. And in October 2011, the Sunnis and Shi'a reached another accord, reaffirming previous agreements.

The Kurram Agency remains dangerous, but displaced persons have begun to return, and the blockade has been lifted. The situation has since stabilized. Sunni Bangash and Shi'i Turi tribal elders cooperate with one another, and the political administration is keen to work with them.<sup>314</sup> But most major militant actors—including Fazal Saeed Haqqani and the Mahdi militia—still operate in the region.<sup>315</sup>

By the end of 2011, after multiple failed ceasefires, an estimated 1,500-3,000 people had been killed in the Kurram Agency war that, at its root, was about

local Sunni acquiescence to the Taliban and Shi'i Turis resistance to Talibanization, according to an Islamabad-based expert on FATA.<sup>316</sup>

The expert states that the local Sunni population "was sucked into the conflict" and had a "naïve" understanding of the TTP, abetting the insurgent group's rise.<sup>317</sup> Indeed, Kurram Agency Sunnis would later come to regret their collaboration with the Taliban—a Faustian bargain from which they, in addition to the Shi'i Turis, would suffer. In addition to seeking an upper hand over the Shi'i Turis, ideology also likely motivated some Sunni tribesmen who joined hands with the Taliban.

Sunni-Shi'i conflict in the Kurram Agency in 2007 was transformed by regional conflict just as it was in 1996. In that previous bout of violence, the scale and intensity of the fighting was magnified by an influx of heavy weaponry—an externality of the Afghan war. In 2007, the conflict intersected with an expanding insurgency that was adept at using mass casualty attacks and sought to take over terrain and subjugate the local populace, especially religious minorities.

### **From Kurram to Khost: A Strategic Logic behind the Conflict?**

The 2007-2011 war in the Kurram Agency was not simply a binary conflict involving Shi'i Turis on one side and the Sunni Bangash allied with the TTP on the other. There were other actors involved, including the Frontier Corps, the FATA administration, the Pakistan Army, Afghan officials and power brokers on the border, the Kabul government, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), and elements connected to Iran.

### **Pakistan Army and Haqqani Network Pulling the Strings?**

There are conflicting narratives regarding the Pakistan Army's role in the conflict in the Kurram Agency. In Kurram, much like elsewhere in Pakistan, there is the evergreen question of whether the Pakistan Army was unable or unwilling to stop the spread of insurgent groups. The central allegation against the military is that it sought to transform the Kurram Agency into an alternative entry point for North Waziristan-based militants into Afghanistan, and willingly allowed various Taliban militant groups to gain a foothold in the region, only intervening when the Shi'i Turis were willing to concede a Taliban presence.

### An Incapable Army?

Pakistani security forces did intervene in the initial April 2007 clashes between Sunnis and Shi'a in the Kurram Agency. Using a mix of Frontier Corps personnel on the ground and gunship helicopters, the Pakistani government sought to induce an end to the fighting. But both Sunni and Shi'i tribesmen attacked Pakistani security personnel. Dozens of Frontier Corps officers were killed in these attacks. In contrast to other parts of FATA, what they faced was sectarian strife between native populaces.

The local Frontier Corps paramilitary force, the Kurram militia, which mainly consists of outsiders from Waziristan, failed to stop the TTP's spread. The Kurram militia either lacked the capacity to stop the TTP or willingly let the insurgent group attack the Shi'i Turis. Abbas, the Shi'i Turi from Parachinar, alleged that the militia had sympathy for the Taliban and the political agent had difficulty controlling them. But a senior FATA official told a U.S. diplomat in Peshawar in 2008 that the Kurram militia was outgunned by the TTP and was afraid to confront it, which the locals misinterpreted as the militia's support for the Taliban.<sup>318</sup>

Indeed, the Pakistan Army's approach toward counterinsurgency was a complete failure when the latest bout of violence in the Kurram Agency flared in 2007. The Frontier Corps were poorly equipped and ill-trained to wage combat against hardened insurgents. Beginning in 2008, under the helm of Tariq Khan, the Frontier Corps underwent a major transformation. In the same year, the Pakistan Army began a series of counterinsurgency operations in the Bajaur and Mohmand tribal areas, testing its own variant of counterinsurgency with markedly better success. In 2009, the Pakistan Army conducted major counterinsurgency operations in Swat and South Waziristan and then worked its way into the Khyber, Kurram, and Orakzai Agencies.

### Or an Unwilling Army...Aiding the Haqqanis?

A common perspective, articulated in particular by critics of the Pakistani military-intelligence establishment, accuses Rawalpindi of seeking to use the Kurram Agency as an alternative entry point for North Waziristan-based militants into Afghanistan. Parachinar, and Upper Kurram as a whole, juts out into Afghan

territory—and, as a result, the area has been referred to as the “Parrot’s Beak.” Shi’a-dominated Upper Kurram provides access to both the greater Paktia area, the prime area of operation for the Haqqani network, and Kabul, where the Haqqani network has conducted complex, high profile attacks.

Waziri militants appear to have established a presence in the Kurram Agency as early as 2005, which grew after the September 2006 North Waziristan Peace Accord. By 2010, the Obama administration escalated pressure on the Haqqani network, with a dramatic rise in drone attacks in North Waziristan as well as special operations in adjoining parts of Afghanistan. Two years earlier, a local Kurram Agency activist claimed that Taliban militants sought to capture an area of Upper Kurram where the “GPRS system of U.S. drones does not work properly.”<sup>319</sup> At the same time, the United States continued to press Pakistan to conduct military operations in North Waziristan.

As a result, some have alleged that the Pakistani military-intelligence establishment had even more ambitious plans of wholly transferring the Haqqani network and other groups into the area, with Kurram replacing North Waziristan as the group’s safe haven. Rawalpindi, they claim, allowed the conflict to persist until the Shi’i Turis were worn down through attrition and willing to make concessions allowing the Haqqani network access to roads that lead through Upper Kurram into Afghanistan. Multiple news reports, generally citing unnamed Kurram Agency tribesmen, also portray the Haqqani network as strategically interjecting into the conflict at opportune moments to secure such concessions from the Shi’i Turis.<sup>320</sup> But there is contradictory reporting on the issue.

One narrative claims that two sons of Jalaluddin Haqqani appeared at Kurram Agency peace talks in Peshawar and Islamabad in September and October 2010 and offered to serve as guarantors of peace deals between the Shi’i Turis and Sunni tribes.<sup>321</sup> Both the BBC and DAWN describe the talks as inconclusive, with Shi’i leaders either apprehensive about the Haqqani network’s motivations or doubtful about their own ability to guarantee safe passage for Taliban militants.

Another report states that the Shi’a were not simply skeptical about the Haqqanis, but in fact rebuffed their offer.<sup>322</sup> It also claims that the Islamabad meeting took place in December 2010, not October.<sup>323</sup>

A third narrative claims that Shi’i Turi tribal leaders reached out to the Haqqani network, seeking its assistance in stopping attacks by the TTP, particularly

militants from the neighboring Orakzai Agency.<sup>324</sup> It cites unnamed residents of Parachinar, a Pakistani official in Peshawar, and an unnamed former pro-Taliban parliamentarian from Kohat (likely Javed Paracha).<sup>325</sup> Oddly, it states that the Shi'i Turis wanted protection from the Taliban from NATO's cross-border raids.<sup>326</sup>

A fourth narrative, which emerged after the conclusion of the February 2011 peace deal, states that the Haqqanis did not demand that the Shi'i Turis give them a safe haven in Upper Kurram and that the Shi'i Turis were unwilling to provide them with one.<sup>327</sup> But it suggests that the Haqqanis realized that they had met a dead end in trying to exact concessions from the Shi'i Turis. A report in *DAWN* states that the "militants"—it is unclear whether the report is referring to the Haqqanis, the TTP, or both—failed to defeat the Turis in clashes at Shalozan Tangi near the Afghan border in September. It described this as a "turning point" in which the militants failed to realize an opportunity to push the Shi'i Turis into a "bargaining position."<sup>328</sup> Strangely, the article claims that the Haqqanis sought to restore peace in Kurram as a result of rapprochement with Kabul.<sup>329</sup> It also states that the Haqqanis sought involvement in the ceasefire talks as early as 2009.<sup>330</sup>

Indeed, a Shi'i Turi tribesman told the author that the Haqqani network offered to protect every Parachinari "from Karachi all the way to Parachinar," but the Shi'i Turis rejected the deal. He also maintained that the Haqqani network does not have a supply or transit route into Afghanistan from Upper Kurram today.

A fifth narrative rejects the idea of Haqqani involvement in the peace talks. A report from the Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN) describes such reports as "part of a narrative that wants to paint a favorable picture of...[the Haqqani] network."<sup>331</sup> The AAN report cites an unnamed tribal elder who said that the Haqqani role is an urban legend of sorts:

An elder from Parachinar interviewed by AAN dismissed the whole engagement of the Haqqanis in the jirgas as a tale only, saying that it did not happen in such an overt or relevant way, if it happened at all.<sup>332</sup>

Similarly, an official of the Awami National Party and an outspoken critic of the ISI's support for militant Islamists told the author that "there was so much chaos that it was unclear whether the Haqqani network was directly involved in all this."<sup>333</sup>

It does appear that the Haqqani network intervened in the conflict at opportune moments to secure concessions from the Shi'i Turis related to Afghanistan, but it lacked the leverage to obtain anything meaningful from them. There is no substantial evidence that the Haqqani network played an overarching role from the start of the conflict. Much of the reporting on the Kurram Agency war mistakenly imposes a level of coherence onto the conflict that did not exist in reality. And the media reports overestimate, if not exaggerate, the influence of the Haqqanis in North Waziristan and the surrounding region, ignoring ways in which the Haqqanis are dependent on neighboring militant groups such as the Mehsud Taliban. The AAN report dismisses claims that Haqqanis could "single-handedly solve a conflict which had lasted for years and which featured at least seven major militant groups."<sup>334</sup>

The Kurram Agency, despite being the site of a few drone attacks and cross-border raids, never emerged as a significant infiltration route for Afghan militants. That, however, does not mean that the Haqqani network and Rawalpindi never sought to convert it into one at some point during the four-year Kurram Agency war.

U.S. drone attacks and incursions into the Kurram Agency all appear to have taken place during periods of relative calm, except for September 2010. This either suggests that the Shi'i Turis did indeed allow Sunni militants access to Afghanistan or that coalition forces stepped up pressure in September 2010, believing that the Haqqani presence was or could be growing.<sup>335</sup>

Indeed, some observers have claimed that the October 2010 closure of the Kurram Agency's main border with Afghanistan by the Pakistan Army was part of a bid to force the Shi'i Turis to concede a Haqqani network presence:<sup>336</sup>

But even if the military was pressuring the Shi'i Turis, the motivation may have not necessarily been to relocate militants. In previous peace talks, the Shi'i Turis were not keen to guarantee the security of Sunni civilians, which was a main stumbling block. Indeed, an ISAF official reportedly threatened to cut off the Shi'i Turis' food supply in 2009 in order to compel them to make peace with the Sunni Mangals.<sup>337</sup> ISAF, which was brokering talks between the Sunni Mangals and the Shi'i Turis, appears to have also tried to leverage the dependence of the Shi'i Turis on Afghanistan as a source for food and other materials to induce them to make compromises for peace.

Meanwhile, from 2007 to 2009, the Pakistan Army had a feckless approach toward counterinsurgency. The army began to approach it more methodically, beginning in Bajaur and Mohmand, and later with major operations in Swat and South Waziristan. It was only then that it went after the TTP in the Kurram Agency. Additionally, the Pakistan Army had been overwhelmed in these initial years, struggling to develop and adopt a counterinsurgency strategy, beginning its entries into these battlegrounds with limited operations in Bajaur and Swat.

Still, a resident of the Kurram Agency was skeptical of the idea that the military did not have the resources to combat the TTP. He said, "We were left to fend for ourselves."<sup>338</sup> The Shi'i Turi tribesman said that his grandfather tried to convince the army to airlift supplies into Parachinar, which was cut off from the rest of Pakistan.<sup>339</sup> But his grandfather's request was not met, which gives some validity to the tribesman's claim that the army sought to let the Turis get worn down. Indeed, the FATA Secretariat asked the army to resupply pockets of minorities located in Turi and Bangash-dominated areas, but it "was turned down because of the prospect of anti-aircraft fire."<sup>340</sup> Sunni tribesmen, at the same time, have their own grievances. Some contend that the Pakistan Army never conducted military operations in Upper Kurram.

In September 2011, Shi'i leaders accused the government of complicity with the militants.<sup>341</sup> Mistrust between the Shi'i Turi and the Pakistan Army remains. A Shi'i Turi tribesman said that many locals are skeptical as to whether the Pakistan Army truly cleared the area of militants. However, he did concede that the ground reality is far better now than it was in 2007.<sup>342</sup> The Pakistan Army, he said, operates checkpoints every ten kilometers along the route from Peshawar to Parachinar; though there are some inconveniences—for example, entry into Parachinar is barred after 6 PM—residents now feel safe after military operations and the Murree Accord. Parachinar, he said, is now secured by Shi'i Turi tribesmen as well as the Kurram militia. The Shi'i Turi tribesman added that Shi'i elders would like a new militia just for Parachinar that is 75% Shi'i—a figure that is similar to the area's demographics. The border with Afghanistan, he said, is now controlled by the Kurram militia, levies, and the Pakistan Army. Progress is slow, but taking place. The army is reportedly fair in monitoring check posts, but is perceived by some as bullying.

Today, the Pakistan Army seals the border with Afghanistan to secure Parachinar for the Ashura commemorations. It holds meetings with members of different

tribes and sects. Paramilitary forces are stationed along the major road and strategic points, providing secure access to roads.

### **Other Third Party Forces**

The Shi'i Turis were not only able to push into Lower Kurram in the later summer and early fall of 2008, but over the course of four years they were able to withstand the onslaught of Sunni Bangash and Mangal tribesmen, TTP units from across the region, and other militant groups. While the Shi'i Turis were aided by a strong sense of group solidarity and a difficult terrain that guarded against outsiders, they also likely received some support from foreign governments. A 2008 U.S. diplomatic cable reported: "Rumors [in Pakistan] consistently attribute the Shi'a momentum to Afghan and Iranian support."<sup>343</sup> There is strong indication that the Shi'i Turis, denied access to supply routes in Pakistan, received material support from elements in the Afghan government, with whom they open border crossings. It is unclear that there was ever any official sanction from Kabul, and evidence of Iranian support is weak at best.

### **Afghan Support**

In August 2008, as the Shi'i Turi offensive gained new ground, pushing into Lower Kurram, Sunni Bangash tribesmen captured two men wearing Afghan National Army (ANA) uniforms. Both men said they were from Khost in neighboring Afghanistan. They were allegedly captured "along with other companions with [a] huge quantity of arms, allegedly sent by the Afghan government."<sup>344</sup> A U.S. diplomatic cable, citing unnamed contacts, states that the local political agent in FATA may have even obscured the arrest of Afghan soldiers fighting in Kurram to "prevent a blame game from ramping up."<sup>345</sup>

An outlandish report in the otherwise reliable *DAWN* states that the captured ANA personnel admitted that Kabul sent 6,000 troops to fight on behalf of the Turi tribe in the Kurram Agency.<sup>346</sup> The August 2008 *DAWN* report does claim that Shi'i Turi elders "had met the Afghan president [Hamid Karzai] a few months ago and requested him to help them with manpower and arms and ammunition in their fight against Bangash tribesmen."<sup>347</sup>

Two unnamed Pakistani Shi'a, presumably Turis, admitted to a U.S. diplomat in Peshawar that Afghans were arming his community.<sup>348</sup> An Afghan National Army

officer proposed a quid pro quo: in exchange for arms, the Shi'i Turis would "carry out attacks on targets selected by the Afghan government."<sup>349</sup>

A Shi'i Turi tribesman told the author that it was possible that logistical support was provided by elements of the former Northern Alliance. After all, the Turi were a bulwark against the Haqqani network's entry into Khost and Kabul via Parachinar. Indeed, a 2009 U.S. State Department cable states: "[I]n the estimation of the Paktya government and coalition forces in the area, the Turi are the main reason that Paktya's Pakistan border is relatively secure."<sup>350</sup>

A FATA bureaucrat, according to a September 2008 U.S. diplomatic cable, alleged that "some Afghan intelligence officers formerly of the Northern Alliance have brought in weapons, financing, and advice to support the Shi'a against the taliban [sic]."<sup>351</sup> And an unnamed source told the U.S. consulate in Peshawar shortly after the Shi'i Turi offensive that "Hazaras, Tajiks, and Uzbeks have been lending support for two months now."<sup>352</sup> But there was significant doubt as to "whether the Afghan support has been officially sanctioned," though "the Afghan government has tried to send convoys of supplies to Shi'a dominated Parachinar."<sup>353</sup>

Afghan support for the Shi'i Turis may have been limited to the leadership in the Paktia province. The author was unable to find other sources confirming a meeting between President Karzai and Shi'i Turis in the summer of 2008, ahead of the Turi offensive. In 2007, Shi'i Turis, according to one report, did request that the Paktia governor intervene in their dispute with a segment of the Sunni Bangash community located within Shi'i territory in Upper Kurram.<sup>354</sup> The deputy governor of Paktia, despite being a Sunni Mangal, appears to have had some sympathy for the Shi'i Turis.<sup>355</sup> Kabul, or at least one ministry in Kabul, appeared to be partisan toward the Sunni Bangash in Bushera, ordering the closure of the border in 2009 to induce the Shi'i Turis to allow Sunnis access to Khost, where they obtain medicine and other essentials.<sup>356</sup> But the deputy governor in Paktia said that Kabul was ignorant of the local dynamics along the border and did not implement the order.<sup>357</sup> In June 2009, local Paktia officials brokered a "framework agreement" between the Shi'i Turi and Sunni Bangash at an ISAF base.<sup>358</sup>

U.S. diplomatic cables from Kabul are silent about alleged Afghan support for the Shi'i Turis. It remains unclear whether Kabul consented to or was aware of the support of local Afghan officials for the Shi'i Turis. And the actual impact of

the Afghan support for the Shi'i Turis in 2008 is uncertain. Afghan assistance may have been restrained, helping save the Shi'i Turis from the onslaught of pro-Taliban Sunnis. A Shi'i Turi tribesman was extremely grateful toward Afghanistan's assistance, telling the author:

"Our relationship with Afghanistan has changed. Help from Afghanistan post-2006 created goodwill."<sup>359</sup>

But it is also possible that the Afghan aid may have actually helped the conflict metastasize by enabling the Shi'i Turis to press into Lower Kurram, attacking Sunni areas, displacing many Sunni families, and adding more fuel to an already combustible mix of sect and tribe.

### ***Iranian Support?***

Unnamed "senior Pakistani military officials" also alleged in conversations with U.S. officials in 2008 that Iran had "stepped up its financial and advisory support to the Shi'a of Kurram."<sup>360</sup> Pakistani security officials "speculate[d] that this support may be channeled through the Hazaras of Afghanistan, who also receive Iranian support."<sup>361</sup> Habibullah Khan, a senior FATA official, told a U.S. diplomat in Peshawar that Qom-based Shi'i seminaries operating charities in the Kurram Agency are vehicles for Iranian influence, allowing, for example, assistance to the Mahdi militia.<sup>362</sup>

However, a Shi'i Turi tribesman told the author that claims of Iranian influence in Parachinar are overstated.<sup>363</sup> He said that while the local pesh imam is chosen by a shura in Iran, Tehran provided no financial or military support to Shi'i Turis during the course of the Kurram Agency war, adding that Parachinaris, unlike Hazara Shi'a, "do not come and go from Iran" regularly.<sup>364</sup> The two major Shi'i Turi militant groups, Hezbollah and the Mahdi militia, were just names made up by young men.<sup>365</sup>

However, Sunni Mangal tribesmen alleged to U.S. officials that:

...Iran has long been supporting their Shi'i neighbors. Specifically, one Abed Hussein, who they said has traveled from Islamabad to Tehran via Karachi, is receiving Iranian funding and weapons for his fighters. His group, they suggested, maintains training camps in Zeran, Arkhi, and Shingak, this last only 5 kilometers from Parachinar. They also alleged that the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence agency (ISI) has encouraged cooperation between these Shi'a and the Taliban, purportedly using the two groups' shared hatred of

the U.S. to bring them together.<sup>366</sup>

An unnamed source told the U.S. consulate that the Iranian consulate in Peshawar provides scholarships to Shi'i students from the Kurram Agency, and while some scholarship recipients attend seminaries, others have gone to Lebanon and Iraq "to be trained as fighters."<sup>367</sup> Pro-Iran and Tehran-backed news sites frequently focus on Parachinar, which they have termed "a second Gaza."<sup>368</sup> But despite indications of deep concern from Iran, available evidence of an Iranian role in the Kurram Agency is weak.

### ***U.S. Support?***

Both Sunni Mangal and Shi'i Turi tribesmen appealed to the Afghan government, ISAF, and Washington for assistance. In December 2008, Sunni Mangal tribesmen from the Kurram Agency, accompanied by Mangal tribal leaders and government officials from Afghanistan, met with U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan William Wood in Kabul, requesting U.S. support against the Shi'i Turis, who they described as Iran-backed.<sup>369</sup>

U.S. officials did intervene in the conflict, though it is unclear to what extent. In June 2009, an ISAF base in Afghanistan's Paktia province hosted peace talks between Pakistani Sunni Bangash and Shi'i Turis, in which Afghan officials brokered a preliminary peace agreement between the two groups.<sup>370</sup> Local Afghan officials and ISAF personnel attributed the stability along the border with the Kurram Agency to the Shi'i Turis, viewing them as a bulwark against the Taliban.<sup>371</sup> But in at least one instance, a U.S. official appears to have felt the need to resort to strong-arm tactics to induce the Shi'i Turis to compromise. In an earlier round of talks, an ISAF official allegedly threatened to blockade Shi'i Turis, saying: "If you don't provide safe access to the residents of Bushara and other hamlets and allow food supply then your movement and food supply via Afghanistan can be suspended."<sup>372</sup>

A Shi'i Turi tribesman told the author that there were rumors that U.S. forces supported the Turis logistically, providing mortar shells and portable bunkers. The author was unable to substantiate these claims. However, U.S. interest in the Kurram Agency did grow the next year as rumors of the Haqqani network's potential shift to the area escalated. In October 2010, a month after a series of U.S. cross-border incursions into the Kurram Agency, unnamed American officials claimed that Sirajuddin Haqqani may have been "sheltered" in the

Kurram Agency, near the border with Afghanistan.<sup>373</sup> The allegation has not been reported elsewhere and is of dubious veracity; Haqqani is unlikely to have moved to a predominantly Shi'i area in close proximity to the Afghan border.

### **Out from Kurram: Orakzai, Kohat, and Hangu**

The four-year sectarian conflict in the Kurram Agency spread out into other regions of Pakistan as residents migrated to presumably safer areas. There were targeted killings of Shi'i Turis in Islamabad, Karachi, and Peshawar. Sunni Bangash tribesmen, claims a Shi'i Turi, provided "hit lists and intelligence" for the TTP in these Pakistani cities to facilitate the killing of Shi'i Turis there.<sup>374</sup> Meanwhile, Shi'i Turis in Karachi and Peshawar<sup>375</sup> have engaged in targeted killings of Sunni Deobandis and also participated in the November 2013 sectarian riots in Rawalpindi.

The sectarian war in Kurram certainly magnified the sectarian conflict in the neighboring areas, especially as Sunni and Shi'i internally displaced persons (IDPs) moved to Hangu and Kohat from both the Kurram and Orakzai Agencies. For example, in April 2010, militants with Lashkar-e-Jhangvi al-Alami (an LeJ splinter group based in FATA) attacked Shi'i IDPs from the Orakzai Agency who were residing in Kohat.<sup>376</sup> And Lashkar-e-Jhangvi al-Alami militants continued attacks in Kohat and Hangu over the next two Muharrams in 2010 and 2011.<sup>377</sup>

But it would be a mistake to view the Kurram war as the sole causal factor behind the sectarian conflict in the surrounding region. All of these areas have had sizable Shi'i populations and a history of sectarian tensions going back decades. Ultimately, it was the strengthening and spread of Pakistani Taliban groups in the mid-2000s that fomented a surge in sectarian violence in the Pashtun belt from Dera Ismail Khan up to the Kurram Agency. Anti-Shi'a violence is inherent to Talibanization, which is built on a sense of Sunni Deobandi supremacism and the subjugation of religious minorities.<sup>378</sup>

For example, in the Orakzai Agency, Mehsud and other TTP commanders followed a similar pattern of Talibanization as elsewhere: eliminating traditional leaders, establishing a parallel system of "justice," extorting the local populace, and targeting Shi'i tribes or sub-tribes. Militant actors in Orakzai and elsewhere naturally progressed from anti-Shi'a militancy to an all-consuming anti-state insurgency. Aslam Farooqi, once an SSP militant in the Orakzai Agency who took

part in sectarian clashes pre-September 11, co-founded the TTP and had for some time served as its amir in Orakzai.<sup>379</sup>

Similarly, the Kohat district experienced a major suicide attack on Ashura processioners in February 2006, before the start of the Kurram war.<sup>380</sup> The area has had a significant presence of anti-Shi'a militants from both the SSP/ASWJ as well as Jaish-e-Muhammad, which has been expressly anti-Shi'a even when it was focused on Kashmir.<sup>381</sup> Sunni Deobandi sectarian militants are among Kohat's powerbrokers. Most notable among them is Javed Paracha, a former PML-N parliamentarian with links to the SSP/ASWJ. Paracha allegedly enabled attacks on Shi'i Bangash by militants from the Orakzai Agency in 1998<sup>382</sup> and also admits to sheltering al-Qa'ida operatives after September 11.<sup>383</sup> He returned to the national limelight last year when he claimed to have spoken with Hakimullah Mehsud on behalf of the government.<sup>384</sup> Paracha was also invited by the Pakistan Army to take part in a Kurram peace jirga,<sup>385</sup> and continues to represent the area's Sunnis.<sup>386</sup> Indeed, Paracha represents how radical Deobandism has been able to have its cake and eat it too: he harbors al-Qa'ida militants, espouses anti-Shi'a views, claims to be an intermediary with the TTP, and is a member of a mainstream, center-right political party.

While the TTP no longer has the freedom of movement in the region that it had during the course of its spread throughout the Pashtun belt and as a result of the Kurram Agency war, mass casualty attacks continued in Hangu and in neighboring areas into 2013.<sup>387</sup>

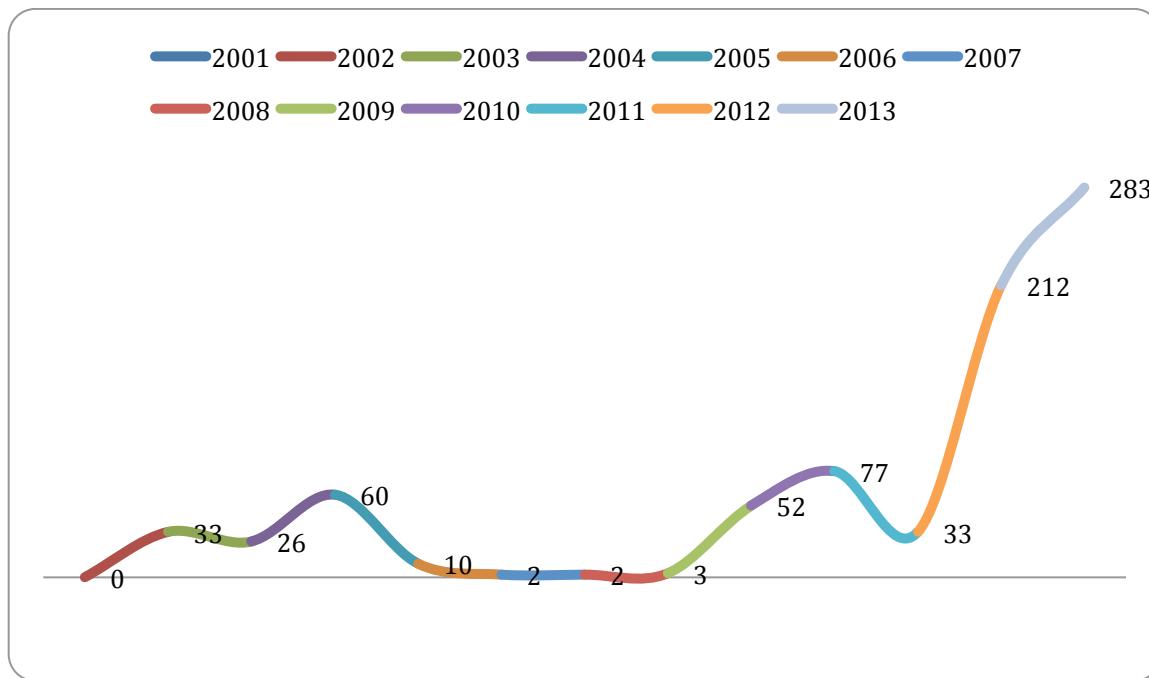
## Karachi: LeJ, the TTP, and Resurgent Shi'i Militant Groups Battle

Karachi is now the most active and complicated battlefield in Pakistan's sectarian war, eclipsing all other hotbeds, including Baluchistan and Punjab. While there have been occasional Sunni Deobandi and Shi'i sectarian clashes and targeted killings elsewhere in Sindh, a vast majority of such attacks take place in Karachi.

Sectarian violence is not new to Karachi. During the 1990s, scores of Shi'i doctors and other professionals were killed by the SSP and LeJ. A veteran Pakistani police official said that this tactic is an integral part of a campaign by Sunni Deobandi extremists to eliminate notables in the Shi'i community and instill fear among common Shi'a.<sup>388</sup> An LeJ statement signed by Asif Chotu, who

heads an LeJ cell based in Karachi, pledges to kill every professional "who misuses his social position to tarnish the beliefs of Muslims."<sup>389</sup>

**Chart 3 - Deaths in Suspected or Confirmed Sunni Deobandi-Shi'i Sectarian Violence in Karachi (2001-13)**



**Source:** Author's working database comprised of suspected or confirmed incidents of Sunni Deobandi-Shi'i sectarian violence compiled from reports from the *Daily Times*, *DAWN*, the *Express Tribune*, and *The News*.

The practice of sectarian targeted killings has continued post-September 11, dramatically increasing in 2012 and 2013. While Karachi has witnessed a surge in mass casualty terror attacks targeting Shi'a since December 2009, these events take place against the backdrop of regular targeted killings of a wide array of Shi'a civilians as well as a growing number of Sunni Deobandis—both SSP/ASWJ activists and officials as well as Deobandi clerics and madrasa students unaffiliated with the SSP/ASWJ. The everyday sectarian targeted killing campaign has operated in a style largely consistent with the nature of violence overall in Karachi, blending into a general wave of targeted killings that take the lives of often up to a dozen people daily on the basis of ethnicity, gang affiliation, and sect.

### **LeJ Fuses with the TTP in Karachi, Fomenting a Metastasizing Tit-for-Tat**

In the wake of the events of September 11, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi accelerated its fusion with al-Qa'ida. And it is in Karachi where the early manifestations of this new relationship took place. LeJ operatives, for example, played key roles in the Daniel Pearl kidnapping and the 2002 attack on the U.S. consulate in Karachi. Indeed, the Daniel Pearl case involved three individuals—Matiur Rehman, Attaur Rehman (known as Naeem Bukhari),<sup>390</sup> and Qari Abdul Hayee—who would go on to lead the LeJ in Karachi and FATA.<sup>391</sup> Asif Ramzi and other LeJ commanders were also suspected of taking part in the planning of the 2002 attack on the U.S. consulate in Karachi.<sup>392</sup>

From 2005-2008, Sunni Deobandi-Shi'i sectarian violence ebbed in the city. This drop in violence was consistent with national trends, but it was also the result of the arrest of LeJ operatives and a conscious decision by the emerging TTP to utilize Karachi mainly for fundraising and rest.<sup>393</sup> But a local LeJ cell led by Qari Abid Iqbal Mehsud remained active, and its composition would serve as a harbinger of the new FATA-based terror wave set to come.

Qari Abid, a cousin of Abdullah Mehsud, the Guantanamo detainee who returned to Pakistan in 2005 to contribute to the emergence of the Pakistani Taliban, orchestrated a series of attacks, including the 2006 suicide attack on Allama Hassan Turabi, the Sindh chief of the Tehreek-e-Jafaria Pakistan in Karachi. Using a taxi driver named Gul Zarin Mehsud, the Abid Mehsud Group would bring in arms and ammunition from Wana, South Waziristan into Karachi.<sup>394</sup> The group has also been involved in extortion and targeted killings. By 2008, Abid Mehsud, according to one report, joined Baitullah Mehsud's TTP.<sup>395</sup> Other reports suggest that Qari Abid remained autonomous and some members of his group later joined Hakimullah Mehsud's faction of the TTP.<sup>396</sup> Nonetheless, the fusion of LeJ elements in Karachi with the TTP gave the latter a greater ability to strike targets in Pakistan's largest city.

In 2009, the Pakistani military conducted large-scale counterinsurgency operations in Swat and South Waziristan, resulting in a massive flow of displaced persons, including some militants, from these areas into Karachi. With the loss of large swaths of territory in the Pashtun belt, the TTP opted for a more aggressive posture in Karachi, engaging in both anti-state as well as anti-Shi'a attacks. Today, much like in the Kurram Agency war, the line between the LeJ

and TTP is blurred, particularly as a result of the Pashtunization of the LeJ and Sunni Deobandi violence in Karachi.

According to Chaudhry Aslam, who had been a senior counterterrorism official in the Karachi police department shortly before his assassination in January 2014, LeJ cells in Karachi are small task-based cells consisting of five to six individuals.<sup>397</sup> He identified two major LeJ groups in Karachi. The first group is led by Naeem Bukhari, with Hafiz Qasim Rasheed having served as its operational chief until his arrest.<sup>398</sup> Aslam described the group as essentially being an appendage of TTP.<sup>399</sup> Bukhari had been in detention from 2002 until his release in 2009.<sup>400</sup>

The other major LeJ group in Karachi is led by Asif Chotu,<sup>401</sup> who started out as a low-level militant with the SSP in 1992 and rose up in the ranks of the LeJ.<sup>402</sup> Gul Hasan, an ethnic Baluch and a Lyari native, served as its operational chief until he was killed in a November 2013 police encounter.<sup>403</sup> He was allegedly involved in attacks on Sindh High Court Justice Maqbool Baqir, as well as suicide attacks on the Imambargah Ali Raza and the Haidri mosque.<sup>404</sup>

### ***As 2009 Ends, Karachi's New War Begins***

From late 2009 into 2010, small cells, some more expressly linked to the TTP than others, began a series of mass casualty attacks targeting Shi'i processions in Karachi. The new wave of anti-Shi'a terror attacks effectively began on December 28, 2009, when a suicide bomber detonated his explosive vest at a Shi'i procession commemorating the holy day of Ashura. Forty-three people were killed in the blast. Terrorists struck Karachi's Shi'a on the next Shi'i holy day on February 5, 2010 in dual attacks that took the lives of 25 people. First, a bomb blew up near a bus carrying Shi'i pilgrims; then, nearly an hour later, another bomb exploded near a Shi'a-operated hospital where the initial blast victims were being taken.

In mid-2010, the LeJ also renewed its targeted killing campaign against Shi'a. These killings, according to Karachi police statements, appear to have been conducted by two separate cells. One cell included an LeJ gunman who had been released from prison in 2009.<sup>405</sup> Another network, allegedly part of the Asif Ramzi group, killed additional Shi'a, including a disability advocate.<sup>406</sup> Karachi police managed to arrest key operatives in these cells, which may have

preempted severe carnage during Muharram, which went by without a mass casualty attack.

However, sectarian killings in Karachi accelerated once again from late 2011 into early 2012. In the first month of 2012, ten Shi'a were killed and two SSP/ASWJ members were murdered in apparent sectarian attacks. The next month witnessed a wave of reprisal attacks, likely by Shi'i militants, whose victims included a broad segment of Sunni Deobandis. Six SSP/ASWJ activists were killed along with four others with no apparent affiliation with Sunni sectarian groups. One of the victims was a member of the Tablighi Jamaat, a Sunni Deobandi missionary group. Later, in April and May, three Sunni Deobandis—a madrasa student, instructor, and prayer leader—were killed in separate incidents.

### **Attacks on Family Members**

Both Sunni and Shi'i militant groups would also step up attacks targeting family members of their prime targets. Three brothers from the Sunni Deobandi Ilyas family were killed, likely by Shi'i militants, in separate attacks over the course of 11 months. On February 17, 2012, unidentified motorcycle-borne gunmen approached Akbar Ilyas and his friend Rizwan Shami.<sup>407</sup> After confirming his identity, Ilyas and his companion were shot dead. Nearly three months later, on May 8, 2012, Akbar's brother, Muhammad Ali, a restaurant owner, was shot dead in an apparent sectarian attack by unidentified motorcycle-borne gunmen.<sup>408</sup> Neither of the two brothers had any formal affiliation with the SSP/ASWJ; however, their brother, Maulana Asghar Ilyas, was a member of the group.

Finally, on January 7, 2013, Asghar Ilyas was killed in a brutal murder after two armed men chased his vehicle.<sup>409</sup> He was accompanied by his wife and two daughters. The killers opened fire on his vehicle as it sped away and hit a pole. Both Asghar Ilyas and his daughter Zainab were killed in the shooting. His wife, Farzana, and other daughter, Dua, were injured. Several weeks earlier, Ilyas had been targeted by gunmen, who mistakenly shot a passerby.<sup>410</sup>

Though Shi'i militants have broadened their targeting of Sunni Deobandis, the Sunni Deobandi campaign of killing Shi'a is far more expansive in its targeting. Its victims include Shi'i activists, businessmen, doctors, imambargah trustees,

journalists, preachers, security officials, and teachers, as well as clerics and officials associated with major Shi'i parties.

The targeting of Shi'i family members by Sunni Deobandi militants has been relentless. On July 7, 2012, Syed Qamar Raza, a Shi'a and an intelligence bureau official, was killed by unidentified motorcycle-borne gunmen.<sup>411</sup> Later, in November, unidentified motorcycle-borne gunmen shot dead his son and two of his friends as they were having a barbecue.<sup>412</sup> On the same day, a Shi'i auto shop owner and his two sons were killed by an armed motorcycle-borne team of four.<sup>413</sup> The use of more than one motorcycle team is an indicator that the gunmen had sought to kill more than just one man. A Shi'i lawyer and his son were killed in a rickshaw on March 24, 2012.<sup>414</sup>

On a number of occasions, Shi'i men have been killed while taking their children to school, a routine activity that involves a predictable departure time and travel route. For example, on January 8, 2013, Imran Abbas was killed while driving his children to school in the morning.<sup>415</sup> Later, on June 19, 2013, Imran Rizvi, a school van driver and a Shi'a, was killed by two unidentified motorcycle-borne gunmen while on his way to pick up children at school.<sup>416</sup>

By 2012, sectarian violence had become the most prominent form of killing in Karachi, eclipsing battles that had dominated the city's landscape in previous years, such as the fight between the Awami National Party (ANP) and the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM). Excluding mass casualty attacks against Shi'i civilians, which will be discussed below, Shi'i militant groups have been able to match Sunni Deobandi militant groups in targeted killings. In a three-day period in November 2013, seven Shi'i civilians were killed in six incidents, while 11 ASWJ activists and officials were killed in seven incidents. Also during this time, a Sunni Deobandi madrasa student was killed and another was injured in two separate shooting incidents.

### ***The Targeting of Smaller Shi'i Subsects***

Sunni militant groups expanded their killing to smaller Shi'i communities, such as the Dawoodi Bohra and the Imami Ismailis (colloquially known as the Aga Khanis). Both communities are small, close-knit, and relatively prosperous. As a result, they are vulnerable to extortion. Additionally, Dawoodi Bohra men and women tend to wear distinct garb that makes them easily distinguishable.

Attacks on the Bohra and Imami Ismailis had been rare until the fall of 2012. On September 18, 2012, twin blasts struck a Dawoodi Bohra community in North Nazimabad, killing two and injuring 22.<sup>417</sup> Karachi police officials blamed the attacks on LeJ operatives who escaped from police custody in 2010.<sup>418</sup> The attack, timed around the arrival of the Dawoodi Bohra's India-based leader, was followed by two targeted killing attacks in February 2013<sup>419</sup> and later in September<sup>420</sup> and October of that year.<sup>421</sup>

Unlike the mainline Ithna Ashari Shia, the Dawoodi Bohra and Imami Ismailis neither have much involvement, if any, in militancy, nor do they have strong connections to Iran. Both the LeJ and TTP could, in fact, target these prosperous communities even more than they presently do, but they likely exercise restraint in order to extort them and receive "protection" money.

### ***Mass Casualty Attacks on Shi'i Enclaves***

From late 2012 into 2013, the LeJ and the TTP began a series of mass casualty attacks on Karachi's Shi'i enclaves. In November 2012, an IED blast struck an imambargah in Abbas Town, killing two people.<sup>422</sup> And on March 3, 2013, a dense apartment complex in the same area was struck by the TTP in a massive IED blast that killed at least 48 people and injured over 140.<sup>423</sup> The bomb blast, which took place while many were at home watching a Pakistan-South Africa cricket match, was designed to level the residential community and kill as many people as possible, including its scores of Sunni residents. While visiting the attack site this year, the author was informed by residents that gunfire preceded the blast, which was part of an attempt to draw more people into the residential complex.

On November 22, 2013, two TTP suicide bombers blew themselves up near the entrance into another Shi'i enclave in Karachi—Ancholi—during the month of Muharram.<sup>424</sup> The TTP claimed that the attack was "revenge" for the sectarian clashes earlier that month in Rawalpindi—a clear indication that though the sectarian war in Pakistan is being fought by often diffuse networks, the country is one large battlefield linked to an increasingly polarized Muslim world.

## Shi'a Move into Enclaves

Karachi has historically been a city welcoming to Shi'a. Some of the city's old elite families as well as many of the Urdu-speaking migrants are Shi'i. The city's two largest parties, the MQM and the PPP, have generally been seen as pro-Shi'a. Both parties, in fact, make use of Shi'i slogans and symbols in their political speech. The practice is so common that some officials from both the MQM and PPP, such as Altaf Hussain, are suspected of being Shi'i, though they are in fact Sunni.

The dramatic rise in sectarian attacks in Karachi is, according to some press accounts and author interviews, forcing some Shi'i Karachiites to move to predominantly Shi'i areas—a trend that is particularly troubling given the city's tradition of religious pluralism. According to an account in the Pakistani English-language daily *The News*, "an increasing number of Shi'i families have been moving to areas like Jaffer-e-Tayyar Society in Malir, Old Rizvia in Golimar, and Ancholi."<sup>425</sup>

The author visited Ancholi. Deep in the area, it is clear that this is a safe space where Shi'a are unafraid to self-identify. Many homes display the *panja*, or the symbolic hand of the Prophet's daughter, Fatima, on their roofs. Shi'i religious bookstores in the area display pictures of Ayatollah Khomeini, Ayatollah Khamenei, and Hezbollah's Hassan Nasrallah. And at one end of the area, wall graffiti reads, "Hezbollah Zindabad" (Long Live Hezbollah).

But as the Shi'i presence becomes denser in Ancholi, its residents become easier targets. Indeed, one entry point into Ancholi was targeted by suicide bombers in November 2013. Close to this entry point, claims a local resident, there is a mosque that had been run by Sunni Barelvvis but was taken over by Sunni Deobandis. The residential property owners on an adjacent block only rent to Sunnis. This is a sign of encroachment by Sunni Deobandis.

Inside Ancholi, there is a sense of anger, fatalism, and resilience. Members of the local Shi'i community have established their own ambulance and rescue service, the Jafaria Disaster Cell (JDC). The organization, according to one of its chief administrators, is funded by both Sunnis and Shi'a. It has conducted extensive training in CPR, including at a nearby church. While the JDC has

served all of Pakistan's religious communities, including Christians attacked at the Joseph Colony in Lahore and Hindu victims of the famine in Tharparkar, its existence stems from the terrible reality that Shi'a in Karachi have to contend with a regular onslaught from the LeJ and TTP. As a result, it provides emergency services after suicide attacks and performs the ritual Islamic bath for up to dozens of dead bodies prior to burial.

The JDC also conducts mock terrorist attack drills to train lay community members how to deal with such emergency situations. A JDC official told the author, "In a blast, let's say, 50 people die, but to save the remaining people, we need to have [rescue] awareness and training."<sup>426</sup> He added:

"It's not just [about] taking a bullet. It's what happens afterwards that's the most difficult part."<sup>427</sup>

Because of his work, the JDC official receives regular threats from individuals calling from Afghan and other international phone numbers. On one occasion a caller told him, "We are not getting sleep because you are still alive."<sup>428</sup> Later, another caller informed the JDC official of his exact movements on a given day and the clothing he was wearing, indicating that he was closely watched.<sup>429</sup> The JDC official told the author that he informed the Citizens Police Liaison Committee, a prominent Karachi crime fighting organization, but officials there said that they do not have the ability to access Afghan phone numbers.<sup>430</sup>

### **Resurgence of Shi'i Militancy in Karachi**

Contrary to the claims of Shi'i activists in Abbas Town and Ancholi, Shi'i militancy in Karachi exists. It flourished in the 1980s and 1990s and never completely disappeared. Shi'i militants have displayed their muscle in Karachi even prior to the emergence of mass casualty attacks targeting Karachi Shi'a in December 2009.

For example, on July 15, 2009, prior to the advent of LeJ-TTP mass casualty attacks against Karachi Shi'a, unidentified militants in Karachi's Malir Town killed Hafiz Ahmad Bakhsh, an SSP/ASWJ official who had been implicated in a murder case in the 1990s. Later that day, one SSP/ASWJ activist was killed and another two were injured after being shot on their way to Bakhsh's funeral. Soon after, an ASWJ activist was kidnapped and murdered on his way back from the same funeral. A little over a year later, there would be another spree of SSP/ASWJ

killings. Over a six-day period in September 2010, five SSP/ASWJ activists were murdered in separate targeted killing incidents.

Shi'i militants have not only relentlessly targeted SSP/ASWJ activists and officials, but as has been indicated above, their family members as well as Sunni Deobandi clerics and seminary students unaffiliated with the SSP/ASWJ. Though the Kurram Agency is home to some hardened Shi'i militias, it is in Karachi where Shi'a have most visibly demonstrated their willingness to push back against the LeJ-TTP onslaught.

Groups like Sipah-e-Muhammad as well as Shi'i members of the MQM conduct violence against the SSP/ASWJ and other Sunni Deobandi targets. A Karachi-based journalist said that there is “ample speculation” that a senior leader of the MQM, a Shi'a, gives directives to the party’s targeted killers to murder specific SSP/ASWJ activists.<sup>431</sup> He claimed that there is indication that the MQM’s gunmen have the autonomy to freelance and act on behalf of Shi'a at the same time.<sup>432</sup>

### ***The Great War Narrative***

Along with a sense of resilience, there is also a deep-seated feeling of fatalism and an impression that the plight of Pakistan’s Shi'a is tied into a broader cosmic, historical, and regional war. The JDC official—a dynamic young man who built an organization designed to save lives—said, “Every Shi'i child is brought up to know he is born to die.”<sup>433</sup> He described the LeJ and TTP as “descendants of Yazid.” The Shi'a, he felt, were exceptionally built to withstand such violence, stating: “With the extent to which we’ve been killed, no other community would survive this.”<sup>434</sup>

While sitting in the courtyard of an imambargah in Ancholi, a Shi'i Karachi University student told the author that the Twelfth Imam will come at the peak of oppression and that he will bring justice.<sup>435</sup> Similarly, a low-level MWM official in Abbas Town said, “The signs of the End Times are apparent [today].”<sup>436</sup> He boldly added:

“Yes, this is a religious war. It’s been this way from the start. From the time Islam began.”<sup>437</sup>

An Ancholi-based activist, as well as the Shi'i student in Ancholi and the low-

level MWM official in Abbas Town, claimed that Shi'i religious scholars were holding young men back from committing more retaliatory violence.<sup>438</sup> Indeed, a Shi'i activist in Ancholi said, "If our *mujtahid* gives us the okay to kill, [then we will kill]."<sup>439</sup> With great frustration, the MWM official, a muscular, bearded man, said, "The intent to retaliate is there, but the resources are not."<sup>440</sup>

Shi'i anger was not just about the violence, but was also directed toward a broader society that they believe is indifferent to daily killings. The JDC official said, "We hear that 12 died in Karachi today, but we don't even read *fatiha* [a chapter of the Qur'an recited to mourn the dead] for them....We've become beasts."<sup>441</sup>

But there is a deep sense among some Shi'a the author spoke with in Abbas Town and Ancholi that their government is working against them. A Shi'i activist in Ancholi claimed that the Pakistani intelligence services review his organization's bank accounts extensively.<sup>442</sup> He even suspected the author of being an intelligence operative, verbally insinuating this and rarely making eye contact during the course of a roughly one-and-a-half hour meeting.<sup>443</sup>

Both the Shi'i activist in Ancholi and the low-level MWM official in Abbas Town pointed to the 1963 massacre in Khairpur as the starting point for state-led persecution of Shi'a in Pakistan.<sup>444</sup> And both deeply felt that the \$1.5 billion provided by the Saudi government to Pakistan was in exchange for Islamabad's support in the war against Iran in Syria and elsewhere. Indeed, such perceptions have led to the birth of some inventive conspiracy theories that give a sense of the distrust many Shi'a have for the PML-N government. The Ancholi-based activist claimed that 3,000 Sunni fighters have gone from Punjab to Syria. And both he and the low-level MWM official, in separate interviews, alleged that the five-hour armed standoff in Islamabad on August 15, 2013 by a lone gunman, known as "the Sikander incident" in Pakistan, was actually a ruse to obscure the arrival of a C-130 containing the bodies of dozens of dead Pakistani Sunni fighters from Syria.<sup>445</sup>

Perhaps most ominous are the statements of Shi'i activists and others regarding the regional sectarian conflict. A Shi'i Karachi University student in Ancholi compared the plight of Pakistan's Shi'a to Shi'a elsewhere, stating: "Our situation is not as bad as [it is for the Shi'a] in Iraq and Bahrain."<sup>446</sup> The conflict in Syria seems to be having a profound impact on the sectarian narrative in Karachi and beyond. According to a Shi'i activist in Ancholi, when the shrine of Bibi

Zainab was attacked in Damascus, "It was like the End Times. *Majlises* [prayer gatherings] were held everywhere."<sup>447</sup> When asked whether Pakistani Shi'a were heading to fight in Syria to defend the shrine of Zainab, a low-level MWM official nodded.<sup>448</sup> The author was unable to gain confirmation of these claims from other sources.

### ***Shi'i Militant Support Networks***

Karachi police officials point to an Iranian hand behind the city's militant Shi'i networks. Raja Umar Khattab, a senior official with Karachi's Crime Investigation Department (CID), alleged in early 2014 that SMP militants, transiting through Dubai, have been traveling to Iran, where they receive specialized training.<sup>449</sup> Some of the SMP militants, he said, are originally natives of Parachinar in the Kurram Agency.<sup>450</sup> Indeed, as evidenced by the November 2013 Rawalpindi riot, Baltistani and Parachinari Shi'a are often the lead in firebrand or militant activity elsewhere in Pakistan. Shi'i militant networks are small and diffuse. But Karachi's CID alleged that up to 200 SMP militants received training from Iran.<sup>451</sup>

While some may dismiss these claims of Karachi police as an attempt to blame the city's sectarian violence on a foreign hand, there are indications of collusion between local Shi'i militants and Iran. On May 16, 2011, Hassan al-Qahtani, a Saudi intelligence official, was assassinated near the Saudi consulate in Karachi.<sup>452</sup> In November 2011, DAWN reported that Karachi police arrested three suspects who confessed to the killing and self-identified as members of a group called the Mehdi Force.<sup>453</sup> Indeed, unnamed Saudi officials, interviewed by the *Washington Post*'s David Ignatius, said that Iran orchestrated the murder, adding:

"Pakistani intelligence had identified the killer as a member of a Shi'i dissident group known as Sapih Mohammed [sic], which had connections with the Quds Force."<sup>454</sup>

Some SMP militants, Karachi police allege, also receive support from administrators at Karachi's major universities, where they are given cover positions.<sup>455</sup> This support from university administrators is consistent with Karachi's governing logic, which centers on competing nexuses of identity-based political actors, mafia syndicates, and armed gangs.<sup>456</sup> Shi'i militants are allowed to operate because of the prevalence of armed networks in the city, sympathy from the MQM, and the inflows of migrant populations from sectarian hotbeds.

As with perhaps all social and economic organizations in Karachi, the journalist community is also divided on ethnic, political, and sectarian lines. In 2010, the SSP/ASWJ spokesman Ehsanullah Farooqi was killed after departing from the Karachi Press Club.<sup>457</sup> The SSP/ASWJ claims that Shi'i reporters at the press club performed surveillance work on Farooqi on behalf of the Shi'i militant group Sipah-e-Muhammad. However, in early 2014, a senior official with Karachi's Crime Investigation Department stated that the SMP had killers pose as journalists to select their targets.<sup>458</sup> In August 2013, another SSP/ASWJ spokesperson, Maulana Akbar Saeed Farooqi, was killed after leaving a group rally.<sup>459</sup> Given the media coverage that SSP/ASWJ and other Sunni Deobandi militants receive, it makes sense for militant groups to utilize journalism as a cover to perform casing work. A Karachi-based print journalist informed the author that a driver of a news van of his newspaper's sister television network moonlights as a targeted killer for a major political party in the city.

A former senior Karachi police official, much like the Quetta police official discussed earlier, linked the rising MWM party to SMP.<sup>460</sup> But other groups, such as the Mukhtar Force, appear to have claimed responsibility for the killings of ASWJ figures and other Sunni Deobandis in Karachi. For example, Pakistani law enforcement agencies reportedly arrested Danish Rehmani, an MQM targeted killer, in March 2014 upon his return from Dubai for involvement in the killings of Sunnis. And the MQM, traditionally seen as a defender of Shi'a, has taken part in the killings of both Sunni and Shi'i religious leaders.

### **Sectarian Political Parties Make Political Gains**

Amid the rising sectarian violence in Karachi, the city's political arena is also taking on a more sectarian bent. The SMP/ASWJ and, to a lesser extent, the MWM, emerged as electoral forces in select constituencies in the 2013 general elections, though it is unclear whether this trend will be extended into future election cycles.

The SMP/ASWJ is making inroads as an electoral contender in Karachi's Pashtun community. Aurangzeb Farooqi, then the ASWJ's spokesman and most prominent figure in Karachi, lost the PS-128 Sindh Assembly seat to an MQM candidate by a margin of 202 votes.<sup>461</sup> A Karachi-based journalist said that he thinks the "election was stolen from [Farooqi]."<sup>462</sup> Indeed, it is difficult to imagine how the MQM legitimately secured a victory in the heavily Pashtun constituency, which voted in Pashtun candidates belonging to the Muttahida

Majlis-e-Amal and the Awami National Party in the previous two election cycles.<sup>463</sup> Farooqi, who is originally from Mansehra in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, has helped expand the ASWJ's support base in Karachi to Pashtuns in the Landhi, Sohrab Goth, and Kiamari areas.<sup>464</sup> In October 2014, he was promoted to secretary general of the SSP/ASWJ.

As a result of the TTP's strengthening hold over Karachi's Pashtun areas, the ANP shut down many of its offices in the city, giving space for the SSP/ASWJ to grow.<sup>465</sup> In the 2013 elections, the JUI-F was compelled by the ulama at a prominent Deobandi seminary in Karachi to withdraw its candidate in the PS-128 race to help consolidate the Deobandi vote and facilitate an Aurangzeb Farooqi victory.<sup>466</sup> Multiple local journalists speculated that the SSP/ASWJ could also gain traction in some of Karachi's other marginalized communities, such as the Baluch in Lyari and ethnic Rohingyas. However, the author spoke with Baluch and Kutchi activists in Lyari, all of whom believed that there would be little appeal for the SSP/ASWJ in these areas, despite their suspicion of state support for such groups to counter ethnic nationalists. Still, the SSP/ASWJ has considerable support among non-Pashtuns. Its headquarters is located in an MQM-dominated area, and most killings conducted by SSP/ASWJ-LeJ are done in areas where the MQM has considerable influence.<sup>467</sup>

Lashkar-e-Jhangvi's infrastructure in Karachi is also quite diverse. Its operatives have included its Punjabi-speaking core, Saraiki speakers, Pashtuns native to Karachi as well as more recent migrants from South Waziristan, members of the Bengali and Rohingya communities, Hindko speakers, Urdu speakers, and ethnic Baluchis and Sindhis. The cell that conducted the 2006 attack on Shi'i scholar Allama Turabi is a perfect example of the LeJ's ethnic heterogeneity. The cell was led by a Mehsud originally from South Waziristan, the suicide jacket was prepared in Darra Adam Khel, and the suicide bomber was either an ethnic Bengali or Rohingya.<sup>468</sup>

The MQM has also been losing support from some of Karachi's Shi'a to the rising MWM. Ahead of last May's elections, the MWM's political secretary in Karachi promised that "the Shi'i vote bank of the MQM will be cut down."<sup>469</sup> The MWM also secured a last-minute electoral alliance with two Sunni Barelvi parties.<sup>470</sup> The MWM, however, did not perform well in Karachi in last year's general elections, even taking MQM intimidation and rigging into account. But it has demonstrated an ability to make shows of strength through massive street protests after major terror incidents targeting Shi'a. By the end of 2013, the

MWM and MQM parties were at loggerheads ahead of local government elections that had been scheduled for early 2014. In recognition of the MWM's electoral potential, three local government elections candidates affiliated with the MWM were murdered in December 2013.<sup>471</sup> The MWM blamed the murders not on Sunni Deobandi militants, but on the MQM, and staged protests against the party in London, where its leader it based.<sup>472</sup>

And in early January, four MQM activists were arrested for shooting the convoy of MWM's Allama Mirza Yousuf, in which two of his bodyguards perished.<sup>473</sup> Two individuals, including an MQM targeted killer by the name of Umar "Jailer," had been implicated in the killings of around 90 Sunnis and Shi'a.<sup>474</sup> Indeed, ahead of these arrests, Shahid Hayat, the chief of Karachi's police, alluded in November and December that the MQM was behind the killing of both Sunnis and Shi'a, with one of its aims being to pit the two sects against one another.<sup>475</sup> Sharjeel Memon, the Sindh provincial information minister and a senior PPP member, also made the same insinuation in November.<sup>476</sup>

Ali Ahmar, the MWM's central spokesman, alleged:

The MQM has a takfiri group that threatens our people. They threatened our local government election candidates and tried to stop them from contesting in the upcoming local body elections [by killing them].<sup>477</sup>

The MQM contains several factions, but as a whole it has remained fairly progressive on the issue of sectarianism, promoting inter-sect and interfaith harmony. But, like any other Pakistani political party, it is also opportunistic. Its leaders have met with SSP/ASWJ officials from time to time. And perhaps more than any other mainstream political party in Pakistan, it will jealously guard areas seen as its political turf, not shying away from the use of violence. As a result, the MQM in the past year has sought to use its muscle to halt the rise of the MWM as well as the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Party.

## VII. Current Trends: Sectarianism Growing

Multiple, concurrent trends indicate a deepening of sectarian cleavages in Pakistan. Jihadi violence in Pakistan is becoming increasingly colored by Sunni-Shi'i sectarianism. Anti-state and revolutionary jihadis seek to pull the SSP/ASWJ cadre into their orbit. A new, pro-Iran, Shi'i political party, the Majlis-e-Wahdat-e-Muslimeen, is gaining strength as Shi'i militants also are more proactive. Sectarian cleavages are also becoming more apparent in mainstream political parties and media. Regionally, Pakistan is being pulled into the Sunni Arab orbit as tensions along the border with Iran grow. The sectarian discourse inside Pakistan is now highly infused with commentary about Syria and other Middle Eastern sectarian battlegrounds. Shi'i migration into ghettos inside Pakistan and out of the country is rising due to the relentless targeting of Shi'i non-combatants, including community notables, professionals, religious pilgrims, and congregations. Anti-Shi'a sectarianism is deeply intertwined with the Sunni Deobandi militancy that the Pakistani state feeds on and is being consumed by.

### **Anti-State and Revolutionary Jihadis Seek to Pull ASWJ into Their Orbit**

Among Deobandi political groups, the SSP/ASWJ has the greatest national reach. It has a presence in all four provinces, a sizable pool of workers that can be leveraged for elections and street agitation, and a pool from which radicalized militants can be recruited. Indeed, in an appeal to SSP/ASWJ workers to join the jihad against Islamabad, a takfiri preacher noted that the group has "hundreds of thousands of workers across all of Pakistan."<sup>478</sup>

As a result of this grassroots network, the SSP/ASWJ is being pulled in multiple directions. Elements within the PML-N, including Rana Sanaullah, as well as other rightist political forces, such as Hamid Gul, have sought to mainstream the organization. At the same time, anti-state and revolutionary jihadis, dissatisfied with an SSP/ASWJ leadership they see as timid, have sought to pull the SSP/ASWJ rank-and-file into their orbit.

The most pragmatic face of the SSP/ASWJ-LeJ syndicate is one of a political force expressly focused on relegating Shi'a to a second class legal status in Pakistan by declaring them non-Muslims and confining their activities to within the boundaries of their houses of worship. In many ways, the syndicate operates according to the norms of contemporary Pakistani politics, using a mix of electoral maneuvering, public agitation, and violence targeting opponents. Simultaneously, the SSP/ASWJ is an important recruiting ground for other jihadi groups, with many members “graduating” from the group to move on to other, more hard-line Deobandi and takfiri jihadi groups with broader aims. Militants from other Deobandi groups make pitches to the ASWJ cadre to join their fight, cleverly reframing their activities in sectarian language to appeal to ASWJ activists and militants.

### Fight the Shi'a...in Afghanistan

In April 2012, Commander Abdul Jabbar, who heads a Jaish-e-Muhammad breakaway group engaged in combat in Afghanistan, Tehreek Ghalba-e-Islam, addressed a public SSP/ASWJ gathering in Lahore, asking the attendees to support the jihad in Afghanistan.<sup>479</sup> In doing so, he offered a narrative that fused anti-West and anti-Shi'a sentiment. After describing how the United States will be evicted from Afghanistan like other foreign invaders, Abdul Jabbar spoke of how Iran, which was “up to mischief,” confronted the Afghan Taliban after the killing of its diplomats in Mazar-i-Sharif in 2005 but was forced to back down by Mullah Omar. Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, Abdul Jabbar said, was as a Qilla-e-Islam (Fortress of Islam).

Abdul Jabbar sought to depict the jihad in Afghanistan that aims to reestablish Taliban rule as one that is as much against Shi'i Iran as it is against Western coalition forces. Abdul Jabbar, who was arrested in 2003 in connection with the attempted assassination of President Musharraf, was released in 2006.<sup>480</sup> In 2010, he was described as a senior Punjabi Taliban based in North Waziristan.<sup>481</sup> But his 2012 address given in an open-air forum in Lahore contained no anti-state references. In January 2012, he also spoke at a rally of the Difa-e-Pakistan Council, an alliance of anti-American rightist and Islamist groups, indicating that he has likely distanced himself from anti-state violence at least for the time being.<sup>482</sup>

### **Lal Masjid Cleric: Join the Vigilante Brigade**

Maulana Abdul Aziz Ghazi, the leader of the Lal Masjid, has also sought to pull the SSP/ASWJ rank-and-file into his orbit. On October 10, 2013, less than a month after he was acquitted of all charges related to the 2007 clash between mosque leaders and Islamabad authorities, Ghazi addressed an SSP/ASWJ conference in the southern Punjab district of Rahim Yar Khan.<sup>483</sup> Prior to his address, the audience chanted slogans in favor of the “martyrs of Lal Masjid” and proclaimed Ghazi’s brother, Abdul Rashid, a “martyr.”<sup>484</sup> In his address, Ghazi claimed that the oppression Muslims face today in “Syria, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen, and Egypt” is greater than that faced by the Prophet Muhammad and his followers in Mecca.<sup>485</sup> He called on the SSP/ASWJ youth to grow their passion (*jazba*) for jihad and remove the sense of fear within them.<sup>486</sup> Failing to mention Ahmed Ludhianvi, Ghazi instead saluted Malik Ishaq, referring to him as a *mard-e-mujahid* (Islamic warrior).<sup>487</sup>

Ghazi then engaged in an indirect critique of the SSP/ASWJ leadership, saying that “some of our comrades are mistaken that this is an Islamic system,” and argued that the constitution is made up of “English laws.”<sup>488</sup> The solution to Pakistan’s problems, he said, is the implementation of the Qur’an and Sunnah. Ghazi called on the SSP/ASWJ youth to engage in vigilante activity in their local areas, abstain from their traditional passivity, and go beyond defending the Prophet’s companions, saying:

“We ask our Sipah...Ahle Sunnat brothers to also impose *shariat* [Islamic law].”<sup>489</sup>

The Lal Masjid cleric revealed that he issued a fatwa for young men from his seminary, Jamia Faridia, to kill criminals. He said there are “oppressors” across Pakistan—kidnappers, landgrabbers—and asked the young men to “pledge to not allow oppression in our respective areas.” He called on young men to prepare for an Islamic system that is coming worldwide and is the “mission of the Prophet’s companions.”<sup>490</sup>

Ghazi’s call to vigilantism bore an uncanny resemblance to the pre-election appeal of al-Qa’ida’s chief Pakistan spokesman, Ustad Ahmad Farooq, for Pakistani youth to form local vigilante committees led by ulama.<sup>491</sup> However, Ghazi denied any connection to the al-Qa’ida call when queried by the author and claimed that he had not heard of Farooq.<sup>492</sup> He was also reluctant to discuss sectarianism with the author, though he did say that Sunnis have more in

common with Ahmadis than they do with Shi'a.<sup>493</sup> He also called on Shi'a to confine their religious processions to their imambargahs.<sup>494</sup>

### **Takfiris: Targeting Shi'a Is Not Enough**

In early 2013, Mufti Abu Zar Azzam,<sup>495</sup> one of Pakistan's most extreme takfiri preachers, issued a self published video message addressed to the "workers of Sipah-e-Sahaba," calling on them to join the jihad against the Pakistani state and work to establish the caliphate, which he said was the group's purpose at its founding.<sup>496</sup> He bemoaned the "minimal cooperation" of the SSP/ASWJ in the ongoing jihads in Pakistan and Afghanistan and condemned the group's leaders who "forbade the jihad against Pakistan" and issued statements of solidarity with the Pakistan Army.<sup>497</sup> Abu Zar insinuated that the SSP/ASWJ has not simply rebranded in recent years, but that it has in fact moderated, asking why the group's work has adapted along with the change in its name from Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan to Ahle Sunnat Wal Jammat. Repeating the phrase, "I too am a Deobandi," Abu Zar attempted to use Deobandi collectivism to appeal directly to SSP/ASWJ workers while critiquing their leaders:

We are Deobandi, not Barelvi. Barelvis talk. Deobandis act...I too am a Deobandi, I too am a soldier of the Prophet's companions (May God be pleased with them), and supporter of Haq Nawaz Jhangvi's mission. And I am his comrade and servant...Regrettably, the same disease [of passivity that has afflicted Barelvis] has afflicted the Deobandi leaders of Sipah-e-Sahaba. In special seasons and months, they give a few speeches and sermons and then just sit down. However, our work is the work of the Prophet's companions. And the Prophet's companions engaged in jihad.<sup>498</sup>

Noting that some SSP/ASWJ members have come to FATA for jihad, Abu Zar said that more should come as "now is the time for sacrifice."<sup>499</sup> He called on SSP/ASWJ workers to go beyond "chanting slogans" and to "come in the field and engage in jihad against the apostates just like the [rightly guided caliphs]," which will then make them "true lovers of the Prophet's companions."<sup>500</sup>

Abu Zar, who graduated from a major Deobandi seminary in Karachi, reportedly took over an LeJ splinter group and has now aligned himself with the IMU and the TTP.<sup>501</sup> He has appealed to SSP/ASWJ to move along the same path of hyper-radicalization. Combatting the Shi'a through the current Pakistani system of laws, he concludes, is seeing the forest for the trees:

...we are the servants of the ulema-e-Deobandi. Their way was always that of jihad in the path of God. If you want to take forward the true mission of the great leader Haq Nawaz Jhangvi, then migrate (*hijrat*), prepare for jihad, and engage in war in the path of God. As a result, this system will be destroyed and there will be no need to declare the Shi'a infidels. When your government comes, they will by themselves become infidels. When your government comes, they will by themselves be below your feet.<sup>502</sup>

### **TTP: Let's Fight the State**

After the November 2013 riots in Rawalpindi between Sunnis and Shi'a, the TTP made several efforts, both in terms of propaganda and violence, to make a definitive entry at a national level into the Sunni Deobandi-Shi'i sectarian war. A month later, the TTP's operational leader, Khalid Haqqani, issued a video statement on the "Rawalpindi tragedy," saying that the "massacring of the youth at Madrasa Taleem ul Quran was a gift for us...[The Shi'a] showed us who they were."<sup>503</sup> Haqqani sought to frame the riots not only in the context of the historic Sunni-Shi'i dispute, but also in light of the TTP's war against the Pakistani state.<sup>504</sup>

The history of Shi'a, he said, "is marked in blood" and perfidy.<sup>505</sup> Haqqani claimed that the Shi'a killed the third caliph, Uthman, waged "conspiracies against the [Sunni] caliphate," allying with the Tatars and, later, making Iran a Shi'i state during the Ottoman era.<sup>506</sup> Continuing on into the modern era, Haqqani described the Shi'a as "the biggest roadblocks to the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan," the "first to shake hands with the Americans in Iraq," and now a "source of strife (*fitna*) in Syria and Yemen."<sup>507</sup> Pakistan, Haqqani proclaimed, is ruled by Shi'a, who "have removed Muslims from their homes, martyred their women and children from Parachinar to Karachi."<sup>508</sup> He claimed that the Rawalpindi incident was a "well thought out conspiracy" by the Pakistan Army and ISI, whose headquarters were not too far away.<sup>509</sup>

After Haqqani's commentary, a narrator in the video states that the Rawalpindi incident "is not the first attack by Islam's enemies," introducing a series of video clips of the 2007 Lal Masjid siege and blasphemous and violent acts allegedly committed by Shi'a in the Kurram Agency, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Karachi, as well as Iraq and Lebanon.<sup>510</sup> The narrator then asked, "Who will hold them [the Shi'a] accountable? Will protests, rioting, and strikes be sufficient?" Next, a video clip of the SSP/ASWJ leader Ahmed Ludhianvi asking for patience was shown, and the narrator asked, "Will this make the killers visible?" The video ends by stating

that the sword is the solution and that the Pakistani system of government must be destroyed:

It is this infidel democratic system that gives Shi'a, Qadianis [Ahmadis], the intelligence agencies, and the apostate security forces "free issue" to make their hands red with the blood of Muslims whenever and however they want.<sup>511</sup>

In January 2014, Ahmad Ali Intiqami, the TTP's Rawalpindi chief, released a video statement calling on Sunnis to make jihad against the Shi'a and kill them "before they are able to flee to Iran."<sup>512</sup> In a message likely directed at SSP/ASWJ activists and Sunni Deobandi madrasa students, Intiqami said that the TTP's "training centers are waiting for you." Boldly, he said, "Suicide jackets, explosive-filled cars, and all equipment to level the Shi'a are available [for you]."<sup>513</sup>

Much like Haqqani and Abu Zar, Intiqami ridiculed the nonviolent methods of the SSP/ASWJ:

Protests, strikes, and peace conferences will not destroy Shi'i disbelief. They [the Shi'a] only recognize the language of the bullet...Come join us to destroy the enemies of Islam and establish Islam.<sup>514</sup>

## **Shi'i Political Party and Militant Groups Growing in Strength**

In 2009, the Majlis-e-Wahdat-e-Muslimeen (MWM) was founded in Islamabad by a group of Shi'i clerics and activists discontent with what they regarded as the quietist and self-serving leadership of the Tehreek-e-Jafaria Pakistan's Allama Sajid Naqvi. Led by Allama Amin Shaheedi, the group made its mark in the protests that followed massive suicide attacks targeting the Hazara Shi'i community, in which Shi'i protestors refused to bury their dead until their demands were met by the Pakistani government. In 2013, they forced Prime Minister Raja Pervaiz Ashraf to appear in Quetta.

In 2013, the MWM took part in its first elections and sought to adopt a more aggressive strategy than the quietist Naqvi. Rather than making an electoral alliance with one of the two major parties, the MWM decided to run a broad number of candidates, fielding 14 National and Sindh Assembly candidates from Karachi alone.<sup>515</sup>

According to Agha Nasir Abbas Shirazi, the MWM's lead political strategist, the MWM decided not to run candidates against other Shi'a, which would have diluted the Shi'i vote.<sup>516</sup> Though the party endorsed Sunni candidates, such as those from the Sheikh family, chief opponents of the SSP/ASWJ in Jhang, the MWM is an unabashed Shi'i party. Shirazi defended his party's pursuit of politics on the basis of sect, stating:

"If Shi'a can be killed on the basis of sect, why can't they conduct politics on the basis of sect?"<sup>517</sup>

The emergence of the MWM in many ways is similar to the emergence of other TJP splinter groups, such as the TNFJ and Sipah-e-Muhammad, which saw Naqvi's leadership of the Shi'i community as dismal. The MWM has sought to mix a more assertive street presence with a smarter electoral strategy that prevents the MQM and PPP from taking them for granted. Shi'i activists often point out that the resurgence of anti-Shi'a violence has taken place while the PPP and MQM were coalition partners at the center and in Sindh, and while the PPP was leading the Baluchistan coalition government. The MWM has also forged a partnership with a major Barelvi party, the Sunni Ittehad Council, while Naqvi's TJP/SUC has partnered mainly with Maulana Fazlur Rehman's JUI-F.

The MWM also appears to have links to Iran. Like other pro-Tehran parties in Pakistan, its offices are adorned with photos of Ayatollah Khomeini and Ayatollah Khamenei. Its senior leadership consists of Shi'i clerics. And MWM officials meet with Iranian officials in Tehran and Qom (where the party has an office) and visit Tehran-backed Shi'i leaders in Iraq and Lebanon—including Hezbollah's Hassan Nasrallah.<sup>518</sup>

The MWM appears less inclined to follow the Hezbollah model and more inclined to follow the Bahraini party al-Wefaq's peaceful approach. But there are indications that the party is involved in some violence. Police officials in both Karachi and Quetta linked the party to some killings of Sunni Deobandis. Indeed, the emergence of the MWM coincided with the resumption of Shi'i militancy in Karachi, though there is no evidence of causation.

Other Shi'i groups are likely also involved in the violence. A former senior federal law enforcement official said that in the past some members of Shi'i groups that were ostensibly protecting imambargahs and processions were also

engaged in sectarian violence. He pointed toward the Pasban-e-Islam, which he said was trained in Iran.

Indeed, a Twitter account that appears to be affiliated with the TNFJ's Mukhtar Force, which publicly functions as a protection force, has claimed responsibility for some killings of SSP/ASWJ members and Sunni Deobandis. For example, it claimed the April 2014 killing of three Sunni Deobandi madrasa students:

"In a great operation by Mukhtar Force's volunteers near Gulistan-e-Johar's Continental Bakery, three dogs from the SSP's Madrasa Dar ul Khair were sent to hell."<sup>519</sup>

The same Twitter account posted a tweet in 2012 that attributed a quote to the TNFJ's leader stating that "terrorism in this era makes it compulsory for each family to give one if its own young men to the Mukhtar Force to defend the mission of Hussain (peace be upon him)."<sup>520</sup>

## **Sectarian Divisions Growing in Society, Fed by Domestic and Regional Conflict**

Pakistani society, including its political parties, is increasingly divided on sectarian lines.<sup>521</sup> The alliances made with the SSP/ASWJ by individual members or factions of two parties otherwise generally seen as pro-Shi'a (the PPP and the MQM) have resulted in greater Shi'i appeal for the MWM, though the party is unlikely to upend either in any electoral contests in the near term.

The MWM claims that the MQM has a "takfiri" element in it, alleging that Sindh governor Ishrat ul Ebad and others in the party are sympathetic to the SSP/ASWJ.<sup>522</sup> Still, the MQM also has some outspoken Shi'i members, including Haider Abbas Rizvi. Given the strong levels of party discipline, sectarian differences within the MQM currently play out in quiet ways. A Karachi-based Pakistani journalist claimed that the MQM had to end communal prayer at its headquarters as Sunnis and Shi'a would not pray together.<sup>523</sup>

Sectarian divisions extend into the PPP as well. The outspoken Shi'i politician Faisal Raza Abidi, upon resigning from his Senate seat in April 2014, alleged that there was a "takfiri element" within his own party, the PPP.<sup>524</sup> Abidi has pointed his fingers at Khurshid Shah, Qaim Ali Shah, and Qamar Zaman Kaira—senior PPP officials who have received electoral endorsements from the SSP/ASWJ.

A Shi'i, Urdu-speaking Karachi University student claimed that the Pakhtun Students Front, the student group for the Pashtun nationalist ANP, had split along sectarian lines at Karachi University in recent years, but then reunited ahead of the May 2013 general elections.<sup>525</sup> He said that the Imamia Students Organization, a Shi'i student group, has 700 members at Karachi University and described it as perhaps the best organized student group or political party at the institution.<sup>526</sup>

At a national level, a more powerful centrifugal force has been the PML-N's soft approach toward the SSP/ASWJ and pursuit of peace talks with the TTP. A leading Sunni Barelvi leader in Punjab said that the talks with the Deobandi TTP, made without the involvement of Sunni Barelvi and Shi'i leaders, has deeply alienated both communities, sending a message to the two communities that their fate is in their own hands.<sup>527</sup> He fears that "there will be a civil war" in the years to come. While he claimed that Sunni Barelvis are not considering violence, he alleged that Shi'a are receiving militant training in Jhang in preparation to face emboldened Sunni Deobandi militants. However, the author spoke with multiple Shi'a in Karachi—including a student, a community activist, and a low-level MWM official—all of whom said that they remain nonviolent as they have not been given permission from their *marja-e-taqlids* (sources of emulation) to use violence.<sup>528</sup>

What is clear, though, is that during the talks with the TTP and even after their failure, there has been greater political cooperation between the two major Shi'i and Sunni Barelvi groups in Pakistan, the MWM and the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC). The MWM and the SIC have organized joint events across Pakistan, including in Karachi, Lahore, and Gilgit-Baltistan. In addition to forging a united voice against peace talks with the TTP and being in favor of military operations, both the MWM and SIC have banded together to celebrate Milad-un-Nabi (the birth of the Prophet Muhammad), whose commemoration Salafis and takfiris oppose as *bid'a* (innovation). The sectarian divide has also played a role in the anti-government protests that gained momentum in August. MWM and outspoken Shi'i politician Faisal Raza Abidi played an active role in the protests led by Barelvi cleric Allama Tahir-ul-Qadri and his Pakistan Awami Tehreek (PAT). Meanwhile, Nawaz Sharif has been staunchly backed by Deobandis including the SSP/ASWJ and Tahir Ashrafi.<sup>529</sup> The SSP/ASWJ has even derided the PAT's Inqilab March (Revolution March) as seeking to bring an "Iranian revolution" to Pakistan—accusing Qadri and his Shi'i allies of being supported by Tehran.<sup>530</sup>

Sectarian differences are also producing two diametrically opposed narratives in Pakistan of the evolving regional context as the Sunni-Shi'i divide in the Middle East deepens. Increasingly, the conflict in Syria plays a greater role in the rhetoric and messaging of the SSP/ASWJ, MWM, and other sectarian groups in Pakistan. For example, the SSP/ASWJ leader Aurangzeb Farooqi has spoken of a "Sunni revolution" that is taking place in Pakistan, Iraq, and Syria.<sup>531</sup> Also, both groups' social media and SMS subscription services frequently give updates about the conflicts in Bahrain and Syria.

The 2013 attack on the Damascus shrine of Sayyida Zeinab, the granddaughter of the Prophet Muhammad and one of the most important icons in the Shi'i tradition, was perhaps a seminal moment for Shi'a in Pakistan, hardening the sectarian lens through which the Syrian conflict is viewed. Pakistani Shi'a tend to reflexively defend the al-Assad regime, claiming that he is fighting "al-Qa'ida" and "Wahhabi" terrorists while ignoring his blatant targeting of civilian populaces. At the same time, some Sunnis gloss over the takfiri elements that are predominant among the Syrian rebels and the threats to religious minorities.

Both the SSP/ASWJ and MWM are also directing their protests at foreign governments involved in the regional sectarian war. In early February, the SSP/ASWJ held a sit-in near the Iranian consulate in Karachi to protest "Tehran's involvement in militancy training, arming, and funding of sectarian terrorists" in Pakistan.<sup>532</sup> And in mid-March, the MWM conducted a sizable protest in Karachi during the visit of the Bahraini monarch.

## Pakistan Being Pulled into Regional Sunni Axis

As Sunni Deobandi-Shi'i violence grows in Pakistan, there are indications that Pakistan under Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who has historically been close to the Saudis, is tilting toward the Gulf Arab Sunni axis led by Saudi Arabia. In April 2014, Sharif visited Tehran in a bid to quell the apprehensions of Iranian officials and many in Pakistan. But there is little evidence that his visit rebalances Islamabad's ties with Tehran and Riyadh.

Indeed, Sharif's Iran visit was preceded by a flurry of high-level visits of Pakistani and Saudi officials—including the Saudi crown prince and Pakistani army chief—to their respective capitals as well as by the provision of \$1.5 billion to

Islamabad by Riyadh. Curiously, Pakistani officials initially refused to name the donor.<sup>533</sup> After much public speculation, Islamabad recognized the Saudi source of the funds, but claimed that they were provided with no strings attached. Yet, the de facto national security advisor Sartaj Aziz also conceded that Pakistan would be selling arms to Saudi Arabia, albeit while making assurances that there would be restrictive end user agreements. This actually fueled speculation in Pakistan that previous reports of Islamabad arming Syrian rebels via Riyadh were true.

Also in March, the Bahraini king made his first ever visit to Pakistan. Pakistan has historically sent over retired security personnel to serve in Bahrain's police and national guard. This year, the Bahria Foundation, headed by Pakistan's naval chief, put out an advertisement recruiting retired Pakistani security personnel for Bahrain's police.

A prevailing opinion in Pakistan, particularly among Shi'a, is that the government of Pakistan is already providing active support for the Sunni cause in Bahrain and Syria. The author was struck by the fact that two separate local-level Shi'i activists in Karachi claimed that a highly televised armed standoff by a lone gunman in August 2013 in Islamabad was a ruse to allow the bodies of dead Sunni fighters to return from Syria.<sup>534</sup> While it appeared that the two activists were genuinely convinced of the myth's truth, some appear to be passing on similar rumors to paint the ruling party as sectarian. The author attended an off-the-record gathering in Washington in which a former Pakistani legislator, a scion of a major Shi'i industrialist family, falsely alleged that many "Punjabis"—i.e., Sunni Deobandi jihadis—were coming home in body bags from Syria.

But there may be just as many Pakistani Shi'i fighters in Syria fighting on behalf of the Assad regime as there are Pakistani Sunnis fighting against it. An Israeli think tank gave a loose estimate of "scores and perhaps hundreds" of Shi'i fighters from Afghanistan and Pakistan in Syria.<sup>535</sup> A *Wall Street Journal* report revealed the presence of Afghan Hazara fighters.<sup>536</sup> But it is difficult to get a sense of how many Pakistani Shi'i combatants there are. A low-level MWM official tacitly conceded to the author that some Pakistani Shi'a are heading to Syria, ostensibly to defend the shrine of Sayyida Zeinab, the granddaughter of the Prophet Muhammad, which was severely damaged by rebels in 2013.<sup>537</sup> The Institute for the Center for the Study of Radicalization broadly estimated the number of Pakistani fighters who have joined the rebels as ranging from seven

to 330—a figure comparable to the aforementioned combined estimate of Afghan and Pakistani Shi'a fighting on behalf of the regime.<sup>538</sup>

### ***Anti-Iran Sunni Militancy***

While Pakistan appears to be tilting toward the Gulf Arab Sunni camp, Pakistan-based militants are also increasingly setting their eyes on Iran. In January, a TTP commander invited anti-Shi'a sectarian activists to join his group, calling on them to kill the Shi'a "before they are able to flee to Iran."<sup>539</sup> In February, a TTP splinter group launched the network's first attack on an Iranian installation inside Pakistan, targeting Tehran's consulate in Peshawar. The attack, ordered by a militant commander native to the Kurram Agency, is consistent with the LeJ practice of attacking Iranian interests in Pakistan in reprisal for attacks by Shi'a against Sunnis.<sup>540</sup>

And in the same month, Jaish al-Adl, an Iranian Sunni Baluch insurgent group based in Pakistan, kidnapped Iranian border guards.<sup>541</sup> Tehran subsequently gave a not-so-veiled threat that it would conduct cross border raids into Pakistan,<sup>542</sup> and it already fires mortars across the border into Pakistani Baluchistan.<sup>543</sup>

Jaish al-Adl, which emerged in 2012,<sup>544</sup> is effectively the successor group to Jundullah, the Iranian Baluch insurgent group that waged attacks against the Iranian government and security officials from 2003-2012 in the Sistan-Baluchistan province. The Baluch insurgency in Iran has both ethnic and sectarian dimensions given that the regime from which they seek autonomy or independence is Persian and Shi'i. Jundullah had been a source of consternation between Islamabad and Tehran until Abdul-Malik Rigi, the group's leader, was arrested and taken to Tehran, where he was executed in 2010.

The Baluch insurgency subsided until the emergence of Jaish al-Adl and other Sunni Baluch groups such as Harkat Ansar Iran and Hizb-ul-Furqan, which later merged with one another. A Pakistani Baluch journalist who has covered Baluchistan and is now based in the Persian Gulf described Jaish al-Adl as an organization that likely has linkages to Sunni Deobandi militant groups in Pakistan and has the support of one or more Gulf Arab states.<sup>545</sup>

The Pakistani Baluch journalist said that Jaish al-Adl has safe havens in Pakistani

Baluchistan districts bordering Iran such as Chagai, Kech, and Nushki. He also alleged that the group has a presence in Quetta. Jaish al-Adl fighters, he claimed, are not just Iranian Baluch, but also include Pashtuns and Punjabis from Pakistan. The group, he said, receives support from Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, which provides mentorship and training.

The journalist also informed the author that he met a Jaish al-Adl operative in the United Arab Emirates and speculated that the group's presence was permitted by authorities there.<sup>546</sup> Ethnic Baluch separatists, he said, are "more low key" in the UAE, fearing that "they'll be extradited to Pakistan," whereas Jaish al-Adl operatives do not exhibit such fear.<sup>547</sup> He claims that they, in fact, operate a television channel in the emirate.

Jaish al-Adl's propaganda is mainly in Baluchi, Persian, and Arabic—not Urdu. The Pakistani Baluch journalist also said that the Arabic propaganda was likely for reaching out to "potential funders" in the Persian Gulf.<sup>548</sup> He also pointed to what he alleges is a growing Saudi presence in the Kech district of Baluchistan, which has a Jaish al-Adl presence and is where large amounts of Saudi money are being directed.<sup>549</sup> Finally, he alleged that the Saudis "are building huge mosques and hospitals" in Kech, "focusing strategically on the border region" with Iran.<sup>550</sup> These claims have not been verified by additional sources, but if they are true, then the Saudi support for anti-Iran Baluch militants has the active support of Pakistan's military-intelligence establishment.

## **Some Sunni and Shi'i Leaders Rising to the Challenge**

Some Sunni Deobandi, Sunni Barelvi, and Shi'i leaders have taken risks to push back against the sectarian tide spreading across Pakistan—for example, after the April 2012 massacre of Shi'a in Gilgit-Baltistan. Later that year, local leaders of four Sunni and Shi'i political parties, including the JUI-F and MWM, broke the Ramadan fast together and pledged to revive a preexisting body for forging Sunni and Shi'i unity.<sup>551</sup>

In June 2013, Maulana Tariq Jamil, a prominent Sunni Deobandi preacher with the Tablighi Jamaat, spoke at a Shi'i mosque in Gilgit-Baltistan, accepting an invitation from Shi'i religious leaders.<sup>552</sup> Jamil reciprocated by inviting Shi'i clerics, including the MWM's Agha Rahat, to the Tablighi *ijtima* (gathering) in Gilgit, which they accepted.<sup>553</sup> In his sermon, Jamil called for tolerance and nonviolence, stating that "we are all Muslims; therefore we will have to accept

this reality [of religious differences]. We are here to preach love and respect, not hatred.”<sup>554</sup>

Later that year, some media outlets reported an attack on Jamil’s vehicle in Faisalabad, but Jamil denied that such an attack took place.<sup>555</sup> If Jamil was indeed attacked, it could be an attempt by the SSP/ASWJ, LeJ, or TTP to discourage him from attempting to forge bonds with Shi'a.

## VIII. Policy Recommendations

### **Make a Decisive Shift from Deobandi Militancy and Counter the Militant Narrative**

The government of Pakistan, including the Pakistani military and intelligence services, must recognize that the primary internal security challenge it faces is from Sunni Deobandi militancy, of which anti-Shi'a sectarianism is an inherent part. While Islamabad should not publicly single out the Sunni Deobandi subsect, it has to develop a comprehensive strategy to reduce its dependence on Islamic militancy as a whole and Sunni Deobandi extremism in particular as an instrument of foreign and domestic policy.

Pakistan's elected civilian leadership also needs to form a counternarrative to Islamic militancy, providing a vision of a pluralist state that is a force for peace in the country and region. A broad spectrum of Sunni Deobandi jihadis, including those fighting against the state and those not actively combating it, hold the rule of the Afghan Taliban as an ideal, which works against the vision of Pakistan's founders for a modern Muslim state. As these groups grow in influence, whether as anti-state insurgents or political allies of mainstream political parties, they progressively erode the remaining edifice of pluralism on which the Pakistani state was established.

A former Pakistani advisor to the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad advised that Washington play a "consistent, solid, and silent role" in aiding Pakistan in its long-term fight against radical extremism.<sup>556</sup> But he recommended that the United States not favor a single sect, referring to its past mistake of overtly supporting Sunni Barelvis or Sufis as a counterweight to Sunni Deobandis.

### **The Federal Government Must Lead a National Effort to Combat Sectarianism**

The federal government of Pakistan, in concert with provincial governments and lower level administrative and law enforcement officials, must publicly admit that the country faces a challenge from sectarianism that is fueled by both domestic and foreign actors. It must openly reject sectarianism and acknowledge it as a violation of the very idea of Pakistan as a non-sectarian Muslim majority state in which minorities have full religious liberties and rights as citizens.

Islamabad must develop a national counter-sectarianism program. It should bring together amenable persons from hard-line Sunni Deobandi and Shi'i groups, as well as Sunni Barelvis and Ahl-e-Hadis, establishing a voluntary code of conduct in which these religious communities abstain from actions that could incite other sects to violence. A voluntary framework is preferable to formal mechanisms, as it would not involve legal curbs on free speech. Legislative methods, such as expanding the blasphemy laws (such as through a Namoos-e-Sahaba bill), which have been used to level false accusations against innocent citizens, would likely result in greater persecution of religious minorities.

Currently, there are a number of intersectorial harmony initiatives being led by competing power brokers, including Allama Tahir Ashrafi, Maulana Fazlur Rehman, and the Punjab provincial government. None have the buy-in from all key players. A single platform at a national level that isolates irreconcilable extremists on both ends is necessary; it must be officially endorsed by the prime minister and led by the interior minister. A similar framework involving the endorsement of the top elected official and leadership of the most senior civilian security official must be replicated in all four provinces and in Gilgit-Baltistan. In contrast to previous initiatives, such as the Milli Yakjehti Council, the code of conduct must be implemented and enforced. The recommendations of previous initiatives, such as the Muttahida Ulema Board in Punjab and Milli Yakjehti Council, were never fully implemented.<sup>557</sup>

### **The State Should Show Its Teeth by Enforcing Existing Laws**

Pakistan already has legislation in place to combat sectarian incitement, which, when implemented fairly, could help reduce sectarian violence.<sup>558</sup> Federal and provincial governments should enforce existing laws that prohibit the use of mosque loudspeakers for purposes other than the call to prayer, criminalize sectarian hate speech, and allow for the detention of and restrictions on the movement of alleged terrorists on the federal terrorist watch list, known as the Fourth Schedule of the 1997 Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA).

Sectarian violence was reduced during the Musharraf era in part due to the closing of the offices of the SSP/ASWJ and attempts to prohibit hate speech. The benefit of enforcing such measures is that, much like the broken windows policing theory, combating sectarian hate speech alters the public environment and indicates that the state has no tolerance for sectarian hate groups. This

denies militants an easy method of radicalizing the public. Additionally, detaining militants provides a short term, tactical benefit of “slowing the momentum” of terror groups, according to a senior Quetta police official.<sup>559</sup> But it must be coupled with active surveillance of militant communications. Suspected terrorists in Pakistan under house arrest and in prison easily have contact with the outside world, enabling them to direct terror while under detention.

The 1997 ATA also empowers law enforcement to restrict the movement of those on the terrorism watch list. However, SSP/ASWJ officials who claim to have cut ties with the LeJ, such as Malik Ishaq and Ghulam Rasool Shah, have traveled to Saudi Arabia, ostensibly to perform Islamic pilgrimages, but likely also to facilitate fundraising and logistical matters for the SSP/ASWJ and/or the LeJ. An Islamabad-based journalist claimed that Shah “called the shots” for the LeJ from Saudi Arabia, where he spent an extended period after his release in 2010.<sup>560</sup> The technical intelligence capabilities of Pakistan’s civilian intelligence agencies must be enhanced, allowing for greater legal surveillance of those on the terrorism watch list and for such data to be shared with local levels of law enforcement as well as court prosecutors.

Pakistan’s federal and provincial governments have regularly failed to enforce the violation of loudspeaker use and restrictions on the movement of suspected terrorists.<sup>561</sup> The issue is not one of capacity, but of will and competency. In the summer of 2012 in Rawalpindi alone, the loudspeaker ban was violated approximately 175 times without the police taking action.<sup>562</sup> According to some accounts, the November 2013 sectarian riots in Rawalpindi took place in part because of anti-Shi'a incitement over loudspeakers by Sunni Deobandis at the Taleem ul Quran madrasa.<sup>563</sup> Local police officials in Pakistan regularly convene meetings with Sunni and Shi'i leaders ahead of Ramadan and Muharram to coordinate the logistics of their respective events to avoid clashes.<sup>564</sup> But in the case of the Rawalpindi riot, it appears that neither did local police enforce the loudspeaker ban on the Sunni Deobandi madrasa, nor did it stall the Shi'i procession, which approached the madrasa ahead of schedule.

### **Avoid Sunni Majoritarianism and Reverse De Facto Privileging of Sunni Deobandis**

All organs of Pakistan’s federal and provincial governments must consciously avoid propagating Sunni majoritarianism in policies that impact all of the country’s religious communities. Sunni Barelvi and Shi'i leaders were shut out of

the peace talks with the TTP. These talks were largely an intra-Deobandi dialogue involving persons such as Maulana Sami ul-Haq, Maulana Fazlur Rehman, and retired Major Muhammad Amir. While it was impossible to have religious minorities present at talks with the anti-Shi'a TTP, Prime Minister Sharif should hold regular meetings with Sunni Barelvi and Shi'i leaders to indirectly include them in future dialogue processes, should they resume.

Pakistan's provincial governments should also pass legislation barring "mosque grabbing," which is when one sect seizes the mosque of another, converting it into one of their own. During the past two decades, the Pakistani state effectively looked away as Sunni Deobandis took over Sunni Barelvi mosques, forcing the latter group to form the Sunni Tehreek, which violently reclaimed some of its mosques. When the Pakistani state turns a blind eye to Sunni Deobandi mosque grabbing, it sends the message that Pakistan is a Sunni Deobandi state and it contributes to the militarization of Pakistani society as other sects, such as the Sunni Barelvis, resort to violence to defend their houses of worship.

### **Purge Police Forces of SSP/ASWJ-LeJ Members and Sympathizers**

All provincial police forces should conduct regular counterintelligence operations to monitor their personnel for potential sympathizers and members of Sunni Deobandi and Shi'i militant groups. Police personnel who are identified as members of the SSP/ASWJ, LeJ, or Sipah-e-Muhammad should be purged from the forces and placed on the Fourth Schedule of the 1997 Anti-Terrorism Act, enabling them to be monitored by federal and provincial intelligence agencies. In Jhang and other sectarian hotbeds, the provincial and local governments must actively investigate SSP/ASWJ racketeering syndicates that allegedly provide quotas in the police services for their members and help determine postings and promotions. The provincial police forces must also take preventative measures, such as including counterradicalization sessions in their training process.

### **Avoid Being Pulled into Sectarian Regional War**

The government of Pakistan should carefully navigate relations with Bahrain, Iran, and Saudi Arabia, making clear both publicly and privately that it seeks friendly relations with them all. It must move toward a zero tolerance policy for foreign citizens or governments who provide material support to militant and

sectarian actors in Pakistan. Islamabad should take measures to prevent Baluchistan-based militants who target Iran from consolidating a presence inside Pakistan.

### **Maintain Army in Kurram and Orakzai Agencies to Prevent TTP Return**

The Pakistan Army should remain deployed in the Kurram and Orakzai Agencies until the Frontier Corps is ready to assume full responsibility for the area's security in order to prevent the return of the TTP and other anti-Shi'a militant groups. The army and paramilitary forces must monitor entry routes into the Kurram Agency via North Waziristan, Orakzai, and Hangu and prevent the influx of North Waziristan-based militants into this area. The Frontier Corps should induct more Parachinaris into the Kurram militia to achieve a better sectarian balance in the force and enable it to take full control of the agency's security after the army presence recedes. Islamabad should also consider building an alternative route for Parachinaris to reach Peshawar via the Khyber Agency, reducing their dependence on the Thall-Parachinar road that moves through Sunni areas. Finally, the FATA secretariat should resolve all disputes involving Sunni and Shi'i tribesmen who were forced to leave their homes via resettlement or compensation.

### **Go After Safehavens in Kabo, Baluchistan, and Surrounding Areas of Quetta**

The Pakistani military must cease all links to Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi-supporting militias in Baluchistan, if such a formal or informal policy does indeed exist. It should also consider targeted operations on LeJ safe havens in the province.

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## X. Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Other than the April 2012 terrorist attack that killed over a dozen Shi'a in the Chilas area of Gilgit-Baltistan, the region has experienced relatively low levels of sectarian violence, ebbing after a series of clashes in the early-mid 2000s.

<sup>2</sup> For an academic discussion of the historic Sunni-Shi'i divide, see Wilferd Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Madelung's account largely conforms to the mainline Shi'i narrative. Khaled Ahmed's *Sectarian War: Pakistan's Sunni-Shia Violence and Its Links to the Middle East* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2011) provides an excellent primer on the history of Sunni-Shi'i relations in Pakistan and South Asia.

<sup>3</sup> For contemporary examples in Pakistan, see "Rulers Urged to Follow in Hazrat Umar's Footsteps," *The Nation*, 16 May 2014, <http://www.nation.com.pk/national/07-Nov-2013/rulers-urged-to-follow-in-hazrat-umar-s-footsteps>. Pakistani politician Imran Khan frequently cites the rule of the Caliph Umar as an example of an ideal "Islamic welfare state" in which rulers held themselves accountable and took care of the weakest: <http://www.currentaffairspk.com/imran-khan-speech-in-noshehra-khushab-15th-january-2014>.

<sup>4</sup> Those Who Attack the Sahaba (Companions of the Prophet - Sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam): [www.sunnah.org/msaec/articles/attack.htm](http://www.sunnah.org/msaec/articles/attack.htm).

<sup>5</sup> For a discussion of ijma, see Iysa A. Bello, *The Medieval Islamic Controversy Between Philosophy and Orthodoxy: Ijma and Ta Wil in the Conflict Between Al-Ghazali and Ibn Rushd* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 1989), 35.

<sup>6</sup> Event of Ghadir Khumm, Al-Islam.org: <http://www.al-islam.org/ghadir/incident.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 112.

<sup>8</sup> Syed Akbar Hyder, *Reliving Karbala: Martyrdom in South Asian Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 82.

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<sup>10</sup> For an academic discussion of the Dawoodi Bohra, see Jonah Blank, *Mullahs on the Mainframe: Islam and Modernity among the Daudi Bohras* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

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followers-of-Imam/articleshow/17249326.cms; Syed Akbar Hyder, *Reliving Karbala: Martyrdom in South Asian Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 82.

<sup>12</sup> Man Kunto Maula: nusrat.info/man-kunto-maula.

<sup>13</sup> Muhammad Ali Jinnah's sister, Fatima, said some time in the years following the establishment of Pakistan, "I am not a Shi'a, I am not a Sunni, I am a Mussalman." See Liaquat H. Merchant, *Jinnah: A Judicial Verdict* (Karachi: East & West Publishing Company, 1990), 165.

<sup>14</sup> See Venkat Dhulipala, *Rallying Around the Qaum: The Muslims of the United Provinces and the Movement for Pakistan, 1935-1947* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 2008), 105-128.

<sup>15</sup> The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, referred to pejoratively as Qadianis, believe that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908) was the messiah and a prophet, contradicting the consensus of Muslims that the Prophet Muhammad was the last of all prophets.

<sup>16</sup> For more on the Jamaat-i-Islami's opposition to the Muslim League and Pakistan, see Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, *Mawdudi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

<sup>17</sup> Testimony of Tariq Khosa, former director general of the Federal Investigation Agency, before the Senate Committee on Defense and Defense Production, 28 September 2012, [http://www.senate.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1365092265\\_822.pdf](http://www.senate.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1365092265_822.pdf).

<sup>18</sup> Testimony of Tariq Khosa, former director general of the Federal Investigation Agency, before the Senate Committee on Defense and Defense Production, 28 September 2012,

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<sup>19</sup> See Hassan Abbas, "Shiism and Sectarian Conflict in Pakistan Identity Politics, Iranian Influence, and Tit-for-Tat Violence," Occasional Paper Series, *Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point*, <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/CTC-OP-Abbas-21-September.pdf>.

<sup>20</sup> Interview, Syed Zafar Abbas Jafri (General Secretary, Jafaria Disaster Management Cell), Karachi, 24 March 2014; Interview, local Majlis-e-Wahdat-e-Muslimeen activist, Abbas Town, Karachi, 24 March 2014.

<sup>21</sup> Second Amendment, Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan:  
<http://www.pakistani.org/pakistan/constitution/amendments/2amendment.html>.

<sup>22</sup> See 1984 address by TNFJ leader Arif Hussaini in which he acknowledges cooperating with Sunnis on the issue of the Khatm-e-Nubuwat:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uWURoormX6g>.

<sup>23</sup> molana haqnwaz jhangvi shaheed chok yadgar peshawar taqreer:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9cVW7sYAv7s>.

<sup>24</sup> Hassan Abbas, "Pakistan," in *Militancy and Political Violence in Shiism: Trends and Patterns*, ed. Assaf Moghadam (New York: Routledge, 2012), 166.

<sup>25</sup> Interview, senior Baluchistan police official.

<sup>26</sup> Interview, prominent Sunni politician from southern Punjab.

<sup>27</sup> Vali Nasr, "Islam, the State and the Rise of Sectarian Militancy in Pakistan," in *Pakistan: Nationalism Without a Nation*, ed. Christopher Jaffrelot (New York: Zed Books, 2002), 89-90.

<sup>28</sup> Vali Nasr, *The Shia Revival* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), 147.

<sup>29</sup> Interview, prominent Sunni politician from southern Punjab.

<sup>30</sup> Interview, prominent Sunni politician from southern Punjab.

<sup>31</sup> Hassan Abbas, "Shiism and Sectarian Conflict in Pakistan Identity Politics, Iranian Influence, and Tit-for-Tat Violence," Occasional Paper Series, *Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point*, 22 September 2010, 34.

<sup>32</sup> Golden Speech by Shaheed Quaid Allama Arif Hussaini (1984, Karachi):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uWURoormX6g>.

<sup>33</sup> Golden Speech by Shaheed Quaid Allama Arif Hussaini (1984, Karachi):  
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<sup>34</sup> Jonathan Broder, "Sectarian Strife Threatens Pakistan's Fragile Society," *Chicago Tribune*, 10 November 1987, [http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1987-11-10/news/8703240490\\_1\\_shiites-sunni-karachi](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1987-11-10/news/8703240490_1_shiites-sunni-karachi).

<sup>35</sup> Hassan Abbas, "Shiism and Sectarian Conflict in Pakistan Identity Politics, Iranian Influence, and Tit-for-Tat Violence," Occasional Paper Series, *Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point*, 22 September 2010, 28.

<sup>36</sup> Hassan Abbas, "Shiism and Sectarian Conflict in Pakistan Identity Politics, Iranian Influence, and Tit-for-Tat Violence," Occasional Paper Series, *Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point*, 22 September 2010, 28-29.

<sup>37</sup> Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 116-17.

<sup>38</sup> Peter L. Bergen, *Holy War, Inc.: Inside the Secret World of Osama bin Laden* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001), 55.

<sup>39</sup> At the time of its founding, the group's name was Anjuman Sipah-e-Sahaba. It was subsequently changed.

<sup>40</sup> Testimony of Tariq Khosa, former director general of the Federal Investigation Agency, before the Senate Committee on Defense and Defense Production, 28 September 2012, [http://www.senate.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1365092265\\_822.pdf](http://www.senate.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1365092265_822.pdf). The SSP also leveraged class divisions that overlapped with the sectarian divide in Jhang. Most landed notables in the region are Shi'i. After partition, Sunni Deobandi muhajirs (migrants) from Indian Punjab moved into the district's urban areas. They form the nucleus of the SSP. However, the group also received initial support from one Sunni notable in the region. See Mariam Abou Zahab, "The Sunni-Shia Conflict in Jhang (Pakistan)," in *Lived Islam in South Asia: Adaptation, Accommodation, and Conflict*, eds. Imtiaz Ahmad and Helmut Reifeld (Delhi: Berghahn Books, 2004), 135-148.

<sup>41</sup> Interview, senior Baluchistan police official.

<sup>42</sup> molana haqnwaz jhangvi shaheed chok yadgar peshawar taqreer:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9cVW7sYAv7s>.

<sup>44</sup> molana haqnwaz jhangvi shaheed chok yadgar peshawar taqreer:  
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<sup>45</sup> Khaled Ahmed, "The Lucknow Connection," *The Indian Express*, 12 May 2014, <http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/the-lucknow-connection/99>; Khaled Ahmed, "The Roots of Sectarianism in Pakistan," *Criterion Quarterly*, 4 October 2013, <http://www.criterion-quarterly.com/the-roots-of-sectarianism-in-pakistan/>.

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<sup>47</sup> Sabir Shah, "91 Major Terrorism Incidents Haunted Karachi in 64 Years," *The News*, 4 May 2012, <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-6-106417-91-major-terrorism-incidents-haunted-Ka>.

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<sup>49</sup> Zahid Hussain, *Frontline Pakistan: The Struggle with Militant Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 93.

<sup>50</sup> "For Peace in Gilgit-Baltistan," *The Express Tribune*, 29 September 2012, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/444392/for-peace-in-gilgit-baltistan/>.

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<sup>52</sup> "Lashkar Chief Riaz Basra 'Arrested,'" DAWN, 22 January 2002, <http://www.dawn.com/news/16071/lashkar-chief-riaz-basra-arrested>.

<sup>53</sup> Phone interview, former senior Pakistani federal law enforcement official.

<sup>54</sup> Phone interview, former senior Pakistani federal law enforcement official.

<sup>55</sup> Phone interview, former senior Pakistani federal law enforcement official.

<sup>56</sup> Interview, prominent Sunni politician from southern Punjab.

<sup>57</sup> Interview, prominent Sunni politician from southern Punjab.

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<sup>59</sup> See Jessica Stern, "Pakistan's Jihad Culture," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2000, <http://www.bks.harvard.edu/fs/jstern/pakistan.htm>.

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<sup>69</sup> Interview, prominent Sunni politician from southern Punjab.

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<sup>71</sup> Interview, prominent Sunni politician from southern Punjab.

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<sup>82</sup> Interview, prominent Sunni politician from southern Punjab.

<sup>83</sup> Vali Nasr, "Islam, the State and the Rise of Sectarian Militancy in Pakistan," in *Pakistan: Nationalism Without a Nation*, ed. Christopher Jaffrelot (New York: Zed Books, 2002), 104.

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<sup>89</sup> Interview, prominent Sunni politician from southern Punjab.

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<sup>95</sup> Interview, senior Baluchistan police official, Quetta.

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<sup>131</sup> Aaj Kamran Khan Ke Saath, *GEO News*, 7 February 2014:

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- <sup>155</sup> Interview, prominent Sunni politician from southern Punjab.
- <sup>156</sup> Interview, prominent Sunni politician from southern Punjab.
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- <sup>161</sup> Interview, Islamabad-based Pakistani investigative journalist.
- <sup>162</sup> Ashrafi makes no direct reference to Ludhianvi in this initial tweet, but from the context it was clear he was referring to the ASWJ leader:  
<https://twitter.com/TahirAshrafi/status/401927563943370752>.
- <sup>163</sup> See <https://twitter.com/TahirAshrafi/status/402855184881442816>.
- <sup>164</sup> Interview, prominent Sunni politician from southern Punjab.
- <sup>165</sup> "NA-89: Notifications Declaring Ludhianvi Winner Suspended by SC," *The Express Tribune*, 22 April 2014, <http://www.tribune.com.pk/story/698844/na-89-notifications-declaring-ludhianvi-winner-suspended-by-sc/>.
- <sup>166</sup> Violence in the province might also be underreported. A Jhang-based politician stated that the Pakistani media, at the request of the Pakistan Army, did not report on clashes between the ASWJ and Shi'i groups in the district that took place in November 2013 around the time of Ashura. The politician said that the area's Shi'a "were armed to the teeth," anticipating attacks from Sunni Deobandi militants due to the Ashura holiday and the recent killing of Hakimullah Mehsud in a CIA drone attack. Jhang's Shi'a

perhaps overreacted and the two groups exchanged gunfire for hours before the army came in for three days.

<sup>167</sup> Interview, Islamabad-based Pakistani investigative journalist.

<sup>168</sup> Phone interview, former senior Pakistani federal law enforcement official.

<sup>169</sup> Telephone interview, Rawalpindi-based investigative reporter. This reporter has spoken with Intiqami on a number of occasions. He said that Intiqami appears to be an ethnic Punjabi and played a key role in the 2009 attacks on the army headquarters and Parade Lane mosque, both in Rawalpindi. Intiqami, the reporter added, has links to the Ghazi Force, though is not a member of the group.

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<sup>174</sup> Interview, senior Baluchistan police official.

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<sup>176</sup> Interview, Islamabad-based Pakistani investigative journalist.

<sup>177</sup> Zia Ur Rehman, "Lashkar-e-Jhangvi behind Hazara Killings in Quetta," The Friday Times, 5 August 2011, <http://www.thefridaytimes.com/beta2/tft/article.php?issue=20110805&page=8>.

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<sup>180</sup> Researcher interview, Allama Hashim Mosvi.

<sup>181</sup> Interview, senior Baluchistan police official.

<sup>182</sup> Interview, senior Baluchistan police official.

<sup>183</sup> Interview, senior Baluchistan police official.

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<sup>185</sup> "Quetta: Man Confesses to Sectarian Attacks," DAWN, 17 September 2004, <http://www.dawn.com/news/370817/quetta-man-confesses-to-sectarian-attacks>.

<sup>186</sup> Amir Mir, "Quetta Carnage was Avoidable had Kurd Been Nabbed," The News, 19 February 2013, [www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-21062-Quetta-carnage-was-avoidable-had-Kurd-been-nabbed](http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-21062-Quetta-carnage-was-avoidable-had-Kurd-been-nabbed).

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<sup>256</sup> Researcher interview, Usman Kakar, Baluchistan president, Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party.

<sup>257</sup> Researcher interview, Abdul Khaliq Hazara.

<sup>258</sup> Allama Hashim Moosvi, a Hazara leader in Quetta with the Majlis-e-Wahdat-e-Muslimeen Party, said, "It is true that other communities in Quetta resent the Hazaras. I do not want to name anybody." (Researcher interview)

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