Religiously Motivated Violence and the Public Sphere in Muslim Societies: Lessons from South Asia

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The Problem Defined

In recent years there has been a renewed and sharp increase in scholarly interest to comprehend the phenomenon of non-state militancy or terrorism in international relations. A common but implicit theme in this new wave of scholarship is the attempt to either establish or discredit the link between a particular religious ideology, i.e., Islam and the tendency for preferring violence over peaceful means for achieving political objectives. While this concern is understandable it is also extremely naïve and journalistic because of the erroneous assumption that Islam is a monolithic phenomenon experienced and interpreted identically by all Muslims. The analysis presented in this paper shows that, in all probability, Muslim terrorists share more in common with terrorists belonging to other religious traditions than they do with their co-religionists. Furthermore, the paper argues, that terrorism itself is also not a monolithic phenomenon. More specifically, this paper makes the claim that even though all terrorists may share a common preference for using violent means they do not always share common ends, therefore, once a group is identified as a terrorist entity, it must be classified according to its aspired ends. And it is within this classification based on ends rather than means in which all terrorists must be viewed.

The paper proceeds in three distinct sections. First, it provides a brief discussion of definitional issues, evolution and resultant broad typologies of terrorism, placing current heightened scholarly interest in the subject in its most recent context. The discussion here also delineates some differentiating characteristics of religious and secular terrorisms as they have evolved over time. Second, the paper presents a simple model of a terrorist organization and a conceptual framework. This model highlights the role played by ideology within the overall structure of a religious and a secular terrorist organization. The conceptual framework for analysis, on the other hand, utilizes the non-compensatory principle from the two-stage Poliheuristic Model of decision-making by Mintz (2004). It assumes that terrorists, like legitimate political leaders, are concerned with their own professional survival and the decisions they make are reflective of this concern. This section ends with a list of general claims that derive from the organizational model and the suggested framework for analysis. Third, the paper presents a case study of South Asian terrorist groups with an aim to illustrate the soundness of the claims made at the end of the preceding section. It also argues for the particular usefulness of choosing South Asia as a case to understand terrorism in general, especially in the post-911 context. While the main focus of the case study is on the emergence and evolution of various Pakistani terrorist groups, some discussion of the Indian and Afghan experience is also presented. In addition, for the sake of analysis, Kashmir is treated separately from India and Pakistan to show the transnational nature of religious militancy in the region. In the light of the South Asian experience the paper ends with highlighting several policy implications for tactical prevention of religious militancy in South Asia in particular and the world in general.

Modern Terrorism: Definitional Issues, Evolution and Typologies

Despite the fact that terrorism has a long and diverse history serious scholarly interest in the subject did not develop till the early 1970’s. Furthermore, early studies of terrorism seem more concerned with comprehending the tactical rather than theoretical or intellectual aspects of the phenomenon (McCormick, 2003). Due to this specialized attention the most significant and
controversial feature of the term “terrorism” is its definition. According to an analysis there are over one hundred separate definitions of terrorism (Schmid and Jongman 1988, McCormick 2003). It is not within the scope of this paper to attempt to resolve or even discuss the nature of scholarly disagreement on the term’s meaning, therefore, instead of forwarding a preferred definition this paper focuses on developing a workable list of the most common and fundamental aspects used by scholars to operationalize the concept.

According to Frey and Morris, three most crucial aspects of any act of terrorism are: First that it is always political in nature, i.e., terrorism always aims at precipitating political change through carrying out spectacular violent acts. This political nature is also highlighted by the fact that terrorists commit these outrageous acts under the rubric of some sort of justice, which they feel, has been denied to the constituency that they represent through self-appointment. Second, terrorism is distinguished from other forms of political violence by its non-state character. And third, that terrorism involves deliberate and surprise targeting of traditional non-combatants and innocent civilians (Frey & Morris, 1991).

In terms of the evolution of practice and theory of the phenomenon of terrorism, David Rapoport argues, that it occurs in consecutive and overlapping waves (2001). According to this theory modern terrorism is a power struggle along a continuum in which key variable is a widespread perception of opportunity, combined with a shift in a particular politico-ideological paradigm. These paradigm shifts, and the ensuing terrorist eras during these shifts, help us in identifying various typologies of modern terrorism. Based on this logic, Rapoport further argues, that there have been four main waves of modern terrorism.¹ The first wave occurred with the spread of concepts such as universal suffrage and popular empowerment. At the cost of oversimplification, one could argue, that these concepts eventually resulted in the breakdown of empires which were the dominant form of political order up until the end of the 19th century. The breakdown and consequent search for the new political order towards the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century; provided an opportunity for terrorism during this period. This wave finally culminated with the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and the breakout of the First World War in 1914. The second and related phase of terrorism is linked to the idea of national self-determination; it started at the end of the First World War and continues to the present day. Terrorist activity especially became intense during this wave after the Second World War when rapid decolonization occurred. The third wave began with the US intervention in Vietnam, in this instance the victory of Vietcong excited the imaginations of revolutionaries in every part of the globe, which in turn led to a resurgence of terrorist violence. A prominent feature in this phase of terrorism was the Soviet ideological and material support for anti-west terrorists. The fourth and final wave of terrorism, according to Rapoport, has matured with the September 11 attacks, which he calls the ‘Jihad Era’. This wave began with the Iranian Revolution of 1979 and gained strength during the Soviet occupation, and later defeat, in Afghanistan (Cronin, 2003 and Rapoport 2001).

In sum, therefore, in all four phases of terrorism, as delineated by Rapoport, main element is the window of opportunity provided by an interim period during a paradigm shift in the global political order. Rapoport’s analysis also brings forth several other and related aspects

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¹ It is noteworthy that, according to Rapoport, three of these waves overlap and exist parallel to each other rather than following each other in succession.
of modern terrorism. Most significantly it enables us to categorize terrorism into several types. In
the first three waves, for instance, the single most visible aspect of the motivation to turn to
militancy is a deeply ingrained feeling of injustice, committed against a group or a people, in
context of the prevalent global language of rights, self-determination and liberty. A turn to
militancy, in this instance, is for the purpose of achieving specific political objectives and the
resultant militant acts can be loosely lumped into a broad analytical category of secular
terrorism. This broad category, then, can be further broken down into sub-categories such as
leftist, separatist, ethno-nationalist etc. On the other hand Rapoport’s fourth wave can be broadly
termed as sacred terrorism. It is noteworthy that Rapoport’s waves do not follow each other in
succession and are instead overlapping and could also exist parallel to each other. However, one
could argue that during each paradigm shift a specific type of terrorism becomes more relevant
and effective. Furthermore, specific types of terrorism themselves can be manifested together
within a single terrorist group e.g. a group can be religiously oriented while at the same time
being separatist in nature such as Jihadi terrorist groups in Kashmir and Central Asia and also the
militant actions by IRA. It is worth highlighting here that Categorization of terrorist/ militant
groups is important because it eases the task of analysis on the one hand and reveals the nature of
activities that a group is likely to adopt on the other. These activities are usually supportive of the
ideological claims that militant groups make in order to strengthen their credibility in their
perceived and actual constituencies. It is also in this specific respect that this paper argues for
distinguishing sacred terrorism form the secular variants of the phenomenon.

The sharp upsurge in the scholarly work on the nature and characteristics of terrorism, as
argued earlier, is because of the heightened activity and success of religiously motivated terrorist
groups in the past two decades. Scholars argue that this latest form of militancy is potentially
more harmful than its predecessors. (Hoffman, 1998 & 1999; Lifton, 1999; Gurr and Cole 2000,
McCormick, 2003; Khashsan, 1997; Cronin 2003). According to Cronin, major reasons for this
claim are: First, that religiously motivated terrorists see the world in terms of good and evil,
therefore, everyone who disagrees with their religious vision of good is a potential enemy and
this includes even their co-religionists. Second, the actions of such groups can be extremely
unpredictable as they commit violence with the intent of pleasing a deity. Because of this
justification based on the divine sanction of their actions, religiously motivated militants do not
need to keep a particular constituency happy. In other words, loss of mass support for militant
activities is not an issue in pursuit of sacred terrorism which allows for pursuing violence
indiscriminately fashion. Third, religiously motivated militants do not feel bound by any specific
secular principles. This is to say that unlike ethno-nationalists or separatists, whose objective is
usually to either create a new state or gain their rightful share within an existing system; religious
militancy is not motivated by the notion of correcting a wrong within an existing system. Instead,
religious militants adopt violence because they want to overthrow the secular law-based society
and replace it with their version of a society based on religious commandments (Cornin 2003).
According to Pedhazur some organizations adopt an apocalyptic philosophy, or a death culture,
in which ending one’s life for the cause holds the status of a purifying mechanism for the self. In
terms of tactics, according to Pedhazur, such a philosophy could be the main cause of carrying
out suicide attacks (2005).

In addition to the above, sacred terrorism becomes particularly disturbing and dangerous
because of its time in history. The modern technological advancement, which is the hallmark of a
globalized world, allows these militants to make use of the internet to develop and maintain
terrorist networks; enables them to transfer funds and people across borders without getting detected easily; allows them to gain a larger audience to spread their message and gain new recruits via coverage of their activities by modern mass media. These factors, on the one hand, give modern sacred terrorist organizations an immense advantage over their predecessors, and on the other hand they highlight the urgency that undergirds the need to effectively discredit and control the spread of sacred terrorism. It is this perception of the gravity of threat posed by a combination of the unique features of religion-based terrorism and the current globalized nature of the international system which has resulted in an increase of scholarly interest in the subject.

Modern Terrorism: Organizational Model and Conceptual Framework

In the light of the above discussion, this part of the paper attempts to improve upon a simple model of a terrorist organization originally suggested by Troy and Casebeer (2004). The fundamental assumptions that go into developing this model are that all militant groups are rational actors who want to survive and be successful professionally. Furthermore, because these groups are rational, they make it their business to know about and utilize the very best resources available to them in a globalized and technologically advanced world. In this context, then, the any violent non-state organization must be composed of the following four mechanisms:

1) A support mechanism
2) A maintenance mechanism that funds the group’s activities.
3) A cognitive mechanism to learn from past incidents and to gather intelligence for gauging the impact and response to the activities of the group
4) A mechanism to convert planned operations to physical acts of violence.

Troy and Casebeer suggest that the life cycle of any violent non-state actor must be viewed in light of maturity that each of the above mechanisms, or subsystems, has achieved. In other words, like living organisms, militant organizations pass through a series of inter-related stages in form and function moving from gestation to growth, then maturity and death. However, a peculiar feature of these groups is that their growth is not necessarily linear and forward moving. A sub-system failure, alone or in conjunction with other sub-systems, may actually result in a reverse growth and consequent early death of a militant organization. Such a failure or asymmetric growth comes from the changes in the overall environment within which an organization exists. This raises interesting questions regarding behavior of a militant organization under different environmental impetuses and has serious implications for counter terrorism strategies (Troy and Casebeer, 2004).

This paper suggests that Troy and Casebeer’s model must be modified by introducing ideology as a crucial independent variable to understand the variation in militant group behavior. Inclusion of ideology, as argued later, highlights the differences in behavior of sacred and secular militant organizations. A preliminary test of the usefulness of this suggested modification is presented in the next part in shape of a case study of South Asian militant organizations.
The Models

Place Figure 1 here

The above model suggests that a militant group’s activities must be viewed at three levels of analysis, the environmental, the systemic and the sub-systemic. The environmental level consists of the prevalent and relevant political order at the state, region or international level. An attention to this level informs the analyst about socio-economic structures prevalent in the society in which a group initially takes roots, the historical experience through which a given society has come to the current stage, the political regime’s ability to govern and finally about the evolution of power relations between ethnic, religious, national or sub-national constituencies, which exist within the territorial boundaries in question. It is because of these power relations that a certain constituency may perceive itself as being disenfranchised and excluded from the legitimate political process thereby creating the justification to resort to violence as the only available political expression.

The second level, that of the system, provides information about how militant groups work as an organization. This level explains the interplay within the group and between various sub-systems which make its activities possible. In addition, it also entails the relationships which the group establishes between itself and the immediate constituency for which it is fighting a proxy war with the prevalent oppressive system at the environmental level.

The third level of analysis, i.e., the sub-system involves taking into account the workings of the individual specialized units of a militant group. The focus here is on making sense of the inner workings of individual sub-systems as well as how these specialized sub-units work in conjunction with each other to make the group functional. The four main sub-systems in a militant organization, as stated earlier, are 1) the support sub-system, 2) the maintenance sub-system, 3) the violence producing sub-system and 4) the cognitive sub-system. The work of the first three is inter-related and the activities of these are essentially focused on ensuring each other’s survival. For example, support sub-system entails recruitment and training, resource acquisition, propaganda activities and upkeep of critical stakeholder associations. The maintenance sub-system involves the internal bureaucratic structure of the militant organization, maintenance of supplies, overseeing the training and monitoring ideological purity of the new and existing members. It essentially maintains the culture of the organization as decided by the group’s leadership and ensures that decisions made regarding recruitment, training, resource-acquisition, resource-allocation, and violence campaigns etc. are implemented satisfactorily. The third sub-system, i.e., of violence production specializes in translating high command’s directives regarding violent campaigns into actual violent acts. This sub-system may also be involved in resource acquisition through bank robberies or similar activities, which may not be supportive of the group’s stated ideology but make possible group’s functioning otherwise.

From the perspective of this paper, the last, i.e., the cognitive sub-system is the most important of all and central to the militant group’s survival. Activities at this level include, intelligence gathering, campaign planning, decision making regarding group’s structure and activities. Other key functions at this level could be; determination of the organization’s ideological stance and preserving the monopoly over ideological rhetoric; choosing locations to setup training camps; assessment of success or failure of violence campaigns; and high powered
deals to acquire strategic weapons etc. Any disruption at this level could result in chaos and disorder in the overall organization setup.

From the standpoint of this paper, however, the cognitive subsystem performs an even more important function. As shown in figure 1, in case of a secular militant organization the cognitive sub-system represents the learning cycle for the group. It assesses the impact of violence on the environment and its own constituency and does course correction accordingly in planning future campaigns. For example, if a violence campaign goes bad and the constituency in whose name the group is fighting the proxy war is affected negatively, the group leadership may decide to withhold further violence or issue an apology or statement of regret, to reinforce the legitimacy of resorting to violence to achieve political objectives. In this learning pattern central and foremost concern of the group’s leadership is to ensure that its constituency is always kept satisfied. It is also the mechanism through which group’s decision makers test and hone the logic on the basis of which group campaigns are planned and executed. Troy and Casebeer call this process “the Single-loop learning [which] involves learning from the consequences of previous behavior, resulting in changes in strategies of action, or assumptions underlying strategies, in ways that leave the values of a theory of action unchanged.” (2004, p.4) From the point of view of this paper, this process strongly highlights the fact that in case of secular militant organizations group’s immediate constituency keeps a tacit check on the ways in which violence maybe used by the group. Stated in terms of the Poliheuristic Model of decision making, options that negatively impact the constituency’s interest is a non-compensatory option for secular militant organizations. In addition, the cognitive sub-system’s function is almost fully satisfied by the single-loop learning. Furthermore, changes in strategies and tactics can satisfactorily correct errors in group-performance and also as regards improvement of group-effectiveness. This is because group objectives are limited by the permanent and physical presence of a constituency for whom it resorts to violence in the first place.²

Contrary to the above, as depicted in Figure 2 below, in case of religiously motivated militant organizations (i.e., sacred terrorism) function of the cognitive sub-system is fundamentally different because of the absence of a real constituency. Cognitive process in this case is close to that of a double-loop system. In such a learning pattern two feedback interfaces link the intelligence related to a violent act with the environment or past strategies, and at the same time also to the values served by those strategies. In other words religiously motivated militant groups have the constant potential, as well as need, to reorient and reinvent themselves because of the lack of a physical constituency. As a result violence in such cases is not a means to an end, but an end in itself and can be directed towards anyone who disagrees with group ideology.

Place Figure 2 here

Faith-based ideal of religious groups cannot be falsified through empirical means and the mindset that it helps to create is one in which violence is a sacred duty executed in direct response to the theological demand or imperative. In a certain sense, militants in such groups are totally alienated from real world and feel responsible only to God or his agent, i.e., the group’s leadership. According to Hoffman both, i.e., the sacred and the secular militant group, live in

² Examples of such behavior IRA, RAF etc.
future but the fundamental difference in perception and justification for violence between them is that for religious groups future is divinely decreed and the members of the group themselves are specifically anointed to achieve it; the inevitability of their victory is thus taken for granted. Hoffman cites a 1996 communiqué issued by an Egyptian Islamic group in support of his argument. As the following quote from the communiqué shows that even a remote possibility that the group’s secular opponents might succeed is dismissed,

They [group’s enemies] plot and plan and God too plans, but the best of planners is God … pursue the battle …. until such time that God would grant victory – just as the Prophet Mohammad did with the Quresh until God granted victory over Mecca”. (Bruce Hoffman, 1997).

Similar messages also frequently appear in Bin Laden videotapes which have regularly surfaced in recent years. The place allocated to violence in this kind of reasoning points ultimately to a divinely ordained ultimate reality on the one hand and constantly pushes the group to continue its fight on the other hand as the alternate to give up violence is to displease the deity. Furthermore, what makes the violence even more dangerous, indiscriminate and wholesale, is the notion that rewards to each individual militant in the group will be distributed in the afterworld where God at a personal level would honor militants. This is to say that if a religious militant group or its members were to stop violence they must either relegate themselves to being less committed religiously and thereby cease to exist as militants or in terms of this model move from the double to a single loop of cognition which pushes the usefulness of violent means to a more normal level and takes away the group’s ability of ‘learning to learn’ in a rapidly changing complex environment. In terms of the Poliheuristic model of decision-making, then, abandoning violence is a non-compensatory option for a religious militant group as it would result in the death of the group itself.

To sum up the above discussion; the models of religious militant organizations suggest the following:

1) Abandoning violence is a non-compensatory option for religious militant groups.

2) The non-compensatory nature of violence produced by religious militants makes violence an end in itself rather than it being a means to an end.

3) Production of violence rather than achievement of some distant but realizable political objective is the primary purpose of a religiously motivated Militant group’s existence.

4) The basis for group ideology in case of a religious militant group is not linked to a realizable political objective; instead it is imagined as being divinely sanctioned. The group members live in an alienated state from the societies in which they are physically present and thus are in pursuit of a utopian ideal.

5) Due to the necessity to continue violence, any disruption in a religious militant group’s other sub-systems i.e. support, recruitment, maintenance etc., propels it towards acquiring alternate means of such support in order to continue violence. This assumes that the cognitive sub-system remains largely intact.
6) A religious militant group’s ability to reorient and reinvent itself in response to the change in environmental attributes enables it to broaden the scope of its operations and pushes it towards producing more wholesale acts of violence.

7) A change in traditional support systems and the push towards more indiscriminate acts of violence may lead to a change in tactics traditionally employed by a religious militant group.

**Exploring Religious Militancy in South Asia: A Comparative Case Study**

In this section the statements/claims made above are tested in light of the South Asian experience with religious militancy. The nature of analysis is that of a comparative case study with militant organizations in Pakistan being the focal point. Choice of South Asia is well-justified given its geographical position, its centrality to the current US led war on terror, the transnational nature of militant groups present here and especially because of the September 11th terrorist attacks. Furthermore, in terms of typologies, South Asia allows us to trace the development of both religious and secular militancy in the region. In particular, Pakistan’s geographical proximity to Shiite Iran, its close ties with Wahabist Saudi Arabia, its past status as a frontline US ally, during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and country’s nuclear status; present analysts with a diverse and vibrant scene which allows for tracing historical patterns as well as assessing future dangers associated with the rise of non-state violence. Country’s 60-year struggle with India over the dispute territory of Kashmir has resulted in three full-fledge wars and Pakistani military’s paradoxical position which supports the current war on global terror and also the non-state insurgency in Kashmir further enrich the scope of analysis.

**Insert Table 1 here**

Table 1 lists various militant groups working in South Asia. As the table shows only 3 out of the total 28 militant organizations have secular objectives. In case of India this number is much higher that is 11 out of 15, whereas in case of Afghanistan and Kashmir the groups are not only religious they also have a predominantly transnational character.\(^3\) Other noteworthy factors are the sheer existence of a large number of non-state militant groups in Pakistan. This is indicative of the fact that either the state has a policy of tolerance for non-state militancy or there is a lack of effective governance over its own territory. It makes sense because of the autonomous nature of the tribal areas in country’s north-western region and the dispute over Kashmir in the north-east which is almost as old as the country itself. There is no graph or map here for showing the ethnic spread of the groups within Pakistan overtime, however, past analyses suggest that most of the groups are based close to the western border in the North West Frontier Province where, during the Afghan Jihad against the Soviets, an elaborate network of

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\(^3\) The table is coded on the basis of the MIPT knowledge base’s description of groups, other literature on the region suggests that in case of Afghanistan and the militant groups listed here 100% of the groups have a transnational character. This is partly facilitated by the porous border between the country and its neighbors and partly because of a lack of an effective government since over two decades, which make the country a haven for foreign militants. Similarly for Kashmir only one group can be termed indigenous with a purely nationalist agenda all other groups are transnational, which is understandable because Kashmir is disputed territory with both India and Pakistan having a vested interest in the region. However it is the increasingly religious charter of militancy in Kashmir, which is of interest for the purpose of this paper.
Mudrassahs (i.e. religious schools) was created to produce Jihadis (Nasr, 2003). Since 1990 some major Mudrassahs were also opened in the central and southern Punjab regions to recruit militants for the supporting the struggle in Kashmir (Nasr, 2003). In addition, Karachi (Pakistan’s biggest city) has seen major violence between indigenous Sindhi and migrant Urdu speaking communities. The basis for these disputes is ethno-linguistic and involves Mutahdia Qaumi Movement (MQM). MQM was originally created to increase the stake of the Urban Urdu-speaking population of Sindh province which migrated from India to Pakistan on the eve of the country’s independence in 1947. It is perhaps a classic case in terms of the model presented above for a secular militant organization. MQM represented a specific constituency, the immigrants and was originally called the Mauhajir Qaumi Movement (i.e. Immigrant Nationalist Movement), during the 1980s and early 1990s it launched massive but selective violent campaigns in Karachi. However in 1988 when the country returned to a democratic form of government MQM gained a sizeable number of seats in the provincial legislature and participated in forming the government. Since then violence perpetrated by the movement has decreased and it has expanded its scope from the provincial to the national level. The MQM changed its name to Mutahida Qaumi Movement (i.e. United Nationalist Movement) and participated in the elections from all provinces for seats in the national legislature. The group currently holds several key national level cabinet positions in addition to forming a coalition government in the province of Sindh. It has also effectively transformed its organizational setup from a secular militant organization to that of a regular political party. Group membership and its political agenda however remains exclusivist as it still represents the original constituency and seeks to enhance the share of power for the Urban, Urdu-speaking, and immigrant population of Pakistan.

In contrast to MQM, table 2 above presents a general comparison of Pakistani militant groups. Particular noteworthy here is the sharp rise in the overall number of religious and anti-US groups in the past decade and a half. This confirms Rapoport’s analysis regarding the fourth wave of terrorism, which is led by Jihadi organizations. However from the standpoint of the models presented above two things are especially noteworthy. First is the inclusive nature of religious groups themselves and second the sharp rise in violence along with the rise in religious militancy as represented by table 3 and figure 3 later.

It is interesting to note here that from 1958 till 1980 there were only 5 militant groups in the country out of which 4 were secular. From 1980 to 1990 the number of groups came to 11, adding 6 new groups to the previously existing 5. This rise in groups coincides with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. From 1990 to end 1999 there were 6 more groups added, all having a religious ideology and backed by US and Pakistan to fight the Soviets. A look at group ideology shows that within this broader agenda, during this period, the Pakistani military started its own proxy war in Kashmir by supporting religio-national militant groups in the region. (Abou Zahab, 2004). The table also shows that from 2000 till 2005 six new groups were added to the tally. Interestingly, all of these groups appear after the September 11 attacks and the resultant war on terrorism initiated by the US. From the perspective of this paper, a significant trend in this new inclusion of groups is their religious character and an anti-US ideology. Furthermore, these groups are formed after the Pakistani state banned several existing religious groups formed during Pakistan’s support for the insurgency in Kashmir and Afghanistan. In addition, during this
time Pervez Musharaf’s government in Pakistan launched an initiative to reform the Mudrassahs; house arrested known leaders of religious groups and implemented checks over communication and conventional fund raising practices of militant organizations. In terms of models presented earlier in the paper, it appears, that older groups after losing their traditional sub-systems regrouped to continue violence through alternate means. The most striking feature of these newly formed groups seems to be their trans-national character. In addition, a look at militant group tactics reveals that several previously unutilized methods were employed by South Asian groups in this period. And finally the choice of targets for violence also seems to have become more universal and indiscriminate, i.e., frequently involving co-religionists as targets. It seems reasonable to argue that these factors appear to be a direct result of inclusion of members from disbanded or banned groups. In other words banning or the war on terror, which were supposed to kill the groups, resulted in heightened and indiscriminate violence because of these groups’ necessity to survive professionally. The most important factor, however, remains to be their religious character or sacred ideology which enabled these to seamlessly integrate with other religious groups in geographically distant areas. Ideology, hence, turns out to be the key factor in determining militant group survival and also the range of activities and targets that it can focus on.

**Insert Table 3 Here**

**Insert Figure 3 Here**

Above discussion is also representative of the fact that there is a symbiotic relationship between violence and group survival in case of militant groups which have no physical constituency. Members of these groups conduct violence to please a deity which alone can reward them. In terms of the two-stage Poliheuristic method, then, this situation can be understood as one in which during the first stage, abandoning violence is automatically considered non-compensatory and therefore ruled out from the possible options. In the second stage, only remaining options for the group are those concerning conduct of violence. In this situation, and as a rational actor, more spectacular and devastating violent acts favor the group in terms of recognition and stature. Classic examples in support of these arguments from the South Asian case study can be attacks on Pakistani president and prime minister, Christian missionary schools, missionary hospitals, attacks on Indian Parliament, hijacking of Indian plane and targeting of US related sites and foreign missions in Pakistan. The sensitive and highly protected nature of these targets alone is enough to point us towards understanding the group’s resolve to commit violence. In the face of greater obstacles members of the group are willing to die in pursuit of violence. In other words, instead of being one of many available options, violence seems to be the only option the group is willing to consider. And in this pursuit targets that are not likely to enhance sympathy for the group’s objectives also become fair game hence making violence more indiscriminate.

**Conclusions**

Analysis of militant groups in Pakistani and South Asia above reveals several important characteristics of modern terrorism. First, it illustrates that religious militancy is fundamentally different from its secular counterpart. This difference is most visible in the manner in which groups members operationalize and justify their militant acts. A secular militant group responds
to the pressures exerted by its constituency. Religious militants on the other hand face no such pressures and on the contrary their belief, in the divine sanction of the terror they produce, allows them to be more indiscriminate and wholesale in conducting violence.

The sacred nature of violence also allows these groups to recruit without regard to nationality of its members, hence, producing barriers against possible conversion to a secular/political ideology because of group’s diverse membership. If anything there is possibility of an ideological shift towards becoming more hardcore religious than secular. For example, in South Asia, the call for Jihad until the early 1990s asked for fighting members of a rival sect or the Soviets in Afghanistan and the Hindus in Kashmir and India. With the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan the agenda moved towards becoming more rigorously pro-Sunni and anti-Shiite Islam. However, with introduction of Al Qaeda into the picture in post Soviet Afghanistan the agenda moved once again, this time towards an anti-US and anti-west position. In the post 911 scenario, after Pakistan’s decision to join the US led war on terror, the Pakistani state and other Islamic countries, which supported the US, also became valid targets for Islamic militants.

It is noteworthy that from 2001 – 2005 significant advances were made in terms of disabling the sub-systems of militant organizations because of a heavy worldwide crackdown on terrorism. These advances were made in terms of improved conventional law enforcing tools and also through the US and allied Operations in Afghanistan to uproot the Taliban regime and Al Qaeda bases in Afghanistan. Furthermore, in this period, Pakistani military showed the political will to discourage cross border infiltration in Kashmir and normalize relations with India thus opening a previously untried non-violent solution to the Kashmir issue. With such pressures the logical impact should have been a reduction in terrorist incidents. On the contrary as table 3 shows this is the period in which the maximum numbers of terrorist incidents occur in the region. This suggests that an effective counter strategy to check religious militancy must aim not only at disrupting the support and maintenance sub-systems but also take into account the cognitive processes which are in a sense superimposed over all other sub-systems. While a detailed discussion of these strategies is not possible here, in the light of the recent Israeli strategy of hitting Hamas leaders to curb suicide bombing can be sighted as one example. Research shows that these hits have resulted in less-organized and less effective bombing campaigns in the region.(Mintz, Mishal & Kaplan, 2004)
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**Reports, Congressional Hearings and Databases**

**Pakistan: Balancing Reform and Counter-terrorism**, Congressional Hearing, Committee on Foreign Relations July 14, 2004


**MIPT: Terrorism Knowledge Base**, accessible at [http://www.tkb.org/Home.jsp](http://www.tkb.org/Home.jsp)
Figure 1: Model of a Secular Militant Organization
Figure 2: Model of Religious Militant Organization
Table 1: Militant Groups in South Asia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pakistan</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>Afghanistan</th>
<th>Kashmir</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF)</td>
<td>Al-Gama’a al-Islamiyya (GAI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Al Qanoon</td>
<td>Al-Faran</td>
<td>Al-Qaeda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Al-Anfeen</td>
<td>Al-Hadid</td>
<td>Al-Zulfikar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Al-Badr</td>
<td>Al-Qaeda</td>
<td>Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIU)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Al-Fuqra</td>
<td>Al-Zulfikar</td>
<td>Hizb-I Islami Gulbuddin (HIG)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Al-Intiqami al-Pakistani</td>
<td>Ananda Marga</td>
<td>Hizb-I-Islami</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Al-Nasireen</td>
<td>Borok National Council of Tripura</td>
<td>Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Al-Qaeda</td>
<td>Maoist Communist Center (MCC)</td>
<td>Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Al-Umar Mujahedeen</td>
<td>National Democratic Front of Bodoland</td>
<td>Mujahedeen Message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Al-Zulfikar</td>
<td>National Liberation Front of Tripura</td>
<td>Saif-ul-Muslimeen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Baloch Liberation Army (BLA)</td>
<td>People's War Group (PWG)</td>
<td>Taliban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Black December</td>
<td>United Liberation Front of Assam</td>
<td>Tunisian Combatant Group (TCG)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Harakat ul-Jihad-i-Islami (HUJI)</td>
<td>United People's Democratic Solidarity</td>
<td>Yemen Islamic Jihad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Harakat ul-Mudjahidin (HuM)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Hizb-I Islami Gulbuddin (HIG)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Hizbul Mujahideen (HM)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Jaish-e-Mohammad (JEM)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Jamaat-e-Islami (Jel)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Jamiat ul-Mujahidin (JuM)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Jammu and Kashmir Student Liberation Front</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Lashkar-I-Omar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Muttahida Qami Movement (MQM)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Sipah-e-Sahaba/Pakistan (SSP)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key:
- Religious/ Transnational
- Secular
- Religious/ National/Local

Source: MIPT: Terrorism Knowledge Base (accessible at http://www.tkb.org/Home.jsp)
Table 2: Comparison of Pakistani Militant Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Origins</th>
<th>Ideology</th>
<th>Remarks/ Membership/ Aims</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Mutahida Qaumi Movement</td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>Secular</td>
<td>Urdu Speaking urban immigrant population of Pakistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Baloch Liberation Army</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Secular</td>
<td>nationalist / Baluchi people in the South Western province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Black December</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Secular</td>
<td>Goal specific to liberate prisoners of war from India after secession of Bangladesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Al Zulfiqar</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Secular</td>
<td>Secular/ Anti-Dictatorial philosophy against Zia ul Haq's Regime/ Democratic Restoration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Hizb-e-Islami</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>Mixed membership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Al Qaeda</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>Veterans of afghan and other islamic insurgencies/ Anti western especially US. Activities in Pakistan heightened since Taliban Rule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Harkat ul Jihad e Islami</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>Sectarian Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Sipah Sahaba – Pakistan</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Religious / Sectarian</td>
<td>Sectarian Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Harkat ul Mujahedin</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>Mixed membership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Al Omar Mujahedin</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>Mixed- Religious /Kashmiri Nationalist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Jamaat ul Mujahedin</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>Mixed membership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Lasker e taiba</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>Sectarian Sunni/ moved towards including members of other religious like minded groups/ Anti US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Lashker e Jhangvi</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Religious / Sectarian</td>
<td>Sectarian Sunni/ moved towards including members of other religious like minded groups/ Anti US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Hizb ul Mujahedin</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Religious/ Nationalist</td>
<td>Religious/ Afghan nationalista/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Nationalist/ Religious</td>
<td>Religious/ Uzbek nationalista/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Al Badar</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>Initially appeared in 1971-2 as kashmiri nationalist/ reappeared in 1989 as kashmiri religious / acquired a totally religious color in 1999/ Anti US.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Lashker e Umar</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>Members from diverse religious militant groups/ Anti US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Al Qanoon</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>Members from diverse religious militant groups/ Anti US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Al Arfeen</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>Members from diverse religious militant groups/ Anti US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Al-Inteqami Al-Pakistani</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>Members from diverse religious militant groups/ Anti US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 313</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>Members from diverse religious militant groups/ Anti US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Al Nasireen</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>Members from diverse religious militant groups/ Anti US</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compiled from MIPT: Terrorism Knowledge Base ([http://www.tkb.org/Home.jsp](http://www.tkb.org/Home.jsp))
Table 3: Number of terrorist incidents in South Asia from 01/01/970 – 12/31/2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Pakistan</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>Afghanistan</th>
<th>Kashmir</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1970-1974</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975-1979</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-1984</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985-1999</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2005</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>828</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MIPT : Terrorism Knowledge Base (http://www.tkb.org/Home.jsp)
Data for 1968-1997 covers only international incidents.
Data for 1998-Present covers both domestic and international incidents.

Figure 3: Terrorist Incidents by country from 01/01/1970 till 12/31.2004

Source: MIPT : Terrorism Knowledge Base (http://www.tkb.org/Home.jsp)
Data for 1968-1997 covers only international incidents.
Data for 1998-Present covers both domestic and international incidents.