

**TALIBAN, RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM AND TERRORISM:
IMPLICATIONS FOR CENTRAL ASIA**

*Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfilment of the requirement
for the award of the degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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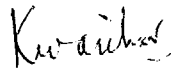
July 21, 2002

CERTIFICATE

Certified that the dissertation entitled “**Taliban, Religious Extremism And Terrorism: Implications For Central Asia**” submitted by **Ajitabh**, in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of this University, is to the best of our knowledge, his own work and has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other university.

We recommend that this dissertation may be placed before the examiners for evaluation for award of the degree of Master of Philosophy.


Prof. K. Warikoo
Chairperson


Prof. K. Warikoo
Supervisor

TO MY LOVING FATHER AND LATE MOTHER

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P R E F A C E

Afghanistan is one of the few countries in the world whose geography determines history, politics and the nature of people. Located geo-strategically at the crossroads of Central Asia, South Asia and West Asia, Afghanistan is bordered by Pakistan, Iran, China and the three Central Asian Republics of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Encompassing 2,45,000 square miles, Afghanistan's geographic features include rugged mountains, deserts, a few fast flowing rivers, isolated fertile valleys, river basins and oases. Hindu Kush range bisects the country roughly into northern and southern part.

Approximately 10-12 per cent of Afghan territory is suitable for cultivation, both irrigated and non-irrigated. Thus economy is agriculture based. In the agriculture-dominated society, a small percentage of the population has also worked as intermediary or traders. Raising of goats and sheeps form a major source of livelihood.

Afghanistan's population is estimated at 22 million. The country's only census conducted in 1978 put the population at 15.5 million. The multi-ethnic character of Afghanistan is clearly brought out by the presence of Pashtun, Tajik, Uzbek, Hazara besides Turkmens, Aimaq, Kazak, Nuristani, Baluchi, Kyrgyz and others. Louis Dupree listed twenty one Afghan ethnic groups.

Demographically, the Pashtuns who speak Pushtu are the largest of the Afghan ethnic groups and form approximately 40 per cent of the total population. They have traditionally lived in the southern and eastern part of the country and dominated the political destiny of land-locked Afghanistan. The Dari-speaking Tajiks, settled predominantly in the north and north-east of Afghanistan, are the second largest ethnic group, constituting about 25 per cent of the population.

The north-based Turki-speaking Uzbeks account for almost 10 per cent of population while the Shia Hazaras, located in the central part of the country and western-Afghanistan based Aimaq both make up perhaps 10 per cent of the population. None of these groups is completely indigenous. Almost all major ethnic groups except for the Hazara overlap the international borders into neighbouring country. Muslims are in majority (99%) in which Shia accounts for 12 % only.

Historically, Afghanistan has been at the centre of both dialogue and conflict between civilizations. Due to its geo-strategic location, Afghanistan has acted at certain times as a buffer between competing empires and ideologies; it has also been used as a corridor through which imperialist forces marched. In ancient period afghan territory was a meeting place and battleground for the Persian and Turkish Empire. Alexander the Great used Hindu Kush to penetrate into India. The famous Silk Route between the Roman Empire and China had many important trading posts in Afghanistan. Islam reached Afghanistan through Arab invaders in the second quarter of the seventh century.

After the collapse of Timurid dynasty, Afghanistan became a bone of contention between rival Mughal and Safavid empires.

The credit for the creation of the modern state of Afghanistan goes to Ahmad Shah Durrani. In 1747, he was elected as the King after a nine-day *Loya Jirga* or meeting of tribal chiefs. Ahmad Shah united all the Pashtun tribes and conquered a large territory. Timur Shah, who succeeded his father Ahmad Shah in 1772, had to face opposition from local groups. His death in 1793 heralded a prolonged period of disunity, which saw increasing rivalry between Czarist Russia and colonial Britain for influence over the area during the 18th and 19th century. The continuing tension between the two competing empires finally resulted in agreements. In 1893 Durand Line delineated the boundary between Afghanistan and British-India. Abdul

Rahman Khan who ruled from 1880 to 1901 with British backing consolidated and centralized the Afghan state. He introduced the concept of a divine right to rule rather than the traditional way of election by the *Loya Jirga*. His son and successor Amir Habibullah Khan brought Afghanistan on the road to modernization by introducing modern education and liberal political system. He was assassinated in 1919 and replaced by his son King Amanullah. Amanullah's reign saw the full formal independence of Afghanistan from Britain in 1919. He introduced the country's first constitution in 1923 and attempted to impose western life-style. He was overthrown in 1929 by a Tajik Habibullah Ghazi (Bacha-I-Saqao). Ghazi's nine-month rule marks the only instance of the Afghan monarchy going to a non-Pashtun. Ghazi was overthrown by dominant Pashtun General Nadir Khan. Nadir Khan's assassination in November 1933 brought his young son Zahir Shah as King. Zahir Shah was deposed in a palace coup led by his cousin and brother-in-law Mohammad Daoud in 1973 and sent into exile in Rome. Afghanistan was declared a republic and Daoud became its President. He was able to crush an Islamic fundamentalist movement whose leaders included Gulbuddin Hikmetyar, Burhanuddin Rabbani and Ahmad Shah Masud. These leaders had to flee to Peshawar in 1975. Pakistan supported them in their opposition to Daoud.

However, Daoud was assassinated in April 1978 in a military coup (Saur Revolution) orchestrated by People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) with Soviet support. The PDPA's imposition of reform policies in land distribution, education, marriage etc led to confrontation and subsequent assassination of President Nur Muhammad Taraki in September 1979. His successor Hafizullah Amin tried to distance himself from Moscow's influence. This and the Soviet fear of Islamists reassertion with US help resulted in the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 and death of Amin. The Communist regime installed by the

Soviets ruled until April 1992, first under Babrak Karmal (1979-86) and then under Najibullah (1986-92).

With the Soviet troops withdrawal from Afghanistan in February 1989, there ensued a struggle against the Najibullah rule. Islamist *Mujahideen* (fighters in a holy war) leaders who had fled to Pakistan in the 1970s took the initiative and with Pakistan and its allies support led the *jihād* (holy war) against the Afghan rulers. The Mujahideen succeeded in overthrowing the Najibullah regime in April 1992. And in June of that year, a Mujahideen government headed by Burhanuddin Rabbani took the reins of power in Kabul. But it could not sustain due to intra-Mujahideen rivalry, infighting and external interference. The Taliban's onslaught forced them to retreat to north in September 1996.

In the post-Cold War world no other political movement in the Islamic world has attracted as much attention as the Taliban in Afghanistan. Labelled variously as soldiers of Islam, militia in pursuit of obscurantist-terrorist ideology, the Taliban evolved over a period of time as the greatest destabilizing threat to the world at large and Central Asian Republics [CARs] in particular. In the wake of the terrorist attacks on US cities on 11th September 2001, world's attention shifted to states and governments, which protect, harbour or encourage terrorism driven by religious extremism. Subsequently a coalition on war against terrorism has been formed to search and crush this global menace. It is in this context that the study of the Taliban, their origin, ideology and their links with other extremist as well as terrorist groups and their implications for neighbouring countries especially the Central Asian Republics assumes significance.

Chapter one analyses factors and circumstances responsible for the rise of the Taliban. The role of external players such as Pakistan and internal socio-political and economic conditions has been dealt in detail.

The second chapter, “Taliban and Religious Extremism”, while assessing the role of religion in Afghan society elaborates the Taliban brand of religious extremism and its effects on society, culture and economy of Afghanistan.

In the third chapter “Taliban and International Terrorism”, the international and pan-Islamic character of terrorism and terrorist network has been deliberated. It sheds light on how Taliban amalgamated itself with the international network of terror providing safe haven to Islamic terrorists from around the world.

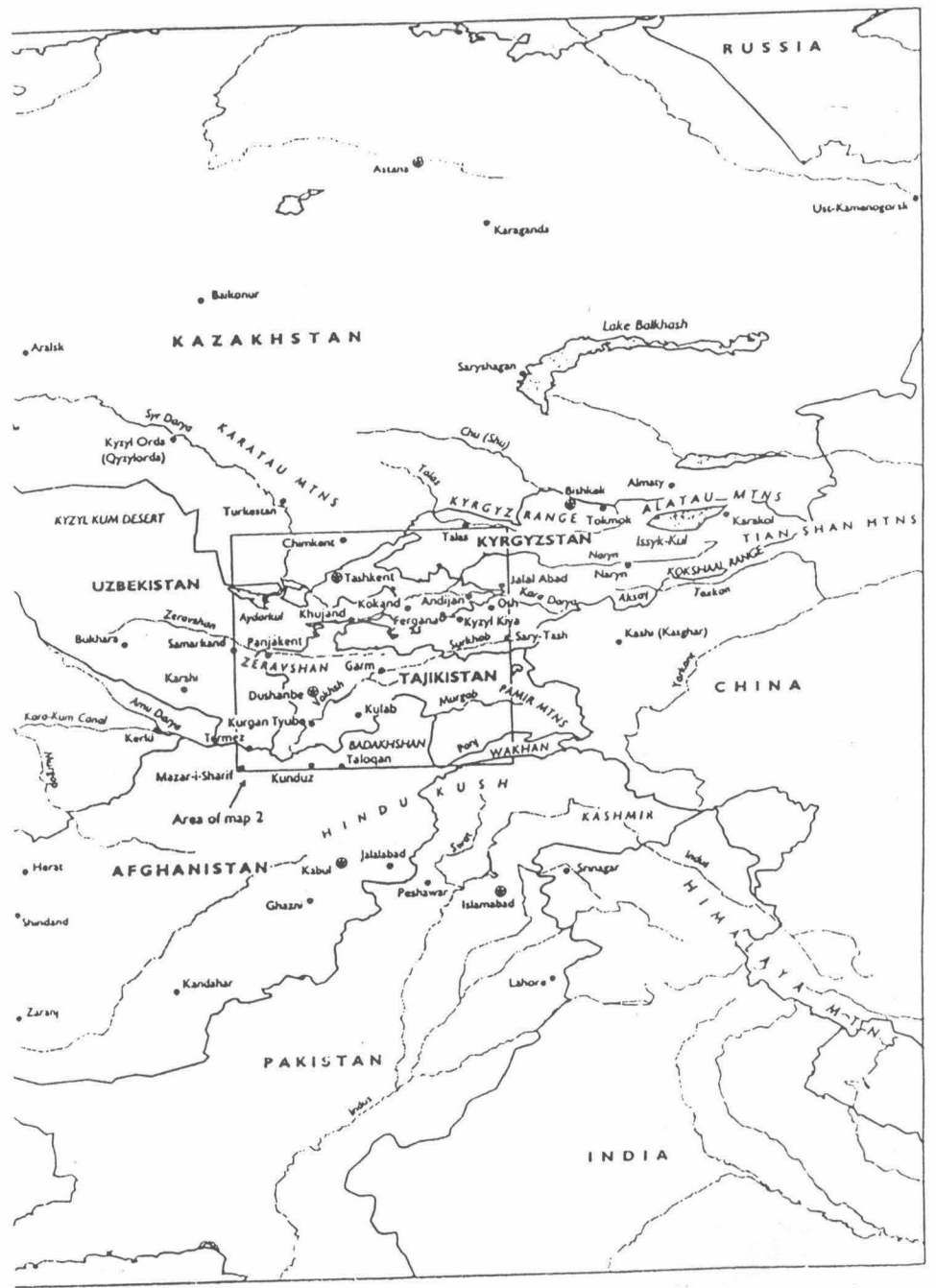
The instability in Afghanistan has always been disturbing for neighbouring nations. But the Taliban’s usurpation of the Afghan throne proved most destabilizing and harmful to regional security especially in regards to the nascent republics of Central Asia.

The fourth chapter discusses the security implications caused by the Taliban for the Central Asian Republics.

Last section winds up this study by drawing the conclusions.



MAP 1: CENTRAL ASIA



CHAPTER – I

RISE OF TALIBAN

The Taliban draws its name from the Arabic word *talib*. The literal meaning of *talib* is one who is seeking something for himself. It is derived from the word *talab*, meaning desire. In Urdu, *talib* is generally affixed with another word to clarify what is being sought, for example, *Talib-e-duniya* – one who seeks the pleasures of this world, *Talib-e-didar*- one who is seeking the sight of his beloved. Similarly the Urdu word *Talib-e-ilm* is a person in search of knowledge i.e., a student. Taliban is the plural form of *talib*. In Pushto the word *taliban* generally means student studying in *deeni madaris* (religious institutions).

Deeni madaris are an offshoot of the old madrassa educational system. They have been playing a role in the Muslim society. Some religious institutions contributed in educating and informing Muslim masses while others were instrumental in dividing the Ummah into different schools of thought and brain washing young minds to spread Islam to different parts of the world.

Though the Taliban phenomenon is of recent origin, *talibs* appeared on the scene much earlier. Long ago in 1898, Winston Churchill wrote about a host of wandering *Talib-ul-ilms* in North-West Frontier, who corresponded with the theological students in Turkey and lived free at the expense of the people.¹ Despite the establishment of state aided educational institutions and madrassas in Afghanistan, private madrassas continued to flourish in which the *talibs* were trained according to strict Kuranic law. Many of them rose to become religious teachers and political activists. Fazal Omar Mojdeddi and Sher Agha Naguib were both *talibs*. They were among the religious leaders who wielded power in

¹ William Maley (ed.), *Fundamentalism Reborn? Afghanistan and the Taliban* (London, 1998) p. 14.

Afghanistan between 1929 and 1953. Mullah Shor Bazar, an Afghan fighter famous for having kept the British at bay during the 1919 Third Anglo-Afghan War was also a *talib*, as was Mir Waiz of Kandahar, who also fought against the foreign occupation of his country. In 1980s *talibs* fought for *jihad* against the Soviet army. Most of the *jihadi talibs* were the product of a chain of *deeni madaris* which had been set up along the Afghan-Pakistan border by General Ziaul Haq, the then President of Pakistan.² Ziaul Haq established them in order to create a group of religiously-minded students who would assist the Afghan Mujahideen to fight against the Soviet forces. He had strategic, political and economic interests in view. They were actively used by the *Mujahideen* in the fight against the Najibullah regime.

But the new breed of the Taliban were different from the earlier *talibs* as they were drawn from hundreds of madrassas and orphanages in Pakistan. Pakistan exploited the Afghan orphans, landless, convicts and mercenaries for its vested interest. Unaware of their lineages or the history of Afghanistan, they became a pawn in the hands of their Pakistani masters. Pakistan created, launched and armed the Taliban in the hope that an indebted Taliban led Afghanistan would become a satellite of Pakistan and would help in diluting and undermining the Afghan nationalism that had threatened to exacerbate the demand for Pashtunistan especially in the light of the lapsed Durand Line Agreement.

Pakistani regimes were always eager to avoid a Delhi - Kabul axis as Afghanistan was considered a potential ally for India ever since Kabul, in 1947, challenged the Pakistani sovereignty over Pashtunistan, that is the area of the North West Frontier Province, populated by Pashtun who were supporting India under the

² Kamal Matinuddin, *The Taliban Phenomenon: Afghanistan 1994-1997* (Karachi, 1999) p. 14.

leadership of Frontier Gandhi, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan. Diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan had already been severed twice, in 1955 and 1962 as Kabul advocated a 'Greater Pashtunistan' in tandem with left-wing Pakistani Pashtuns.

Pakistan's foreign policy has always been determined by its relations with India. A puppet government led by the Taliban, Pakistan thought, would give it 'strategic depth' against India. A limited geographical space denied its forces the ability to fight a prolonged war with India. In case of a war, Pakistani strategists hoped, it could shift its sophisticated nuclear and other armaments and elite forces to a safer place inside Afghanistan, thus denying India easy victory.

Kashmir issue also shaped Pakistan's Afghanistan policy. As international pressure on Pakistan was building up to stop cross-border terrorism, it planned to shift terrorist camps from Pakistan to a friendly Afghanistan from where terrorist training would continue for subversive activities in Jammu and Kashmir. So it supported the Taliban. After acquiring the base in Afghanistan, the Taliban did provide Pakistan-backed terrorists sanctuaries in Afghanistan's Khost, Jalalabad and other places. Pakistan also contemplated to check Iranian influence in Afghanistan through the Taliban and envisaged that Russia and Central Asian Republics would be compelled to deal with the Taliban through Pakistan while the US and other western countries would feel obliged to seek help from Pakistan for its Taliban connection.

Oil politics also contributed to Pakistan's support for the Taliban. Pakistani oil and gas resources were running out. It was estimated that by 2010 Pakistan would face an annual 0.8 trillion cubic feet shortfall in gas. Pakistan was also desperate for assured cheaper oil supplies. The proposed Unocal oil pipeline through Afghanistan controlled by the Taliban would not only have supplied Pakistan oil and gas, but also earned petro dollars for Central Asian oil exports to

Asian markets. Pakistan also visualised becoming the leader of Islamic nations by expanding Islamic solidarity beyond Afghanistan into Central Asia thus strengthening its rivalry against India. Pakistan was also desperately keen to open up via Afghanistan direct land-links for trade and other resources in the emerging markets of now independent five Central Asian Republics for which regional powers such as Iran and Turkey were competing. Lawlessness and political instability in the post-Soviet Afghanistan had negative impact on Pakistan – drug trafficking and Kalashnikov culture were spreading and Afghan refugees' repatriation was not in sight. Around two million Afghan refugees were still in Pakistan.

To fulfil its objectives Pakistan had earlier supported the Mujahideen. It encouraged the Mujahideen parties such as *Jamiat-i-Islami* of Burhanuddin Rabbani, *Hizb-e-Islami* of Gulbuddin Hikmetyar, *Hizb-e-Islami* of Younis Khalis, *Ittihad-i-Islami* of Abdul Rasoul Sayyaf etc. to set up offices and camps in refugee area. It gave full assistance to those resistance groups, which were predominantly Pashtun. Hikmetyar found special favour with the Pakistan's *Jamaat-e-Islami Party* and the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) with the US backing. He was given the lion's share of US arms and other foreign aid and was promoted as the most powerful and legitimate leader.

However, the Rabbani-Ahmed Shah Masud led *Jamiat's* domination of Mujahideen government proved very disturbing for Pakistan. The Rabbani government was not prepared to submit itself to Pakistan's interests. Hence Pakistan tried to play one group against the other. Hikmetyar continued to be given all kind of help, first in his refusal to legitimise the Rabbani regime and then his alliance with Dostum in 1993, that led to the two-year long attack on Kabul, which destroyed the city. Masud accused Hikmetyar of playing in the hands of Pakistan to fulfil its strategic interests. Despite the help of Pakistan, Hikmetyar failed to reign

in other Mujahideen groups. This led to Pakistan, searching for an alternative to the Mujahideen. Thus came into being the Taliban.

As far as the genesis of the Taliban is concerned, the official Taliban version attributes it to a humble madrassa in Singesar village in Mewand district of Kandahar province.³ Mullah Wakil Ahmed, a Taliban spokesman in reply to a question on how and why the movement had started, said : After the Mujahideen parties came to power in 1992, the Afghan people thought that peace would prevail. However, the leaders began to fight over power in Kabul. Some local leaders, particularly in Kandahar, formed armed gangs that fought each other. There was widespread corruption and theft, and there were road-blocks everywhere. Women were being attacked, raped and killed. Therefore after these incidents, a group of students from religious schools decided to rise against these leaders in order to alleviate the suffering of the residents of Kandahar. According to the Taliban lore, Mullah Omar gathered 30 men to avenge the abduction and rape of two young women by a commander. A movement was born, in the rare words of Omar, as “a simple band of dedicated youths determined to establish the laws of God on earth and prepared to sacrifice everything in pursuit of that goal”.⁴ The movement was given the formal name of *Tehreek-i-Islami-i-Taliban Afghanistan*.⁵

Afghanistan was in turmoil just before the emergence of the Taliban in the summer of 1994. Warlordism, sectarianism and factionalism had brought the country in a state of virtual disintegration. The predominantly Tajik government of Burhanuddin Rabbani controlled Kabul and the north-east of the country while Ismael Khan was at the helm of affairs in three western provinces centred on Herat.

³ Maley, n.1, p. 43.

⁴ Johanna Mcgearg, “The Taliban Troubles”, *Time magazine*, 1 October 2001, p.33.

⁵ Matinuddin, n.2, p.26.

Uzbek warlord General Rashid Dostum, abandoning his alliance with the Rabbani government had joined Hikmetyar in January 1994. Bamiyan province was controlled by the Hazaras. Southern Afghanistan and Kandahar were divided up amongst warlords and bandits. The warlords grabbed homes and lands and handed them to their supporters. The commanders tortured and abused population at will. Kidnapping of girls, robbery and illegal taxation on traders had become norms of the day. The people had lost faith in their leaders, who were making and breaking alliances overnight. They found none of them trustworthy, as they were not fulfilling their promises. Their bitterness towards the leadership was increasing, as they saw no end to the wanton killings, which were being perpetrated in their country. Near famine conditions were adding to the anger, which was building up against the once 'revered' Afghan leadership. The Afghan Mujahideen were losing their popularity. Not only had they been unable to bring about peace in their war-ravaged country, but what was worse that many of them had begun to engage in unsocial activities. All of them were armed. Quite a few had turned into gangsters and were extracting money from shopkeepers and levying taxes on passenger vehicles passing through areas under their control. A BBC report said as much as \$ 400 was being taken from every truck driver carrying goods bound for the interior areas.⁶ Even passengers were made to pay 100,000 Afghanis (\$ 2). Those carrying goods on bicycles were not allowed to proceed further without paying something. Between Chaman and Herat alone there were seventy-one such checkpoints. One of the reasons for demanding money, in addition to greed, was that fighters were no longer getting regular salary from their masters.

Kandahar was the worst affected area. There was mismanagement everywhere and the existing Mujahideen leadership was either unwilling or unable

⁶ *ibid.*, p.23.

to curb the rising trend of chaos in Afghanistan. The writ of the central government was not running even in the capital Kabul. There was an economic collapse. Army was not paid properly. Food convoys were being looted. Public disenchantment against the government machinery was gradually increasing. The harmony and cooperation that had existed between them during the Afghan *jihād* had gone to pieces. People were looking for an alternative. Thus, it did not require much effort by the Taliban to garner support for ending the civil war and the anarchy in Afghanistan.

Disgusted by the chaos and lawlessness of the local warlords, bandits and drug traffickers, Mullah Mohammed Omar, the head of a local madrassa organised like-minded Mullahs and ex-Mujahideen. It is said that provoked by a commander's abduction of two girls of the area in July 1994, Omar gathered some 30 *talibs* who were having only 16 rifles between them and rescued the girls.⁷ The commander was hanged and quantities of arms and ammunition were captured. Omar group was successful in getting public support by helping the poor against the cruel commanders. Local help in the form of money and weapons poured in. Now the Taliban needed support to pursue their objectives.

Mullah Mohammed Omar, the head of the Taliban belonged to the Hotak tribe of the Ghilzai Pashtuns. He was born around 1959 in Nodeh village near Kandahar to a landless peasant who shifted to Tarinkot during the 1980s *jihād*. Omar moved to Singesar in Mewand from Tarinkot in Urozgan province. There he became the village mullah and opened a small madrassa. He took the membership of Khalis's *Hizb-e-Islami* and fought against the Najibullah regime between 1989 and 1992. During the course of *jihād*, he was wounded four times and lost his right

⁷ Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Islam, Oil and The New Great Game in Central Asia* (London, 2000) p.25.

eye, which gave him the nickname Rund (one-eyed). His credibility got enhanced due to the wound since it demonstrated his personal sacrifice for the cause of *jihad*.

To widen their influence, Omar's men met Ismael Khan of Herat and in September 1994 Mullah Mohammed Rabbani, a founding member of the Taliban, visited Kabul and held talks with President Rabbani. The Tajik-dominated government wanted to have any new Pashtun force that would face Hikmetyar. Thus they agreed to help and fund the Taliban.⁸ Perhaps they were oblivious of the Taliban's strong and close links with Pakistan where many of the Taliban had grown up and studied in madrassas run by Maulana Fazlur Rehman and his fundamentalist *Jamiat-e-Ulema Islami* (JUI) in Baluchistan and the Frontier province. A survey report by the Home Department of the government of Punjab province of Pakistan revealed in May 1997 that in Rawalpindi division alone there were a total of 169 *deeni madaris*, and that 17,533 *talibs* were on their rolls. Most of these institutions were being used as hideouts for terrorists attached to foreign mentors, the report added.⁹

Deeni madaris, which had shifted to Pakistan after Soviet occupation began refunctioning in Afghanistan after the fall of Najibullah, especially in the eastern provinces and in Herat. They not only imparted religious education of sorts, but more than that, they organized the students into militant groups who would be prepared to use force to subdue their rivals. The famous *deeni madrassa* at Akora Khattak in NWFP known as *Jaamia Darul Uloom Haqqania* was alone at one time imparting religious education and providing boarding and lodging free of cost, to around 2000 *talibs* from Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Central Asian States with Afghans numbering 700 or so.¹⁰ The owners of Haqqania claimed that they had

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 26.

⁹ Matinuddin, n.2, p. 14.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p.17.

established around 1000 such madrassas in Pakistan and in some foreign countries. Quite a few of those *talibs* who were in the Central Shura at Kabul, or who were appointed as governors and deputy governors by the Taliban had passed out from this very institution.¹¹ Another famous *deeni madrassa*, where a large number of foreign students were trained, was known as *Jamiatul Uloomil Islamiyyah* situated at Binnori town in the suburbs of Karachi. The bulk of the Taliban leadership came from these two institutions.¹²

Maulana Fazlur Rehman was an ally of Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and Interior Minister General (Rtd) Nasserullah Babar, a Pashtun. He was in direct contact with the ISI, the army and the other organs of the government dealing with Afghan affairs. Rehman also headed the Standing Committee for Foreign Affairs of Pakistan's National Assembly. Even in Kandahar various Pakistani channels were at work. The ISI had well-connected networks in and around Kandahar where Pakistan had a consulate. The ISI also had close contacts with the commanders who wielded authority around the city airport. In these circumstances it was not surprising that near Kandahar airport another Taliban group under Mohammad Ghaus started operating around this time.

General Babar's role in the creation of Taliban was clear even before its emergence. He had announced in June 1994 during a cabinet meeting Pakistan government's interest in an overland route from Quetta to Turkmenistan and Central Asia via Kandahar and Herat. In September 1994 he even visited Chaman on the Afghan border and surveyed the highway inside Afghanistan.¹³ On his return to Islamabad he announced that in October 1994 the experimental use of the road by Pakistani traders would start. All these steps were taken without getting clearance

¹¹ *ibid.*, p.19.

¹² *ibid.*, p. 20

¹³ Maley, n. 1, p. 45.

from the Kabul government. Obviously, Babar was well aware of the ISI game plan and the Taliban. It was Babar and the ISI who played the lead role in the formation and consolidation of Taliban. At this time, one Kandahari commander, Amir Lalai warned that 'Pakistan is offering to reconstruct our roads, but I do not think that by fixing our roads peace would automatically follow. As long as neighbouring countries continue to interfere in our internal affairs, we should not expect peace'.¹⁴ It was not a coincidence that Taliban's first major military operation came between Babar's September 1994 visit to Afghanistan and the movement of the first 'experimental' convoy. On 12 October 1994 some 200 Taliban from Kandahar and Pakistani madrassas reached the Afghan border post of Spin Baldak. It was an important truck and fuelling stop where Afghan trucks picked up goods from Pakistani trucks as Pakistani trucks were not allowed to cross into Afghanistan. It was under Mullah Akhtar Jan of Hikmetyar's *Hizb-e-Islami*. The Taliban force divided into three groups routed Akhtar Jan's garrison. In this fight only one Taliban died while seven Hizbis lost their life and several were wounded. The Taliban got artillery support from across the border in Pakistan, which later helped the Taliban in capturing large Pasha arms depot, which was guarded by the Pakistani troops. The Taliban got control of some 18,000 Kalashnikovs, dozens of artillery pieces, large quantities of ammunition and vehicles. However, question mark had been put on such large recovery as the depot had already been systematically looted long before. It was said that this seizure was used as a smoke screen behind which such supplies could continue from across the border and to show the world that the Taliban were operating on his own. Kandahar warlords criticised Pakistan for backing the Taliban.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p.80

Meanwhile, on 20 October 1994, Babar brought Pakistan-based six ambassadors from the US, UK, China, Italy, Korea and Spain to Kandahar and Herat, without even informing the government in Kabul. And on 29 October 1994 on Babar's order a 30-truck 'experimental' convoy left Quetta for Turkmenistan without Afghan permission. Colonel Imam and Gul, two ISI officers and 80 Pakistani ex-army drivers were on board. Two Taliban commanders, Mullah Borjan and Turabi with some of their men also accompanied the convoy.¹⁵ They were the Taliban who later led the Taliban's first assault on Kabul in which Mullah Borjan was killed. The convoy was stopped by a group of commanders, Amir Lalai, Mansur Achakzai and Ustad Halim at Takht-e-Pul near Kandahar. The commanders asked for money, a share of the goods and an end to Pakistan's ISI and the Frontier Corps support to the Taliban as the Taliban were initially trained by the Frontier Corps and the Sibi Scouts of Pakistan. On Pakistan's orders, the Taliban moved in on 3 November 1994 to rescue the hijacked convoy. Reinforcements also came from Pakistan. The commanders fled thinking Pakistani army had attacked. Mansur was caught and hanged by the Taliban. Then they marched to Kandahar on 4 November and after two days of sporadic fighting, one of the most important strategic cities was under the Taliban control. It was claimed that Mullah Naquib, the Commander inside the city was bribed by the ISI to surrender.

It was not surprising, in view of the full Pakistani back up, that in a few weeks this unknown force took over the second largest Afghan city with the loss of just a dozen men. The vital question was who ordered the capture of Kandahar, the traditional royal capital of Afghanistan. The presence of ISI officers and senior Taliban commanders in the Pakistani Convoy and brand new weapons in Taliban's hands spoke volumes of Pakistani involvement in the Taliban's forward march.

¹⁵ Rashid, n. 7, p.28.

The Pakistan government and the JUI celebrated the Taliban's victory in Kandahar. Babar owned credit for the Taliban's success, telling media that the Taliban were 'our boys'. According to an estimate 1.5 million US dollars were spent in the capture of Kandahar.¹⁶ The transport mafia who were also funding the Taliban celebrated when in December the first Pakistani convoy of 50 trucks arrived in Quetta from Turkmenistan. In the meantime, thousands of young Afghan Pashtuns studying in Baluchistan and the NWFP were rushed to Kandahar to join the Taliban. The JUI sent Pakistani volunteers to help the Taliban. By December 1994, some 12,000 Afghan and Pakistani students had joined the Taliban in Kandahar.¹⁷ Fazlur Rehman even organised the first bustard hunting trips for Gulf Arab princes to Kandahar in January and February 1995, thereby, creating the first contacts between the Taliban and Arab rulers for future financial and military help. Rehman, as the Chairman of the Pakistan's National Assembly's Standing Committee for Foreign Affairs, even visited US and European capitals to enlist their support for the Taliban. General Babar created an Afghan Trade Development Cell in the Interior Ministry to coordinate activities of different ministries. Thus Pakistan Telecom established a microwave telephone network in Kandahar for the Taliban, which remained attached to Pakistan telephone system. Kandahar could be dialled from Pakistan on a local call. Engineers from the Public Works Department and the Water and Power Development Authority worked out feasibility studies for road repairs and electricity supply in Kandahar city. Frontier Corps set up wireless network. Technicians from Pakistan Air force and PIA were dispatched to repair Kandahar airport and the MIG fighter aircraft and helicopters captured by the Taliban.

¹⁶ Maley, n.1, p.49

¹⁷ Rashid, n.7, p.29

The second phase of the Taliban's rise involved widening of their power in Uruzgan province in the north and Zabul to the northeast. The two provinces fell to the Taliban with hardly any resistance. More and more *talibs* were dispatched across the border from the JUI madrassas. The Taliban then captured Helmand and Ghazni by propping up warlords and bribing others. In the first three months after the conquest of Kandahar, the Taliban had captured 12 of Afghanistan's 31 provinces and had arrived at the outskirts of Kabul and Herat.

In January 1995 on the Pakistan's initiative all opposition Afghan groups were brought together to attack Rabbani government in Kabul. However, the Taliban's rapid advancement forced Hikmetyar to flee from his headquarters at Charasayab. Now they were at the gate of Kabul. The Rabbani government was already engaged in fighting Shia Hazaras under the *Hizb-e-Wahadat* party. Ahmed Shah Masud now started negotiating with the Taliban commanders, Mullah Rabbani, Borjan and Ghaus at Charasayab. However, the Taliban's demand that only their forces would dominate any new government in Kabul forced the Rabbani government to look for other options. And the Rabbani government decided to face the enemy one by one. On 6 March 1995, Masud's forces attacked the Hazaras and drove them out of Kabul. This led to an alliance between the Hazaras and the Taliban. But the sudden killing of Hazara leader Abdul Ali Mazari in the Taliban custody broke the alliance. Meanwhile, on 11 March 1995 Masud launched another attack on the Taliban and killed hundreds of them on Kabul street.

Defeated at Kabul, the Taliban now turned towards Herat in the west. By February 1995 they captured Nimroz and Farali, two of the provinces controlled by Ismael Khan and advanced towards Shindand airbase, south of Herat. But here, too, they had to face defeat at the hands of government forces. Now again Pakistan came forward with arms, ammunition, vehicles and reinforcement. The ISI helped broker an agreement between the Taliban and Dostum. Dostum sent his

technicians to Kandahar to repair MIG fighters and helicopters. The ISI created a new command structure for Taliban. And by 5 September 1995, The Taliban were able to capture Herat with Ismael Khan fleeing to Iran. Angry at the loss of Herat, Kabul citizens attacked and sacked the Pakistani Embassy, wounding the Pakistani Ambassador. President Rabbani openly accused Pakistan of trying to dethrow him through the Taliban.

The Taliban's success was due to efficient communications and command and control network provided by Pakistan. Night operations undertaken by the Taliban were never seen in the jihad-era warfare of Afghanistan's tribal south. Two months training from Pakistani instructors at newly established camps at Spin Baldak and Kandahar for fresh recruits from Pakistani madrassas proved effective. The Taliban had established three-legged army structure consisting of madrassa youth, the real Taliban, former jihadi fighters and former Communist regime officers supplied by Pakistan. Encouraged by their victories, the Taliban launched another assault on Kabul during October and November. But Masud forces were able to push them back. Now Taliban adopted other means to weaken the Rabbani government forces.

In March 1996, Mullah Omar organised a gathering of more than 1200 Pashtun religious leaders of Afghanistan in Kandahar to debate a future plan of action and more importantly to legitimize the Taliban leadership. Significantly no local commander, tribal and clan chiefs, ex-Communists or non-Pashtun activists from north participated in the *Shura*, which continued for more than two weeks. Future political and military issues, imposition of Sharia law, girls' education etc. were discussed in utmost secrecy. Foreigners were prohibited from visiting the city. But Pakistan, the Taliban's master, was there to monitor the *Shura*.¹⁸ Pakistani

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p.42.

Ambassador to Kabul Qazi Humayun and several ISI officials including Colonel Imam, the Pakistani Consul General in Herat represented Pakistan in the *Shura*. The mullah meeting was prompted by the rival Rabbani regime's increasing acceptance. In January and February 1996, Rabbani's emissary Dr. Abdur Rehman met separately with Hikmetyar, Dostum and the Hazara leadership. And in February all the opposition groups except for the Taliban agreed to set up a ten-member council to discuss peace terms with the government. Sensing the danger, Pakistan now attempted to woo the same warlords to form an anti-government alliance with the Taliban. In February 1996 the ISI hosted in Islamabad a meeting between Hikmetyar, Dostum, the Pashtun leaders of the Jalalabad *Shura* and Hazara leaders in order to try to forge an alliance. Pakistan President Farooq Leghari and Army Chief General Jehangir Karamat also held discussions with these warlords. Pakistan proposed, though unsuccessfully a political alliance and in private a joint attack on Kabul.

Rabbani, emboldened by the Pakistani failure, now took a tour of Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan to garner international support and aid. In turn, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia increased arms supplies to the Taliban. Pakistan provided a new telephone and wireless network for the Taliban, overhauled Kandahar airport and airforce machinery while continuing to supply food, fuel and ammunition, including rockets. Osama bin Laden and other terrorist groups were encouraged to support and help the Taliban. The Saudis supplied fuel, money and hundreds of pick-up trucks to the Taliban. In order to destabilize Iran and secure oil pipeline, US also came forward to help the Taliban.

In the meantime, on 26 June 1996 Hikmetyar entered Kabul to take up the post of Prime Minister offered by the Kabul regime. In retaliation, on the same day, the Taliban launched a massive rocket attack on Kabul killing 61 people. Infuriated by the regime's gradual consolidation, the Taliban kept rocketing Kabul throughout

1996. In July, the Saudi Intelligence Chief Prince Turki-al-Faisal visited Islamabad and Kandahar to discuss with the ISI a new plan to capture Kabul.¹⁹ Within two months of Turki's visit, the Taliban were on the move. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia helped engineer the surrender and flight of the head of the Jalalabad Shura, Haji Abdul Qadeer. He was bribed and assured of bank accounts in Pakistan.

The Taliban launched attack on Jalalabad on 25 August 1996 supported by Pakistani men and material supply. They captured the three eastern provinces of Nangarhar, Laghman and Kunar on 24 September 1996 moving to Sarobi, the gateway to the Kabul. And on the evening of 26 September 1996, the Taliban took over Kabul. Rabbani and his allies abandoned Kabul and fled to north. The Taliban had conquered Kabul, the symbol of power. The swiftness with which the Taliban arrived in Kabul was unimaginable. No Afghan force, either government or opposition, had ever carried out such a swift and complex series of operation over such a wide operation area. This was mobile warfare being most effective. Pakistan through its ISI played lead role in helping the Taliban's capture of Jalalabad Shura and providing its members sanctuary in Pakistan and then sending fresh recruits to the Taliban on their attack on Kabul. General Babar, the Pakistan Interior Minister, along with JUI Chief Fazlur Rehman, was the first to reach the Afghan capital the day the Taliban captured it and supervised the execution of former President Najibullah from a square in Kabul where Najibullah had been staying in a UN diplomatic compound. A Pakistani delegation under Rehman was instrumental in writing the Taliban's constitution and the day-to-day code of conduct of the militia regime in Kabul. Pakistan also launched a diplomatic mission to break Dostum away from Masud. However, on 19 October 1996 the deposed President Rabbani, Masud, Dostum and the Hazara leader Karim Khalili met in

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 48.

Khin Jan and formed a 'Supreme Council for the Defence of Motherland' to counter the Taliban.

Taking advantage of the Taliban's advancement in other areas, Masud launched a major counter-attack and on 18 October 1996 was able to recapture the strategic Bagram airbase. Now his and Dostum's forces began shelling Taliban's targets in Kabul. Faced with rising casualties, Taliban looked for reinforcements from Pakistan. Thousands of volunteers were dispatched from Pakistan where some ulema closed down their madrassas so that students would have no choice but to enlist in bulk with the Taliban. Large number of Pakistani students and Afghans began to arrive daily in Kandahar and Kabul on Pakistani vehicles. Pakistan waived all passport and visa requirements for them.

Emboldened by the fresh arrivals, the Taliban launched attack despite heavy snowfall. By the end of January 1997, they had recaptured the freshly lost territory. In the meantime, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia sent diplomatic missions to Kabul to help the Taliban. Now, after the conquest of the south, the Taliban eyed on the north as it holds 60 per cent of Afghanistan's agricultural resources and 80 per cent of its former industry, mineral and gas wealth. The opportunity came in May 1997. Invited by Abdul Malik, who had revolted against the Mazar-i-Sharif's leader General Dostum, the Taliban took control of the city. Pakistani diplomats and ISI officers, overjoyed by the Taliban's success, flew into the city in a bid to help the Taliban renegotiate the terms of agreements with Malik. On 25 May 1997 Pakistan's Foreign Minister Gohar Ayub announced premature recognition of the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan and stated that the crisis in Afghanistan had been solved. Pakistan also persuaded Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to recognise the Taliban.

Soon followed the popular uprising against the Taliban in Mazar-i-sharif on 28 May 1997 in which several key Taliban leaders were caught. More than four

thousand Taliban troops were killed. Pakistan's hand was exposed as more than 250 Pakistanis had been killed and 550 captured during the May-July uprising period.²⁰ After briefly holding more than 90 per cent of Afghanistan, the Taliban had to suffer from the hands of Masud, Malik, Dostum and Khalili.

Once again, Pakistani madrassas were closed down and 5000 new Pakistani recruits were sent to help the Taliban. *The Times* newspaper of Pakistan revealed in its 4 August 1997 issue how a 13-year old poor student of Jamia Islamia madrassa in Karachi's Clifton district was sent in May to Afghanistan. Pakistani press also documented the free movement of the Taliban across the border. *Newsline* magazine in its July 1997 issue reported that "Pakistani buses carrying thousands of religious students continue to enter Afghanistan from the legal point of Chaman without any check or hindrance by the Pakistani immigration personnel at the check post. According to some estimates, over 60,000 Taliban, both Afghan and Pakistani have entered the country through this porous border". Osama bin Laden contributed several hundred Arabs to fight with the Taliban in their northern offensive. The Taliban's bid to recruit forcibly led to internal revolt in Kandahar, Wardak and Paktia provinces in 1997. Thus the Taliban were compelled to draw more upon recruits from Pakistan.

The anti-Taliban forces set up on 13 June 1997 the 'United Islamic and National Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan' and declared Mazar-i-Sharif as their capital. But the pact could not last long due to differences and suspicions. Taking advantage of the anti-Taliban alliance's differences and rejecting the UN mediation, the Taliban began another offensive in the north. The Saudi intelligence chief Prince Faisal again paid a visit to Kandahar in mid-June 1998 and sent 400 pick-up trucks with financial aid. ISI prepared a budget of some two billion rupees

²⁰ *ibid.*, p.59.

for the Taliban's logistical support. The Taliban succeeded in capturing Dostum's headquarters at Shiberghan bribing his commanders and on 8 August 1998 the Taliban massacred many Hazaras on the way to Mazar-i-Sharif and kidnapped some 400 Hazara women. One Taliban unit under Mullah Dost Mohammed and including several Pakistani terrorists of the anti-Shia, *Sipah-e-Sahaba* entered the Iranian Consulate in Mazar and shot dead 11 Iranian diplomats. Bamiyan fell to the Taliban on 13 September 1998. With this the Taliban now controlled 90 per cent of the country.

The Taliban's success was largely due to Pakistani support. Pakistan's government, army, ISI and society supported the Taliban for many reasons. In fact the Taliban were Pakistan's proxy army in Afghanistan. The nature of the Taliban's earliest military operations, their anti-Shia policy, and their replacement of Hikmetyar's forces in early 1995 – all supported this view. From the very beginning, Pakistan helped the Taliban in recruitment, training, planning, weapons and ammunition, logistic support, financial aid and even the direct involvement of Pakistani military, intelligence and regular forces. Logistic aid involved supplies of motor and aviation fuel, spare parts, communication tools and new vehicles. The ISI provided the Taliban hundreds of ex-Afghan army officers like General Tanai and technicians who were residing in Pakistan after 1992. It also assisted them in the inclusion of some key commanders like Jalaluddin Haqqani. Pakistani military personnel maintained and operated Taliban aircraft and tanks. They played the role of combat advisors. Iran, Central Asian Republics, Russia and the anti-Taliban Afghans all alleged that the Taliban's victories in northern Afghanistan in 1998 were due to direct Pakistani military involvement, including more than fifteen hundred troops and several combat flights by the Pakistan Air Force.

The ISI had opened two offices in Kandahar and Kabul, to "liaise with the Taliban authorities" for tracing the Pakistanis who had fled to Afghanistan after

committing crimes. But, the real motive was for greater and effective coordination between the ISI and the Taliban. While the Kandahar office was headed by Major Ashraf, Brig. Pervez handled the affairs of the Kabul office. The ISI had also made its presence felt in the Mazar-i-Sharif to facilitate coordination with the Islamic forces in Uzbekistan. Several Pakistanis held high posts in the Taliban army. Mullah Israil, who headed an intelligence wing, and Mullah Abdullah, a field commander were from Chaman. Mullah Akhtar Mohammad commanded the Rishkor seventh division and Mullah Abdur Razak of Quetta looked after the security in Kabul. Besides, a Pakistani special regiment was stationed to the west of Shahr-e-Nau park in Kabul and a parachute regiment was located in the barracks of the 11th Nangarhar division.

Pakistani commando sub-units were stationed in the building of the artillery headquarters in the area of the former 110 divisions in Nangarhar province. Faizan, military adviser in the south-west group and Mohammad Gul, military adviser in Kandahar, were from the ISI. About 200 *Sipah-e-Sahaba* activists headed by Riaz Basra were housed in a Centre at Rishkor and 300 *Harkat-ul-Mujahideen* activists were living in the Naglu settlement.²¹

The Taliban's tactical sophistication and command-and-control network all were at odds with their image as being religious students. Obviously, they were assisted by Pakistani regulars and trained by Pakistani instructors to fight a different kind of war from the one they had fought during anti-Soviet movement. Pakistan was the primary recruiter for the Taliban. Besides the regular soldiers, the ISI recruited thousands of Pakistani youths since 1994 to fill Taliban ranks. Recruitments were done whenever the Taliban needed them. Pakistani madrasa students made up some 30 per cent of the Taliban military manpower by 1999.²²

²¹ *The Hindu*, 29 September 2001.

²² Rashid, n.7, p.100.

Various government agencies were involved in building the Taliban. An 'Afghan Cell' under General Babar's Interior Ministry coordinated the support activities of different Pakistani ministries and offices. The NWFP and Baluchistan provincial governments supported the Taliban for political reasons. Several private Pakistani groups, with the government support, contributed in the Taliban's rise. The *JUI*, *Lashkar-e-Toiba*, *Hizbul Mujahideen*, *Harkat-ul-Ansar* etc. provided fighters for the Taliban. Over 80,000 Pakistani Islamic militants were trained and fought with the Taliban since 1994.²³

Transport mafia also financed the Taliban through both customs duties and special collections. Arab terrorist Laden, oil companies, drug mafia all contributed to the Taliban's rise. By 1998 heroin exports from Pakistan-Afghanistan were earning some US \$ 3 billion. Pakistan also provided most of the official government budget of \$ 10 million in 1998. It was Pakistan, which lobbied for the Taliban's diplomatic recognition. However, Pakistan attributed the Taliban phenomenon as a reaction to the state of anarchy in Afghanistan. In a speech at the United Nations in November 1996, Foreign Secretary Najmuddin Sheikh, analysing the Taliban's success said that it was neither the ideology the Taliban propounded, nor the religious fervour of the people that accounted for their subsequent success. Rather it was the war weariness of the populace, which stood ready to welcome any force that promised the disarming of the local brigands, the restoration of peace, the semblance of an honest administration, no matter how rough and ready its system of justice.

Its true that Afghans-exhausted by the long war, disgusted by the infighting among Mujahideen groups-were desperate for peace, thus ready for the rise of a new movement. This factor was more applicable in Kandahar and Kabul. Several

²³ Rashid, n.7, p.194.

other factors also contributed in the Taliban's emergence, acceptance and extension in Afghanistan.

The shared Pashtun ethnicity of the Taliban and the majority of the population certainly helped in the acceptance of the Taliban. The bruised pride of Pashtun community whose political authority of more than two centuries had been challenged by newly assertive non-Pashtun *Mujahideen* and the Taliban's assertion to reunify the country also contributed to the Taliban's success. Even Pakistan leader General Pervez Musharraf has conceded that Pakistan support the Taliban in part due to its dominant Pashtun ethnicity which is shared with the Pashtuns of Pakistan's NWFP, FATA and Baluchistan.

The Taliban's emphasis on religious piety and reforms were liked by many conservative, least-literate Afghans. Frustrated by the war-ravaged economy and wide corruption, the religious minded poor and the ignorant fell prey to the preaching of the Taliban. Money also played its role. The Taliban used cash to induce commanders to defect or surrender. Bribing or buying the loyalty of warlords became main tool of the Taliban's advancement. Money for this purpose came from Saudi Arabia, transport and drug mafia, Osama bin Laden and the Pakistani government. It was reported that Osama donated over \$100 million to the Taliban. In March 1995 the Taliban collected \$ 150,000 from transporters in Chaman in a single day and twice that money the next day in Quetta as they prepared for strike on Herat.²⁴

The United States and its western allies also contributed to the Taliban's emergence. In its effort to combat communism, the West provided billions of dollars worth of arms and ammunition to the *Mujahideen*. After the Cold War, it abandoned Afghanistan. With the rise in terrorist activities from Afghan soil the

²⁴ Maley, n.1, p.77.

US now wanted to control it. The US- supported Hikmetyar had failed to fulfil their wish. Thus the US and its allies supported new group, the Taliban as it promised to work towards disarming armed guerillas, driving out terrorists, fighting against Islamic fundamentalism, putting an end to drug trafficking, doing away with unexploded landmines and reunifying Afghanistan under a single stable government thus providing the West access to oil and gas resources of Central Asia. The anti-Shia policy of the Taliban also suited the US and its allies to contain Iran.

But soon the Taliban became dangerous for world peace and security. Taliban's policies on different fronts led to its downfall. It started with the Taliban's confrontation with Iran. Iran's Supreme leader Ayatollah Khomeini accused Pakistan of using troops and aircraft in Bamiyan's capture and warned of war. Confrontation gave Masud the time and space to regroup the anti-Taliban forces. He was able to wrest huge territory from the Taliban along Afghanistan's border with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. On 7 December 1998 Masud held a meeting in the Panjshir valley of anti-Taliban field commanders.

Meanwhile, neighbouring countries got offended by the Taliban offensive, the ethnic cleansing and its support to terrorism and religious extremism. The Foreign and Defence Ministers of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan along with Russian officials met in Tashkent on 25 August 1998 to co-ordinate joint military and political plans to check the Taliban advance. Earlier on 20 August, infuriated by the Taliban's refusal to hand over Laden, the US launched missile attacks on Laden's training camps situated in Afghanistan for his alleged role in the bombing of US embassies in Africa on 7th August.

International community was frustrated with the Taliban's refusal to form a broad-based government, not paying heed to gender issue and follow diplomatic norms. Even die-hard supporters like Saudi Arabia, insulted by the protection given to dissident Laden by the Taliban, lowered its diplomatic relation and ceased all

official fundings. On 8 December 1998, a UN resolution threatened sanctions against the Taliban for harbouring international terrorists, violating human rights, promoting drug trafficking and refusing to accept a cease-fire. Pakistan for obvious reasons did not support the resolution – how can a mother help crush her own child?

Under intense international pressure, both sides of Afghanistan came to a negotiating table and met in Ashkhabad on 11 March 1999. But Omar ruled out future talks. Meanwhile, Bamiyan was recovered by the Hazaras on 21 April 1999. Limited sanctions were imposed on the Taliban on 15 October by the UN. A military coup in Pakistan on 12 October hindered Pakistan support to the Taliban for the first time thus weakening it.

And the final blow came in October 2001 when the US-led coalition on war against terrorism attacked the Taliban in Afghanistan for sheltering and not handing over the terror mastermind Osama bin Laden whose Al Qaeda network was allegedly involved in the devastating attacks on US cities on 11 September 2001. The Taliban's two supporters Saudi Arabia and the UAE cut off all ties on 22 and 25 September 2001 respectively.

CHAPTER – II

TALIBAN AND RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM

Religious extremism, as a socio-political movement, essentially means going back to the original sources and roots of a particular religion. It propounds adherence to the original beliefs of the religion. While interpreting its tenets and beliefs, the proponents go to extreme end in search of a suitable meaning which satisfy their mental and social requirements. The extremists are by nature militant and aggressive, since they are convinced that the state, classes or bureaucratic elite of their religion are incapable of bringing about any radical change and reforms in the unequal social, economic and political systems of their corrupt political orders.

The failure of the political elite to deliver the basic needs of the people paves the way for the rise of extremist forces. The extremists try to convince the people of the need to throw off west oriented development models in socio-economic, political and religious matters and return to the fundamental principles in order to restore the lost identity, moral purpose and character.

The Taliban version of Islam shows that they had not imbibed the intellectual fundamentalism of the established Islamic parties, but followed a mixture of tribal traditions and local mullahs' practices with fundamentalism. Soon after they had taken over Kabul, they declared Afghanistan an Islamic Emirate. They wanted the puritan brand of Islam to be imposed on masses across the country. The Taliban's avowed purpose was to complete the unfinished agenda of the *jihad*: to install a pure Islamic state. Women were especially targetted in the name of their chastity. Wherever the Taliban took over, the first decrees they announced required women to curtail their movements. Women's issues were at the core of their extremist ideology. In a country where women constituted around 60 per cent of the population, the Taliban heaped worst human rights violations.

Soon after acquiring control over Kabul, the Taliban started showing its true colours by adopting and interpreting the extremist version of its religious ideology. For the first time in Afghanistan's history the unifying factor of Islam became a lethal weapon in the extremist hands. Before the Taliban, Islamist extremism had never flourished in Afghanistan. Minority Shias, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazaras, Hindus, Sikhs etc. had all played their part in Afghanistan's society and economy. Islam, despite being at the centre of the ordinary people's lives, had been tolerant. Mullahs were never known to force people towards Islamic rituals. Sufism was popular in the country.

But the arrival of the Taliban brought the Deobandi tradition of Wahabism to the mainstream. Wahabis were the followers of the strict and austere Wahabi creed of Saudi Arabia. They did not have a sizeable presence in Afghanistan before the anti-Soviet war. In fact, the founder Abdul Wahab himself had to face strong opposition in nineteenth century Afghanistan. However, as Saudi money reached the Saudi-trained Wahabi leaders amongst the Pashtuns, a small following came up. Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, an Afghan settled in Saudi Arabia was sent to set up a Wahabi party, the *Ittehad-e-Islami* in Peshawar. The Wahabi Afghans, also called Salafis, actively opposed both the Sufi and traditional tribal-based parties but were unable to spread their brand of ideology as people considered them outsiders.

However, the degeneration and collapse of legitimacy of all the prevalent religious trends – radical Islamism, Sufism and traditionalism – into a naked, rapacious power-struggle created the ideological vacuum which gave the Taliban space in Afghanistan. The first and foremost display of extremist interpretation of Islam by the Taliban was the special role accorded to its leader Mullah Omar. He was bestowed the title of *Amir-ul-Momineen* (Commander of the Faithful) and one of the holiest relics of Afghanistan, the Cloak of the Prophet Mohammad, seen publicly only two times previously in more than a millennium was displayed on the

occasion. Obviously, it was done to legitimize his supremacy and confer on him a mystical image to set him apart from 'ordinary' leaders. It was a clear case of exploitation of religion for an individual, that too a least literate, poor Mullah and the ulterior motive was to obtain power and cling on it. Religion became a weapon in the arsenal of those engaged in the power game. The terror the Taliban religious extremists bred from here onwards proved most dreadful in the annals of Afghan social and political history.

It was not the values and attitudes of the village as former US Ambassador to Pakistan Robert Oakley suggested,¹ but the values and attitudes of the village as interpreted by refugee camp dwellers or madrassa students most of whom had no contact with ordinary village way of life that the Taliban sought to impose in Afghanistan. Their extreme interpretation of Islam was designed to create fear-psychosis and uncertainty among masses so that their very thought of opposition would vanish. Led by Omar's extreme interpretations, the Taliban subscribed to a unique extremist model, based on harsh interpretations of Muslim law and a profound belief in never-ending *jihad*. Their fundamentalist radical Deobandi brand of Sunni Islam deemed women biologically, religiously and prophetically inferior to men. In fact, the Taliban took the Deobandi beliefs to such an extreme that even Deobandis were embarrassed. Many Islamic scholars termed the Taliban's interpretation as idiosyncratic and at best a tribal rural code of behaviour applied in some parts of Afghanistan of which only one aspect was being exploited. The least literate Taliban laced its faith with the hard customs of Pashtunwali, the tribal code of the Pashtuns, like the one that makes hospitality toward guests an irrevocable obligation. Poorly tutored in Islamic and Afghan history, knowledge of Sharia and the Koran and the political and theoretical developments in Muslim

¹ William Maley (ed), *Fundamentalism Reborn? Afghanistan and the Taliban* (London, 1998) p.19.

world, the Taliban debased the Deobandi tradition with their rigidity, accepting no concept of doubt except as sin and considering debate as little more than heresy.

The Taliban and their supporters presented the world a new style of Islamic extremism, which refused to accommodate or compromise with views from outside, thus giving Islamic fundamentalism a new face and a new identity.

The Taliban's work ethic was typical of even a religion-based rule. No matter how serious the military or political crisis, government offices in Kabul and Kandahar were open for only four hours a day, from 8.00 a.m. to noon.² They then used to break for prayers and a long siesta. Later, they had long meetings or social gatherings at night. In the name of religion, official and public works were not attended for. On the other hand hundreds of Taliban cadres and bureaucrats were instrumental in forcing people to grow beards etc.

Power was completely confined in the hands of Mullah Omar. Omar's confident Mullah Wakil, confirming this, said, "decisions are based on the advice of the *Amir-ul-Momineen*. For us consultation is not necessary. We believe that this is in line with the Sharia. We abide by the Amir's view even if he alone takes this view. There will not be a head of state. Instead there will be an *Amir-ul-Momineen*. Mullah Omar will be the highest authority and the government will not be able to implement any decision to which he does not agree. General elections are incompatible with Sharia and therefore we reject them."³ Thus the Taliban had relied on one-man rule with no organizational mechanism to accommodate others' views.

Due to lack of organised mechanism and one-man rule, the Taliban's policy-making was piecemeal and reactionary. Policies were elucidated mainly in social law and order, cultural and economic areas. The most controversial and perhaps

² Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Islam, Oil and The New Great Game in Central Asia* (London, 2000) p.101.

³ *ibid*, p.102.

only well-defined Taliban's programme was in social sector. The ideology of Islamisation was most visible in this area, especially with regard to their policy towards women and girls, the most vulnerable and weaker section of the society. The Taliban policies regarding religious practices, entertainment, art and culture, minority rights were all based on extremist interpretation.

It's not that the Taliban were the first Afghan authorities to interpret and implement policies according to Sharia. But the Taliban were the one who took it to the extreme – in interpretation as well as in implementation. They had totally unacceptable attitudes towards the place and role of women in society, even by Islamic standards. After each major take over the first announcement by the Taliban required women to curtail their movements in public. As an extension of these restrictions, females working outside the home were proscribed and girls' schools were closed. When the Taliban took Herat they issued edicts on the dress and behaviour of the population, as they had done in Kandahar, besides closing girls' school and restricting women working outside. The edicts relating to female access to education and employment had a greater impact than they had in Kandahar. In Kandahar, the administrative infrastructure had already effectively collapsed when the Taliban surfaced and there were few girls' schools operating. There were also very few opportunities for women to seek employment outside the home. However, in Herat city in 1994 there was a reported school population of 21,663 girls and 23,347 boys.⁴ By contrast, in the rural areas, 1940 girls were attending school as against 74620 boys. A large proportion of the teachers were women and it proved necessary to close many boys' schools as a result. In Kabul, the Taliban issued the same edicts as they had done in Kandahar and Herat. But the degree of enforcement was much wider and harshers.

⁴ Peter Marsden, *The Taliban: War, Religion and the New Order in Afghanistan* (London, 1998) p. 49.

In July 1995, the Women's Association in Kabul hosted 300 women at a 3-day workshop to prepare guidelines for the Afghan delegations to the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing.⁵ As they were about to depart the Deputy Foreign Minister, Abdul Rahim Ghafoorzai announced the cancellation of the trip because 'there are a lot of issues to be discussed that the High Council considers are against the basic Islamic principles governing life in the Islamic society in Afghanistan'.

As Taliban challenges increased, harsher restrictions were imposed. Maulvi Qalamuddin, the head of the *Amar Bil Maroof Wa Nahi An al-Munkar* or Department of the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, preferred calling his department as Department of Religious Observations. The department punished people through its religious police. On 6 December 1996, the department announced that it had punished 225 women the previous day, in accordance with the Sharia, for violating its rules on clothing. It stated: "As the dignity of a Muslim woman is ensured by observing *hejab* (seclusion from society) all honourable sisters are strongly asked to completely observe *hejab* as recommended by Sharia. This can be achieved only if our dear sisters wear *burqas* because full *hejab* cannot be achieved by wearing only a chador. In cases of violation, no one will have the right of complaint."⁶

The Taliban were at their extreme on the issue of *burqa* (veil). The Mujahideen parties, who also followed Islamic code, had never insisted that women wear the *burqa*. The imposition of *burqa* put extra economic burden on urban families, further inhibiting their movement. The *hejab*, adopted by many refugee women on orders from the Mujahideen was not acceptable to the Taliban "because

⁵ Maley, n. 1, p.148.

⁶ Marsden, n. 4, p. 63.

it was not from our culture and because it does not conform to Islamic Sharia since it is very smart and draws attention”, according to Maulvi Qalamuddin.⁷

Even foreign agencies were forced to adopt the Taliban regulations. In September 1997, heads of three UN agencies in Kandahar were ordered to leave Afghanistan after they objected that a female lawyer working for the UNHCR was forced to talk to Taliban officials from behind a curtain so that her face would not be visible. In November, the UNHCR suspended all its programmes when the Taliban arrested four of its Afghan employees. ‘ Save the Children’ of UK stopped several programmes because the Taliban refused to permit women to take part in mine awareness classes. On 28 September 1997, the European Commissioner for Humanitarian Affairs, Emma Bonino and 19 Western Journalists and aid workers were arrested by the Taliban religious police in Kabul. They had been touring a female hospital ward funded by the European Union, when journalists accompanying Bonino were arrested for taking photographs of women patients – all photography was banned by the Taliban.

At this juncture, in November the US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright reacted “We are opposed to the Taliban because of their opposition to human rights and their despicable treatment of women and children and great lack of respect for human dignity”.⁸ The Taliban policy was based on a mixture of conservative Deobandi teachings and traditional Pashtunwali conceptions of a women’s place and role in society. They made the issue of women’s roles and status a cornerstone of their Islamization process.

Women were virtually eliminated from public places by being forbidden to work outside the home, prohibited to appear in public without being covered from head to toe, and initially restricted to appear in public at all. Girls were banned to attend school, though the Taliban claimed that they only oppose co-educational

⁷ Maley, n. 1, p.151.

⁸ *ibid.*, p.155.

facilities and that when Afghanistan returns to normalcy, girls' schools would be made available. The restrictions put on working women had serious repercussions for many urban families headed by a widow. Many urban women were forced, as a result, to prostitution and begging. In 1997 around 50,000 widows existed in Kabul alone, many without a male member to help them.⁹ Children were also affected due to ban on working of women outside the home. Now they had to work to support their families. The Taliban also prohibited women access to proper health care. Several edicts were issued on this subject. Public bath-houses reserved for women were closed in Herat and especially in Kabul where on 19 October 1996, 32 such bath-houses were closed.¹⁰ Hospitals lacked doctors, nurses and pharmacists due to ban on working of women. Conditions in hospitals where women were prohibited to be checked by male doctors became desperate without lady medical professionals.

In November 1996, a set of eleven rules for lady medical professionals, signed by *Amir ul-Momineen* Mullah Omar as well as the Minister of Public Health, was released.¹¹ On 17 December the Department of the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice announced a comprehensive set of regulations for both men and women. These paved the way for women to work in the health sector, as long as they dressed appropriately, 'in single clothes – with no cosmetics and make up', worked in segregated places and travelled with escorts. Allowances were made for male physicians to examine female patients as long as the lady was accompanied by a *mahram*, both doctor and patient were dressed in Islamic dress and the male doctor did 'not touch or see other than the affected part' of the lady patient.

⁹ ibidi.,p.145.

¹⁰ Rashid, n.2, p.65.

¹¹ Maley,n.1, p.156.

Regulations on women stated that it should be announced in all mosques that women found washing clothes in the river would be picked up in a 'respectful Islamic manner' and taken to their homes where their husbands would be severely punished. Another regulation said that in order to prevent 'sedition and uncovered females'; no drivers were allowed to pick up females wearing the Iranian *burqa*, which did not cover the face, or seductive clothing. In case of violation the driver would be imprisoned and the husbands would be punished. The Taliban also required the windows of the houses to be blackened to prevent visibility of women from outside. A list of Muslim names were released with which newborn children were to be named. Women working in health sector were not to sit in the seat next to the driver. No Afghan women were allowed to be transported in the same car as foreigners. The regulation also banned women from wearing high heels, making a noise with their shoes while they walked or wearing make-up like bindi, lip-stick, nail polish etc. Beauty parlours, hair and make-up salons were closed. The Taliban observed that only 2 per cent of women nationwide worked in offices and asked aid agencies that why they should focus on this 2 per cent.¹² They did not bother to recall that both during the communist regime and the Mujahideen era, 40 per cent of Kabul's women worked. They went to movies, participated in sports and danced and sang at weddings. Before the Taliban, 70 per cent of school teachers, half of government workers and 40 per cent of doctors in Kabul were women.

The extreme interpretation of Islam by the Taliban leaders was not surprising as they were all from the poor, most conservative and least literate southern Pashtun provinces of Afghanistan. Mullah Omar and his comrades transported their own village culture where working women in offices were never seen; no girl had attended school, as there were none. They brought their own experience or lack of

¹² Marsden, n. 4, p.110.

it with women, to the entire country and justified their policies through Sharia. One regulation emphasized that tailors found taking female body measurements and displaying fashion magazines would be imprisoned. Tailors were ordered to learn to keep the measurements of their regular visitors in their heads instead of measuring them for clothes.

On 24 May 1997 the religious police beat up five female employees of a NGO Care International and ordered that all aid projects receive clearance from not just the relevant ministry, but also from the Ministries of Interior, Public Health, Police and the Department of the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice. This was followed by a demand that all Muslim female humanitarian workers coming to Afghanistan be accompanied by a male relative. In July 1997 the Taliban ordered that all 35 UN and NGO agencies shift their offices to one pre-selected compound at the destroyed Polytechnic building in Kabul.¹³

In Kabul, the Taliban fighters sometimes took female by force for marriage but more often with cash. And the price promised if not always paid, was high, so high that the men of Kabul claimed the Taliban made it hard for them to secure brides. There were also cases of the Taliban abducting, forcibly marrying, raping or selling orphans into sexual slavery. Some were sold to Arabs through the Al Qaeda networks. Britain's Sunday Times newspaper reported in November that an unknown number of women were taken away from prisons as sex slaves by the Taliban as they fled Kabul. It said, there must have been a hundred of them, with many children. The Taliban linked the ban on female education to the drawing up of an appropriate education curriculum in order to ensure that the next generation was brought up on the basis of an acceptable system of belief. The preparation of a new curriculum was said to be conditional on the Taliban first taking full control of

¹³ Rashid, n.2, p.114.

Afghanistan and then calling on a body of Ulema to determine its content. The present curriculum, which was drafted by the Mujahideen parties and therefore could have been seen as already consistent with Islam, was not regarded as acceptable.

The Taliban's gender policies badly affected educational system. Within three months of the capture of Kabul, the Taliban closed 63 schools in the city affecting 103,000 girls, 148,000 boys and 11,200 teachers, of whom 7,800 were women. They also closed Kabul University sending home 10,000 students of which 4000 were women.¹⁴ The UNICEF reported in December 1998 that the country's educational system was in a state of total collapse with nine in ten girls and two in three boys not enrolled in school. All the Taliban's claim about women's respect and virtue had been exposed. They said they were acting in the best interests of women. The fact was that the Taliban perpetrated, in the name of Islam, barbaric acts of violence against women, including rape, abduction and forced marriage.

While the US dubbed the Taliban decrees 'medieval and impossible to justify or defend', Maulana Fazlur Rahman, the JUI Chief and one of patrons of the Taliban criticised the militia for their unrealistic attitude towards women.¹⁵ Even Pakistan's *Jammat-i-Islami* party, a hardliner, issued a statement saying that the Taliban decrees barring women to wear veil and requiring men to grow beards could give a negative image of Islam.¹⁶ It said there was no justification in Islamic law for many of the measures announced by the Taliban. It stated that the Muslim faith made the education of females mandatory and that women should also be allowed to work, so long as they observed Islamic norms of dress and behaviour.

¹⁴ Rashid, n. 2, p. 108.

¹⁵ Maley, n. 1, p.149.

¹⁶ Marsden, n. 4, p. 99.

Even hardliner Iran was vociferous in its criticism of the Taliban. In a Friday sermon on 7 October, 1996 Ayatollah Ali Khamanei said: “In the neighbour of Iran, something is taking place in the name of Islam and a group whose knowledge of Islam is unknown has embarked on actions having nothing to do with Islam”. He also added that the actions being taken in Afghanistan were clear examples of reactionary and fanatical moves and of an ignorance of human rights.¹⁷ Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi in a speech to mark the declaration of the rights and obligations of women in Libya said that the recent experience of rule by the fundamentalist Taliban movement in Afghanistan showed that the first victims of religion-based rule were women.

Referring to their Western critics, Mullah Mohammad Hassan Akhund, number three in the Taliban hierarchy, said: “They won’t be satisfied unless we obey them and turn our face from Allah, but we do not care about anybody, as long as the religion of Allah is maintained.”¹⁸ Even urban males were victims of Taliban brand of religious chauvinism, especially non-Pashtuns. All males in Kabul were asked to grow full beard just in six weeks, even though some ethnic groups such as the Hazaras have very limited beard growth. Beards were not to be trimmed shorter than a man’s fist. Men were required to trim and/or shave their heads and body hair. The religious police stood at streets with scissors cutting off long hair and often beating culprits. Men had to wear their *shalwars* above the ankle. An edict issued by Omar stated that turbans, preferably black, which all men were to wear, must not be worn to one side or too far back. It had to be straight. Even students were required to wear turban as it was said to be a tradition of the Prophet.

¹⁷ Marsden, n. 4, p. 130.

¹⁸ Maley, n. 1, p. 159.

Everyone had to offer prayers five times a day that too, in their local mosques not individually. Men accused of sodomy faced the typical Taliban punishment of having a wall toppled over them.

Every form of entertainment was banned including movies, television, videos, music, flute playing and dancing. Mullah Hassan once told, “of course we realize that people need some entertainment but they can go to the parks and see the flowers, and from this they will learn about Islam”.¹⁹ The Taliban opposed music because, according to the then Education Minister Mullah Hanifi, ‘it creates a strain in the mind and hampers study of Islam’.²⁰ Singing and dancing were banned at weddings. Nobody was allowed to hang portraits, photographs or paintings in their homes.

The Taliban dictated that to prevent sorcery all the related books should be burnt and the magician should be imprisoned until his repentance. It ordered stopping of pigeons keeping and playing with birds. Gambling was banned. Nawroz, the traditional Afghan New Year’s celebration was banned as anti-Islamic. Labour Day was banned for being a Communist holiday. For a time they also banned Muharram, the Shia Islamic month of mourning and even restricted any show of festivity at Eid, the main Muslim celebration of the year.

Taliban policies on minority rights were discriminatory and harsh. Wherever the Taliban went, they created havoc by way of ethnic cleansing. The assassinations of Najibullah, Shia leader Ali Mazari, Tajik Ahmed Shah Masud and others proved that Taliban’s only aim was to grab power by hook or by crook. During Mazar-i-Sharif killing spree, Taliban gave three options to minority Shia – convert to Sunni Islam, leave for Shia Iran or die. Prayer services offered by the Shia in mosques were banned. All norms of Islamic fraternity stood shattered.

¹⁹ Rashid, n. 2, p. 115.

²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 115.

The Taliban's fiat on ways to segregate Afghanistan's tiny religious minorities – consisting of 30 to 40,000 Hindus and Sikhs was inhuman. In a decree, Mullah Omar was said to have ordained that the country's non-Muslim minorities should sport a yellow badge or cloth of identification. The stated aim was to spare them from the rigours of a code of Islamic ethics and etiquette that the Taliban applied in regard to the majority population.

Omar had decreed in January 2001 that anyone convicted of trying to persuade an Afghan Muslim to convert would face death. In August, eight foreign aid workers and 16 Afghans working for a charity, Shelter Now International were nabbed by the religious police on charges of spreading Christianity in Afghanistan. The Taliban had also arrested 65 children with whom the charity worked, but later released them and arrested their fathers instead for allowing the young ones to be influenced by the foreigners.²¹ It was a case of heightened religious bigotry.

The Taliban's justice system was a mixture of Sharia and tribal Pashunwali customs. Lawbreakers had to face in some cases traditional *hudud* punishments, i.e. penalties prescribed in the Koran as modified by Pashtunwali code. The Taliban's interpretation of the Sharia demanded the execution of the murderer by the victim's family. Thieves had their one hand or one foot or both chopped off and adulterers were stoned to death. Hanging rapists, burying homosexuals alive, flogging fornicators and publicly humiliating those convicted of lesser crimes were some of the Taliban's way of punishment. The Taliban held the view that women should neither be seen nor heard because they drove men away from the prescribed Islamic path and into wild temptation. In Kabul, a woman was stoned to death by a baying crowd after being sentenced for trying to flee Afghanistan with a man who was not her blood relative. Even Taliban soldiers became victims of Taliban justice system.

²¹ *The Hindu*, Aug. 19 2001.

In January 1999 in Kabul, six soldiers had their right arms and left feet amputated for looting. The authorities then hung the amputated limbs from trees in the city centre for public display.

All games including chess, football, kite-flying were banned. Radio Kabul became Radio Shariat and music was taken off the air. Kabul football stadium was converted into a punishment ground. It was used every Friday for public display of lashings and amputations. The ban on some sports was later eased with certain rules and regulations. Appropriate attire, i.e. long pants and shirts with sleeves were to be worn by players. Spectators, while encouraging the sportsmen, were asked to chant Allah-o-Akbar and refrain from clapping. On prayer time game had to be interrupted. Both the players and onlookers had to offer prayers in congregation, said a decree. Kite-flying, a popular sport in Kabul and all sports for women were continued to face ban. The Taliban virtually ruled popular culture as un-Islamic and thus forbidden. All photography and art related to human images were banned. To prevent idolatry, pictures and portraits found anywhere were demolished.

Cultural heritage sites bore the brunt of the Taliban's mental bankruptcy. In an open defiance of universal opinion and condemnation, the Taliban destroyed in March 2001 the great relics of 2000 years old Bamiyan Buddhas. It was a public demonstration of the Taliban's cruel way of enforcing their extremist view of Islam. The Taliban Foreign Minister, Wakil Ahmed Muttawakil proudly insisted, "The Emirate has been established for realisation of Islamic Sharia". Obliteration of pre-Islamic historic/cultural heritage had been the prime objective behind the Taliban savagery in Bamiyan and elsewhere. Earlier Kabul museum and other archeological sites were looted and precious artifacts were sold mainly in Pakistan. In Herat, the statue of a horse was decapitated because, by representing the animal form, it was seen as being inconsistent with Islam.

The Taliban's style of interpretation of Islam was unique. It provided an Islamic sanction for peasants to produce opium, even though the Koran forbids Muslims from growing or imbibing intoxicants. The Taliban imposed a strict ban on the production of hashish, 'because it is consumed by Afghans and Muslims'. On the other hand 'Opium is permissible because it is consumed by Kafirs and in the West and not by Muslims or Afghans, said Abdul Rashid, the head of the Taliban's anti-drugs control force in Kandahar.²² Drug economy became the Taliban's staple income generating business. According to one estimate, the Taliban were raking in at least \$ 20 million in taxes by it. The Taliban used to collect an Islamic tax called *Zakat* from all opium dealers. The Koran sanctioned 2.5 per cent of Muslims income as *Zakat* to the poor, but the Taliban had no religious qualms in collecting 20 per cent of the value of a truckload of opium as *Zakat*. According to the UNDCP, farmers received less than one per cent of the total profits generated by the opium trade, another 2.5 per cent remained in Afghanistan and Pakistan in the hands of dealers, while five per cent was spent in the countries through which the heroin passed to its destination in the West. During Taliban rule, Afghanistan became the largest producer of opium in the world, growing 28,00 metric tonnes in 1997.²³

In the name of *jihad*, even children who constituted 48 per cent of Afghan refugees in Pakistan were not spared by the Taliban from joining and fighting war, while it came to light that the Taliban's so called religious Chief Mullah Omar was living a life of aristocrat, having all the modern gadgets in his palatial house built by Osama Bin Laden in Kandahar.

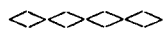
²² Rashid, n. 2, p.118.

²³ *ibid.*, p. 199.

Their religious extremist views were not confined to Afghanistan and its people alone. They visualised extending Islamisation process to Central Asia and beyond to Chechnya, Middle East and other places. In the name of Islam they sheltered numerous terrorist and extremist groups from around the world.

It is obvious that the Taliban extremist religious policy was based on power game. Internal political compulsions and the nature of their madrassa cadres also determined Taliban's religious extremism. The orphans, the rootless refugees had grown up in totally male society. They were given a dose of false manhoodness. In the Taliban's view, women's oppression defying world opinion gave them a sense of victory and put them on a higher status in front of their cadres which was necessary for troops moral boost-up. Another factor in the Taliban's uncompromising attitude was their urge and urgency to show themselves superior. By imposing strict regulations directly on women, the Taliban wanted to demonstrate that everything was under their control including males, as women could not have obeyed the restraints without their male consent.

Thus, Taliban's religious extremism was aimed at strengthening themselves from all sides to retain power in Afghanistan's.



CHAPTER – III

TALIBAN AND INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

Terrorism has become the most dangerous threat to international order, peace and security. It has redefined dimensions of inter-state dynamics in terms that go beyond existing paradigms of geo-politics. Terrorism has demolished all restraints on means to achieve an objective. Terrorism has been defined by scholars in different ways. Yonah Alexander's widely accepted definition of terrorism is "The use or threat of violence against random or civilian targets in order to intimidate or to create generalised pervasive fear for purpose of achieving politics goals".¹

According to Alex P. Schmid, "Terrorism is anxiety inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by clandestine individual group or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal or political reasons, whereby, in contrast to assassination-the direct targets of violence are not the main targets. The immediate human targets of violence are generally chosen randomly or selectively from a target population, and serve as message generations. Threat and violence based communication processes between terrorist victims, and main targets are used to manipulate the main target, fearing it into a targeting of terror, a target of terror, a target of demands, or a target of attention, depending on whether intimidation, coercion or propaganda is primarily sought."²

As per Brian Jenkins "the threat of violence, individual acts of violence or a campaign of violence designed primarily to instill fear is terrorism".³ While Martha Crenshaw terms terrorism as "a means to accomplice certain political objectives with

¹ Yonah Alexander, *International Terrorism: National, Regional and Gobar Perspectives* (New York, 1976) p.10.

² Thomas J. Badey "Defining International Terrorism: A Pragmatic Approach", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 10, No.1, Spring 1998, p. 91.

³ Brian Jenkins, "International Terrorism: Trends and Potentialities", *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 32, No.1 Spring, 1978, p. 115.

international support”.⁴ The US State Department definition says “terrorism means premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents usually intended to influence an audience”.⁵ Thomas J. Badey defined international terrorism as “the repeated use of politically motivated violence with coercive intent, by non-state actors, that affects more than one state”.⁶

Terrorism can be divided into two distinct categories-namely, terrorism of the state and terrorism of the individual. Though terrorism is transnational by its very nature, active state participation is rare in it. They may provide safe-havens to terrorists as the Taliban did. Money, equipment and other types of technical assistance may also be made available to terrorists by the state such as Pakistan. Terrorist or the terror group focuses on disrupting a government to the point that individual liberties are gradually revoked and a more dictatorial regime is put into place, which is more vulnerable to revolt and will help the terrorist in achieving its goal. It also aims at attracting international attention to its plight, and to diverting resources of the state until they can no longer adequately cope and thus become weaker.

By inflicting fear on a target group, the terrorist aims to cripple the movements of its target, and even society at large. It tries to gain public sympathy through publicity and other means. New information and communication technology has strengthened terror movement. In the age of globalisation, it is now much easier for terrorists to attack targets abroad as well as in their country. Transnational funding and recruitment have added new and more effective dimensions to international terrorism.

⁴ Martha Crenshaw. “Theories of Terrorism”, *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 10, No.4, Dec. 1987, P.13.

⁵ Badey, n. 2. p. 91.

⁶ *ibid.*, p. 93.

Terrorism is a means to an end rather than an end by itself. It aims to achieve the stated goals. Socio-economic or psychological aspects are usual factors for growth of terrorism. The nature of terrorism is political and so is its objective. Terrorists believe that once the political power comes in their hands, social and economic reforms would follow by itself. Thus, acquiring political power is their immediate aim. For this purpose, they use religion, propaganda, economy etc in the light of their objectives. Terrorism is an ideology in itself. It tries to conquer and colonise the mind through use of terror, it has thus redrawn the contours of geopolitics. Terrorism is redefining 'power'. It rejects all traditional norms of international order. It works for establishing the hegemony of terror. Terrorism rejects all established boundaries, treaties, limitations, norms-whether geographical or moral.

Terrorism has also challenged dramatically, after September 11-progress, economic growth and globalisation. Now globalisation of terrorism is being witnessed by the world instead of progress in the globalisation of economics. Terrorists interpret, reinterpret or misinterpret religion for the sake of their objectives and requirement. To accommodate and incorporate other groups they maintain flexibility in their views and deeds. One of the significant changes in the field of terrorism has been the increase in the number of groups claiming religious beliefs as a source of legitimacy for their actions. The growth of religious terrorism and its advent in recent times as a driving force behind the increasing lethality of international terrorism has lent new dimensions to terrorism.

The Taliban has been one group. After coming to power in Afghanistan with the active help of its jihadi brothers from around the world, the Taliban set up numerous training camps in Afghanistan to facilitate the terrorists' smooth activities, thus becoming a safe-haven for international terrorism and Islamic extremism. To fulfill its Islamic agenda, increase its political influence and

legitimacy, the Taliban converted Afghanistan into the centre of international terrorism. In the name of religion, it hosted the terror mastermind Osama bin Laden and several terrorist groups whose members had been trained with them in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Osama bin Laden himself was introduced to the Taliban by Pakistan's ISI.

Although Islamic terrorists from around the world were active on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border during the Mujahideen resistance against the Soviets in Afghanistan. The US supported the ISI initiative to recruit radical Muslims from around the world to come to Pakistan and fight along with the Afghan Mujahideen against the Red Army. Pakistan had instructed all its embassies abroad to give visas, without any hindrance to any wanting to come and fight alongside the Mujahideen. Pakistan was doing it in the name of Islamic solidarity and to become the leader of the Muslim world and to foster an Islamic opposition in the Central Asian Republics. The Saudis sensed an opportunity both to promote Wahabism and get rid of its radical elements. In West Asia, the Muslim Brotherhood, the Saudi-based World Muslim League and Palestinian Islamic radicals organised the young recruits and put them into Pakistan's hands. The ISI and Pakistan's *Jamaat-e-Islami* set up reception committees to receive, house and train the incoming terrorists and then encouraged them and join their favorite Mujahideen group, the *Hizb-e-Islami* of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. The funds for this endeavour came from Saudi Arabia. Olivier Roy has described it as "a joint venture between the Saudis, the Muslim Brotherhood and the *Jamaat-e-Islami*, put together by the ISI".⁷ According to Ahmed Rashid, between 1982 and 1992 some 35,000 Muslim extremists from 43 Islamic countries in the Middle East, North and East Africa, Central Asia and Far

⁷ Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban, Islam, Oil and the New Great Game in Central Asia* (London, 2000) p. 130.

East joined the Afghan Mujahideen. Tens of thousands of foreign Muslim extremists came to study in the hundreds of new madrassas that Gen. Zia Government began to fund in Pakistan and along the Pak-Afghan border. Eventually more than 100,000 Muslim radicals were to have direct contact with Pakistan and Afghanistan and be attracted towards the jihad. The Pakistani madrassas and training camps became breeding and meeting grounds for future Islami extremists and international terrorists.

After the fall of Kabul to local Mujahideen in April 1992, these holy warriors dispersed to other countries, particularly to Bosnia Algeria and Egypt. But they could not succeed in their game-plan of assuming power in their countries, though these terrorists carried out a series of attacks. The impact of camp training among the Afghans was felt even in France, where all the best-trained terrorist arrested following the attacks of 1994 and 1995 were found to have spent time in Peshawar, the capital of NWFP of Pakistan. In the words of Samuel Huntington, “the Afghan War left behind an uneasy coalition of Islamist organizations intent on promoting Islam against all non-Muslim forces. It also left a legacy of expert and experienced fighters, training camps and logistical facilities, elaborate trans-Islamic networks of personal and organization relationships, a substantial amount of military equipment including 300 to 500 unaccounted-for Stinger missiles, and most important, a heady sense of power and self-confidence over what had been achieved and a driving desire to move on to other victories.”⁸

The Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan also bolstered the extremist terrorists. They speculated that if the Afghan jihad had defeated one superpower, the USSR, they could also defeat other countries, which they perceived their targets. For these extremist-terrorists, the Soviet defeat was a victory for Islam. Now the

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 130.

Afghan trained Islamic terrorists were getting ready for more victories around the world. But the failure of Pakistan-backed Hikmetyar to gain power delayed their action, though they had started demonstrating their power to the world by exploding bombs in 1993 at the World Trade Centre in New York, killing six people and injuring 1000.

After thrusting their jihadi brother Taliban on the Afghan throne, the terrorist-extremists now had the vast meeting and breeding space to fulfill their Islamic objectives. The Taliban ascendancy on Afghanistan changed everything in their favour. Before the Taliban, Pakistan was under great pressure to close down its terrorist camps. The Taliban's triumph in Afghanistan gave Pakistan and Pak-based numerous terrorist groups from around the world great solace. Now they shifted their entire training and other infrastructure to the Taliban's Afghanistan.

Saudi student Osama bin Laden was among these thousands of foreign recruits. Born in 1957, Osama bin Laden was the 17th of 54 children of a Yemeni construction magnate Mohammed bin Laden. His mother was a Saudi, one of Mohammed bin Laden's many wives. Osama studied for a Masters degree in business administration at King Abdul Aziz University in Jeddah but soon took up Islamic studies. Osama's father had funded the Afghan war against the Soviets and was a close friend of the late King Faisal of Saudi Arabia. Mohammed Laden had become rich on the contracts to renovate and expand the Holy Mosques of Mecca and Medina. The six feet five inches tall Osama Bin Laden was sent to Peshawar by Saudi Intelligence Chief, Prince Turki Bin Faisal to lead the Saudi contingent based in Pakistan and Afghanistan as Pakistan wanted to have a Royal member leading the Saudi contingent there in order to show Muslims the commitment of the Royal family to the jihad in Afghanistan.⁹

⁹ *ibid.*, p. 131.

Osama Bin Laden had first traveled to Peshawar in 1980 and met the Mujahideen leaders, returning frequently with Saudi donations for the cause until 1982 when he decided to settle in Peshawar. In 1986 he helped build the Khost tunnel complex, which was funded by the CIA as a major arms depot, training facility and medical centre for the Mujahideen. For the first time in Khost, Osama set up his own training camp for Arab-Afghans.

In Osama's words "To counter these atheist Russians, the Saudis chose me as their representative in Afghanistan. I settled in Pakistan in the Afghan border region. There I received volunteers who came from the Saudi Kingdom and from all over the Arab and Muslim countries. I set up my first camp where these volunteers were trained by Pakistani and American officers. The weapons were supplied by the Americans, the money by the Saudis. I discovered that it was not enough to fight on Afghanistan, but that we had to fight on all fronts, communist or Western oppression," he added.¹⁰

In Peshawar, the centre for the Arab-Afghans were the offices of the World Muslim League and the Muslim Brotherhood. A Jordanian Palestinian, Abdullah Azam was running this centre.¹¹ Osama Bin Laden revered him as his leader. Osama helped Arab terrorists build up their bases in the Afghanistan's provinces of Badakhshan, Kunar and Nuristan. He even claimed to have participated in the war against the Soviets and in an ambush he is said to have snatched a AK 47 rifle killing a Russian soldier which he always carried with him. At this stage Osama mainly used his wealth and Saudi funds to construct Mujahideen projects and spread Wahabism amongst the Afghans. After the death of Azam in 1989, Osama took over Azam's organization and set up Al Qaeda as a service centre for Arab-Afghans and their families and to build an alliance amongst them. But their extreme

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 132.

¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 132.

Wahabi practices were disliked by the majority of Afghans. By allying themselves with the most extreme pro-Wahabi Pashtun Mujahideen, the Arab-Afghans alienated the non-Pashtuns and the Shias.

The Soviet withdrawal and subsequent internal fighting among the Mujahideen led to disillusionment and flight of Osama to Saudi Arabia by 1990. But he was expelled from there for criticising the Royal family. In Sudan, where he was living since 1992, Osama organized Afghan war veterans. He was even suspected of having played a role in the failure of Operation Restore Hope in Somalia in 1992 and in the attempt to assassinate Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Addis Ababa in June 1995. By early 1996 the Sudanese Islamist regime, seeking to break out of its international straitjacket and having already handed over the terrorist Carlos to the French authorities, offered to hand over the exiled bin Laden to the United States. The Americans doubted or feared the outcome of a trial in which the prosecution would have very little evidence to convict and suggested instead that Osama be extradited to Saudi Arabia. But Saudi monarch declined to accept the dreaded man.

On US and Saudi pressure, Osama bin Laden eventually left Sudan for Afghanistan on May 18, 1996 on a chartered jet along with dozens of Arab terrorists. He was not yet viewed as public enemy by the US and they thought that a poor Afghanistan would not be able to provide him access to outside world. In Afghanistan, initially he lived under the protection of the Jalalabad Shura. Introduced to the Taliban by Pakistan, Osama helped them conquer Kabul in September 1996. He provided the Taliban several hundred Arab veterans from the Afghan war to participate in the 1997 and 1998 offensive in northern Afghanistan against opposition Northern Alliance. These Wahabi fighters helped the Taliban carry out the massacres of the Shia Hazaras in the north. Several hundred Arab-Afghans, based in the Rishkor army garrison outside Kabul, fought on the Kabul

front against Commander Ahmed Shah Masud forces. Osama's Al Qaeda helped the Taliban in eliminating their greatest rival Commander Ahmed Shah Masud. Masud was assassinated just three days before the September 11, 2001 attack in the Panjshir Valley by two North Africans carrying Belgian passports. The men were reportedly there to interview him and were carrying journalists' cards issued by a radical Islamist news organisation based in London. The assassination of Masud was clearly a prelude to the attack on American cities. It was meant to prevent the unification of Afghan opposition to the Taliban in the event of US attack.

Russian Foreign Ministry went on to say that bin Laden was unofficially serving as the Taliban's Defense Minister while several of his cadres were guiding the Taliban on different fronts. Al Qaeda had bankrolled much of the Taliban's campaign to take charge of Afghanistan. Osama had dispatched aircraft laden with arms at a time when the Taliban badly needed them. In Afghanistan, Osama concentrated more, under the Taliban, on internationalising its network. Thus he agreed to meet even a Shia representative from Iran. Dr. Mahdi Chamran Savehie, who had been installed as head of External Intelligence of Iran, visited Afghanistan to meet Osama and discuss about the formation of a new broad-based terror group, *Hezbollah International*.¹² Osama agreed to send an Al Qaeda representative to a summit meeting of major Islamic fundamentalist groups scheduled to be held in Tehran in June 1996, while encouraging many of those groups affiliated to Al Qaeda to join this meet. Several biggest underground fundamentalists including Mustafa Al Liddawi of Hamas, George Habbash of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Ahmed Salah of Egyptian Islamic Jihad, Kurdish People's Party's Abdullah Ocalan and Ramadan Shallah of Palestinian Islamic Jihad attended the summit on 21 June 1996 while Al Qaeda was represented by Mohammed Ali

¹² Adam Robinson, *Bin Laden: Behind the Mask of the Terrorist* (New Delhi, 2001) p. 167.

Ahmed. Among other resolutions were decisions to standardise training, unify financial reporting, and a semi-unified command to avoid replication of work. On the concluding day, 23 June, 1996 a Committee of Three was created as the Supreme Council of *Hezbollah International* Osama bin Laden, Imad Mughniyah, the representative of Lebanese Islamic Jihad and Ahmed Salah were chosen to lead the Committee.

Just two days later, *Hezbollah International* demonstrated its arrival with the bombing of the US military camp at Khobar in Saudi Arabia that claimed 19 lives. Osama commented during an interview: “We roused the people ----to eject this enemy from the holy land----They have raised the head of the Muslim nation high, and washed away some of the dishonour we had to bear by the Saudi government’s collaboration with the American government in the land of Allah.”¹³ Al Qaeda hands were also suspected in the mid air explosion of Trans World Airlines Flight 800 which had taken-off from Kennedy Airport on 17 July 1996. 229 people lost their lives in the crash. A day later, the Jihad Wing of the *Islamic Change Movement* issued a communique claiming responsibility for the TWA Flight crash. This organisation was closely allied to Al Qaeda once.¹⁴ On July 20, its representatives were reportedly lauded for their success at a management meeting of *Hezbollah International* in Tehran. It was followed, on August 23, 1996 by Osama bin Laden’s first “declaration of jihad on the American occupiers of the Holy Places,”¹⁵ demonstrating his intent to forge an effective partnership with the Taliban of Afghanistan. It stated: “The walls of oppression and humiliation cannot be demolished except in a rain of bullets”. Striking up a friendship with Mullah Omar, he shifted to Kandahar, the Taliban headquarter, in 1997 and came under the Taliban’s protection. He cemented the relationship by marrying Omar’s eldest daughter Fatima. He added a fourth wife who belonged to a senior Pashtun family.

¹³ *ibid.*, p.168.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 172.

¹⁵ Rashid, n. 7, p. 134.

Already in August 1996 a US State Department report noted that bin Laden was “one of the most significant financial sponsors of Islamic extremist activities in the world”.¹⁶ The report stated that bin Laden was financing terrorist camps in Somalia, Egypt Sudan, Yemen, besides Afghanistan. Egyptian intelligence, too declared that bin Laden was training 1000 terrorists, a second generation of Arab-Afghans, to bring about an Islamic revolution in Arab countries.¹⁷

In November 1997, fifty-eight tourists-35 of them Swiss and four Egyptians were killed in Luxor, Egypt by elements linked to *Al-Gamaa al-Islamia*, an Egyptian group long associated with Al Qaeda. Switzerland’s federal police chief later said that the massacre was carried out with funding from Al Qaeda. Al-Gamaa also claimed responsibility for the attempt in June 1995 to assassinate Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Another close partner of Al Qaeda, the Al-Jihad targeted Egyptian officials and US facilities in Egypt. In 1998, it failed in its bid to attack US embassy in Albania.

On 23 February 1998, at a meeting in Afghanistan’s Khost camp, Al Qaeda and its associated groups released an eleven page manifesto under the aegis of ‘The International Islamic Front for Jihad against Jews and Crusaders’.¹⁸ The manifesto stated “for more than seven years the US has been occupying the lands of Islam in the holiest of places, the Arabian peninsular, plundering its riches, dictating to its rulers, humiliating its people, terrorizing its neighbours, and turning its bases in the peninsular into a spearhead through which to fight the neighbouring Muslim peoples”. The meeting also issued a *fatwa*. “The ruling to kill the Americans and their allies-civilians and military-is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do

¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 134.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 134.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 134.

it in any country in which it is possible to.”¹⁹ bin Laden also called for the liberation of the entire Muslim Middle East. He called upon all Muslims to “confront, fight and kill” Americans and Britons.²⁰

The International Islamic Front consisted of three terrorist organisations of Egypt and Pakistan, bin Laden’s Al Qaeda, the Taliban, two organisations of Uzbekistan, an organisation of Xinjiang in China and a group operating in southern Philippines. Each of them had their own objectives. The Egyptian *Al-Gamma* and *Al-Jihad* organisations claimed to be fighting to achieve an Islamic state in Egypt. The *Harkat-ul-Mujahideen* and the *Lashkar-e-Toiba* of Pakistan proclaimed their objective as the merger of Jammu and Kashmir, an integral part of India, with Pakistan, and as the ‘liberation’ of Muslims living in other parts of India.²¹ The *Sipah-e-Sabah* wanted Pakistan to be proclaimed a Sunni state and the Shias to be declared non-Muslims. The Al Qaeda had a bigger objective of overthrowing the Saudi monarchy and for the withdrawal of the US and British troops from Saudi Arabia. The Taliban advocated an Islamic Emirate. The *Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan*, IMU was aiming for an Islamic state and other organisations for an Islamic Confederation of Central Asian States. The Xinjiang terrorist group wanted independence for the Uighurs and the Abu Sayyaf group of southern Philippines was fighting for an independent Islamic state in that area.

While continuing to pursue their respective national and organisational objectives, these organisations formed the Front to undertake joint operations against what they described as the common enemies of Islam, the US and Israel.

Pakistan and the Taliban- the two regimes sponsored the terrorist International Islamic Front. Pakistan-Taliban-Al Qaeda combine indulged in

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p.134.

²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 134.

²¹ B. Raman, “Terrorism: The New Context”, *Strategic Analysis*, Dec. 2001.

extensive liaisons with similar organisations across the globe spreading its network in over 60 countries in four continents. Osama's close aides in Afghanistan included Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri, head of the Egyptian *Islamic Jihad*; Mohammed Atef who was indicted for his role in 1998 attacks on US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania; Abu Zubaydah, a Saudi-born Palestine who headed recruitment cell for Al Qaeda and others.

Since the formation of the International Islamic Front in 1998, there were several acts of terrorism undertaken by them. The first was the explosions on August 7, 1998 of the US Embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania that killed 224 people and injured hundreds more. Accusing bin Laden for the attacks, the USA retaliated just 13 days later by firing 70 cruise missiles against bin Laden's camps around Khost and Jalalabad in Afghanistan and Khartoum, in Sudan. Several camps which had been handed over by the Taliban to the Arab-Afghans and Pakistan terrorists were hit. The *Al Badr* camp run by bin Laden and Muawia camps controlled by Pakistan's *Harakat-ul-Ansar* were the main targets. Harakat used these camps to train terrorists involved in India's Jammu and Kashmir. Seven foreigners were killed in the strike – three Yemenis, two Egyptians, one Saudi and one Turk. Seven Pakistanis and 20 Afghans were also killed in the retaliatory attack by the US.

US President Bill Clinton cited four reasons for the US retaliation.²² First was, according to him, the convincing evidence of the key role played by these groups in the embassy bombing in East African countries. Second was the execution of attacks by these groups against US in the past. Third was the information that they were planning additional terrorist attacks against the US citizens and others. And the fourth reason cited was terrorists' attempt to acquire

²² Robinson, n. 12, p. 213.

chemical weapons and other dangerous weapons. The Tomahawk missile strikes against Sudan hit the Al-Shifa Pharmaceutical Industries factory outside Khartoum. The plant was believed to be manufacturing a prototype for deadly nerve gas.

In France, Al Qaeda planned to disrupt World Cup football scheduled to be held in June 1998.²³ However, in May; Abu Hamza, a senior operative within Algeria's Armed Islamic Group, was arrested. French, Belgian, German, Italian and Swiss police staged raids on known and suspected supporters of the Algerian terrorist group, Group Islamic Army (GIA) and the Armed Islamic Group. Nearly a hundred people were taken into custody including Sheikh Tayeb al-Afghani, formerly one of Osama's lieutenants in Afghanistan. It was at this point that Osama had funded and helped organise the plan in Afghanistan when it was presented to him, and agreed to offer additional funding and arms, in addition to the GIA sending key personnel for expert training in Al Qaeda camps.

On 7 June 1999, US put Osama on the FBI's list of the Ten Most Wanted Fugitives'. The USA also announced a US \$ 5 million reward for the capture of bin Laden. The second major terror strike was the bombing on USS Cole in Aden, Yemen on 12 October 2000. Two suicide bombers had detonated their explosives-packed boat next to the US warship as it refuelled in the harbour, killing 17 sailors and wounding 39. Al Qaeda released a video tape, recorded before the attack to the media in which bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri were shown. al-Zawahiri said in the tape: 'Enough of words, it is time to take action against this iniquitous and faithless force (US), which has spread its troops through Egypt, Yemen and Saudi Arabia'.²⁴

²³ *ibid.*, p. 200.

²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 229.

From an operational standpoint, the *International Islamic Front* also sought to replace *Hezbollah International* as a driving force for cooperation and modernisation within the world wide fundamentalist movement. It organised a three-day extraordinary meeting in Beirut in association with Imad Mughniyah of Lebanese Hezbollah at the end of January 2001.²⁵ Though Osama himself did not take part in the meet, Al Qaeda was heavily represented and he helped to cover the expenditure involved in staging such a mammoth event in which *Hamas*, Egyptian *Islamic Jihad* and Algeria's *GIA* were just a few of the groups represented among a list of delegates said to be numbering more than 400. Representatives came from as far as Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Pakistan, Qatar, Sudan and Yemen. The groups present agreed to put aside old rivalries in order to develop a common agenda aimed at destroying Israel and freeing the region of US influence. This new terror alliance was named the *Jerusalem Foundation*.²⁶ Ramadan Abdullah Shallah, head of Palestine Islamic Jihad, and senior Hamas official Musa Abu Marzouq were named to head this new grouping.

Osama was also blamed for the 18 American soldiers killed in Mogadishu, Somalia in 1993, the death of five servicemen in a bomb attack in Riyadh in 1995. He was also accused of two incidents of attack in Aden, Yemen in 1992 and the World Trade Centre bombing in 1993, a 1994 plot to kill President Clinton in the Phillipines and the Pope, a plan to blow up a dozen US civilian aircraft in 1995, a foiled USS Cole type bombing on USS Sullivans on 3 January 2000.

Arab militants trained in camps in Afghanistan and Pakistan along with Chechen commander Shamil Basayev and Khattab, a Jordanian who was sometimes referred to as Russia's Osama bin Laden, conducted raids on Dagestan area of

²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 233.

²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 233.

Russia. Taliban's Foreign Minister Wakil Ahmed Muttawakil once said "It is Muslim world's shame that it does not support Chechens. They are my brothers. They are Muslims. The only solution is to help Chechens"²⁷ He went on to state that Chechens were not terrorists and they were fighting for freedom and independence from Russia. True to its policy, Taliban became the first and only entity in world to have recognised in January 1999 Chechen Republic of Ichkeria as a separate republic. Thus the Taliban ruled Afghanistan became the export centre of terrorism.

The endemic increase in Islamic extremism and terrorism in Central Asian Republics was more due to the Talibanisation of Afghanistan. The Taliban-Al Qaeda nexus worked towards Islamisation of Central Asia. They even dreamt of a grand Islamic Caliphate in the region. Through the region's oil and gas resources, they could have managed their financial burden besides keeping the international community on tenterhooks and in a bargaining position. That is why they actively supported several separatist dissident groups such as *Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan*, *Islamic Renaissance Party*, *United Tajik Opposition*, *Hizb-ut-Tahrir* etc.

In Algeria, one Taliban Al Qaeda protected group named Armed Islamic Group (AIG) was led by Algerian-Afghans i.e. Algerian veterans of Afghan war. They set an agenda that plunged Algeria into a bloodbath, destabilized North Africa and led to the growth of Islamic extremism in France. In Malaysia, seven Afghans were arrested using false Italian passports and accused of trying to start a bombing campaign. According to FBI, terrorists in Yemen who kidnapped 16 Western tourists in December 1998 were funded by bin Laden. In February 1999,

²⁷ *Public Opinion Trends (Afghanistan series)* Vol. xxv, No.7, February 24, 2000.

Bangladeshi authorities said bin Laden had sent US \$ 1 million to the *Harkat-ul-Jihad* in Dhaka, whose members had trained and fought in Afghanistan. They wanted to turn Bangladesh into a Taliban-style Islamic state. In the Mauritania's capital Nouakchott, West Africa, several terrorists were arrested who had also been trained under Bin Laden in Afghanistan. In February 1999 the CIA claimed that through monitoring bin Laden's communication network, they had prevented his supporters from carrying out seven bomb strikes against US overseas facilities in Saudi Arabia, Albania, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Uganda, Uruguay, and the Ivory Coast – emphasizing the reach of the Afghan veterans.

In Jordan, a unique 700 page manual titled *Encyclopaedia of Jihad* for Islamic terrorists detailing every aspect of how to fight a guerrilla war, from biochemical attacks to finding the total pressure point during hand-to-hand combat was obtained by intelligence agencies in 1999 in the home of a terrorist arrested in Amman. Dedicated to Osama bin Laden and Azzam, the 11 volumes guide was available in both book form and on CD-Rom for terrorist instructors.²⁸

A plan to attack Paris-based US Embassy was unearthed with the arrest of a Franco-Algerian Djamel Beghal in Dubai in July 2001. A Dutch internal security agency reported that Islamic militants were recruiting young Muslim immigrants at mosques across the country for terrorist activities. Even the Dutch Parliament passed a resolution asking government to order a survey of Muslim population in Holland. Police from France, Germany, Holland and Belgium warned that a "Mujahideen network" was operating in Europe. A leaked report of Belgian Parliament's intelligence committee stated that the Saudi-backed *Salafi* movement had created a religious 'state' within a state in Belgium. They were circulating Osama bin Laden's videos and had carried out para-military training.²⁹

²⁸ *Times of India*, 5 Nov. 2001.

²⁹ *The Hindu*, 5 June 2002

Islamist extremism and terrorism have reached to a dangerous level in several South-East Asian nations. Singapore and Malaysia have busted terrorist cells, arresting several persons who were plotting or involved in terror acts. In Malaysia, terrorists belonging to the *Kumpulan Mujahideen Malaysia* have been arrested several times. In Singapore, government on January 5, 2002 announced the detention of five terrorists belonging to the *Jemmah Islamiah*. They informed that “several of those arrested had been to Afghanistan where they received training in Al Qaeda terrorist camps. They have links to militant elements in Malaysia and Indonesia.” Al Qaeda, the Jemmah Islamiah and Philippines’ *Moro Islamic Liberation Front*, MILF link were exposed with the arrest of an Indonesian operative Fathur Rahman Al-Ghozi trained in Afghanistan in mid-January 2002. By his own account Al-Ghozi provided instructions in handling of explosive in MILF camps between 1996 and 2001 and assisted in channelling funds and operational know-how to a MILF operations group that staged a series of bomb attacks in Manila on December 30, 2000.

The armed action against the Abu Sayyaf Group, an associate of Al Qaeda network, on Basilan Island off south-west Mindanoo in the Philippines has been widely billed as the ‘second front’ after the demise of the first front, the Taliban in the US-led international war on terror.

According to CNN-Turk Television, a notebook, including detailed plans of various terrorist attacks in Turkish language were found in a camp deserted by Al Qaeda group in Jalalabad.³⁰ It was the first clear cut sign that terrorists from Turkey or those speaking fluent Turkish had been trained in the ranks of the Al Qaeda along with Arabs, Africans, South, Central and South-East Asians, Europeans and other foreign nationals. The ultimate motive of these terrorists was to topple

³⁰ *The Hindu*, 18 November 2001.

regimes in their homelands and Talibanise their countries by overthrowing the democratic governments.

Terrorists trained and sheltered in the Taliban's Afghanistan had been very active in Jammu and Kashmir and other parts of India. They carried out numerous attacks on Indian establishments and forces. *Lashkar-e-Toiba*, *Harakat-ul-Ansar*, *Jaish-e-Mohammad*, all had their training camps in the Taliban ruled Afghanistan. Pakistan wanted to retain the Khost training camps for terrorists active in Kashmir. Both the Taliban and bin Laden provided sanctuary and training facilities for these terrorists who were backed by Pakistan. With the encouragement of Pakistan, the Taliban and bin Laden, Arab-Afghans had enlisted in the Pakistani *Harkat-ul-Ansar* to fight in Kashmir. All the Pakistani victims of the US missile attacks on Khost belonged to Harkat-ul-Ansar. In 1999, Ansar announced that it would impose a Wahabi-style dress code in Kashmir valley and banned jeans and jackets. On 15 February 1999, they shot and wounded three Kashmiri cable operators for relaying western satellite broadcasts.

In December 1998, Indian authorities detained Bangladeshi terrorists for plotting to bomb the US Consulate in Calcutta. The Consulate became victim of terrorist attack in 2002 in which several policemen were killed. *Hizbul Mujahideen*, *Lashkar-e-Toiba* and *Jaish-e-Mohammad* were involved in terrorist attacks in different parts of India especially in Jammu and Kashmir. Their cadres were drawn from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Africa, Arab countries besides the local poor youth. From April 2000 to November 2001, there were 13 incidents of *fidayeen* suicide attacks in Jammu and Kashmir alone including an attack on State Assembly on 1 October 2001. The *Lashkar-e-Toiba/Jaish-e-Mohammad* combine was also involved in the strike on Indian Parliament on 13 December 2001.

In December 1999, the IC 814 Indian Airlines plane hijacking and subsequent drama at the Kandahar airport proved beyond doubt the nexus between

Taliban-Al Qaeda and Pakistan in carrying out terrorist strikes in India. The terrorists including Maulana Masood Azhar released in exchange of 155 passengers at the Kandahar airport were allowed to go scot free by the Taliban tearing all the international norms in such a major event. On December 7, 2001 *The Time of India* quoting *New York Times* reported, giving proof that September 11 carnage and the December 1999 hijacking of the Indian Airlines flight came from the same terrorists pool in Afghanistan. Ansar in 1994 and Al Faran in 1995 had kidnapped British and American nationals to facilitate Masood Azhar release. Ansar was given a new name of Jaish-e-Mohammad by Azhar after his release. Ansar had been banned by the US in 1998 for its links with the Al Qaeda. Attack on Kaluchak, Jammu army residential area in May 2002 was carried out by the Lashkar. These organisations were also found involved in creating disturbances and recruiting youth in several parts of India. Student Islamic Movement of India and other organisations were enticed by these groups to conduct terrorist strikes in India. Even during Kargil war of 1999 Taliban-Al Qaeda combine were found fighting for Pakistan. Al Qaeda-Lashkar-Jaish-e-Mohammad combine were also involved in carrying out numerous strikes against foreign nationals in Pakistan.

The most devastating terror attack was the September 11, 2001 strikes on two US cities of New York and Washington, DC. which left thousands dead. It was this attack executed by Al Qaeda network, which led to the downfall of the Taliban regime from Afghanistan. A \$ 25 million reward was offered for bin Laden's head.

To the world community dismay terrorists have continued their activities. American journalist Daniel Pearl's brutal murder, the suicide attack on a bus carrying French nationals and the attack on US consulate in Karachi on June 14, 2002 were all handiworks of these groups operating from Afghanistan and Pakistan. Pakistan confirmed Al Qaeda's hand in the Karachi car bombing.³¹

³¹ *The Hindu*, 9 July 2002.

The Taliban in concert with Al Qaeda had become the main laboratory to prepare future Islamic mujahideen of Taliban variety. They played host not just to the world's most wanted terrorist but also to thousands of jihadis who flocked there to get training in terrorism. Out of their cynical version of 'pure' Islam and to keep themselves in power, the Taliban turned Afghanistan into a Mecca of terrorism. Many terrorists were drawn to Afghanistan not simply to bin Laden and his gang but also to the idea of Talibanizing the Muslim world. The Taliban guaranteed safe sanctuary to terrorists, allowed them to set up camps to train cadres in Afghanistan. They helped terrorist groups to recruit fresh talent. From camps in Afghanistan and northern Pakistan, the juggernaut of jihad spread out to the most corners of the globe.

Tantalising details of the Bin Laden apparatus and the terrorist training it offered in Afghanistan – emerged during a separate hearing in New York on the conspiracy by a group of Algerians to set off a suitcase bomb at Los Angeles airport at the turn of the millennium. Ahmed Resam, a conspirator disclosed that he had received six months of training at a camp in Afghanistan in 1998, along with volunteers from many other places including Algeria, Jordan, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, France, Chechnya. He also gave details of the training imparted on how to blow up infrastructure of enemy and how to wage urban warfare.

The Taliban -Al Qaeda terror nexus acquired chemical and biological weapons to derive mileage in its fight to achieve their political objectives. Evidence showed that they were on the verge of even possessing nuclear weapons. They used their money power to purchase nuclear weapon casings from a former Soviet Republic. In the name of serving the cause of Islamic jihad, the Pakistani nuclear scientists were found providing the required expertise. Had they had a little more time, they would have acquired nuclear weapons. The repercussion would have been devastating for the entire world. An American Al Qaeda recruit, Jose Padilla

visited a Central Asian country in April 2002 to buy radioactive materials. The American convert to Islam had conferred with senior Al Qaeda members about detonating a radiation weapon, or 'dirty bomb', in the United States.³² *The Daily Telegraph* reported that "Uranium and other materials including cyanide" had been discovered in a tunnel complex near Kandahar airport. Asked about reports on his attempts to develop or obtain nuclear materials, Osama commented to *Time magazine*: "Defence of Muslims is a religious duty. If I indeed have these weapons then I thank God for enabling me to do so. I am carrying out a duty. It would be a sin for Muslims not to try to possess the weapons that would prevent the infidels from inflicting harm on Muslims."³³

As early as in 1993 Chechen separatist leader Chamil Bassaev, who was getting fighters, arms and funding from Al Qaeda, stated: "We have no nuclear weapons in Chechnya. But in 1993 I was offered ----a nuclear explosive for \$ 1.5 million."³⁴ One Arabic publication claimed that Osama had offered the Chechen resistance an infusion of \$ 30 million in cash and two tons of opium in exchange for Chechen criminal contacts and gangs operating in Russia obtaining nuclear material or a warhead.

In 1998, a close aide of the Al Qaeda leader was arrested in Munich and accused by German authorities of 'acting to obtain nuclear materials'. A year later, the Bulgarian Press agency, BTA, reported that Bulgarian businessmen Ivanov met Osama in Peshawar. Osama expressed his interest in the nuclear waste from the atomic power plant in Kosloduj.

³² *The Hindu*, 17 June 2002.

³³ Robinson, p. 221.

³⁴ *ibid.*, p. 222.

All these evidences point to the fact that Osama pursued a campaign to arm Al Qaeda with weapons of mass destruction and bio-weaponry. The Taliban's Afghanistan, in the words of Osama himself was 'the safest place in the world for me. There are several places where we have friends and close brothers – we can find refuge and safety with them'.³⁵

Apart from safe havens and training facilities, the Taliban also provided opportunity to terrorist groups to finance their activities through heroin and smuggling of contraband goods. In fact sundry Islamic radical and terrorists were given a license by the Taliban for narcotics trade while revenue at source was collected by the Taliban. This made Taliban's Afghanistan a major attraction for the Islamic terrorists and extremists from across the world. Drug money became a major source of revenue for Taliban-Al Qaeda network. By 1998 Pakistan-Afghanistan drug exports had touched S 3 billion. Drug money funded the weapons, ammunition and fuel for the war. Even soldiers' salaries were paid from it by the Taliban. Afghanistan's opium crop of 3656 tons accounted for 72 per cent of the world's illicit opium in 2000. Poppy cultivation had climbed from 41720 hectares in 1998 to 64510 hectares in 2000.³⁶ An annual report of CIA in 1999 stated that Afghanistan is the world's largest illicit opium producer, surpassing Burma. Increasing number of heroin-producing laboratories were set up by the Taliban-Al Qaeda combine. The terror-economy was supplemented by donations, tax collections from transport and drug mafia, extortion and of cours Osama's business empire.

The Taliban gave Osama a free hand to develop the organisation as he pleased, unhindered by the chaos and social problems in Afghanistan. His significant share of the Afghani opium and heroin industry was major boost for funds. Al Qaeda went to great lengths to encourage the cultivation of opium among farmers, even going to the extreme of burning fields of crops and forcing the

³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 230.

³⁶ Rashid, p. 124.

sowing of poppy seeds. Maulvi Abdul Kabir a senior Taliban leader was a partner in several poppy-growing businesses.

Mullah Omar even put a religious rubber stamp on Al Qaeda activities by issuing a *fatwa*. On 14 May 1998, the London based *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* newspaper reported that clerics in Afghanistan had issued a *fatwa* stipulating the necessity to remove western forces from the Gulf region. The Afghan Ulema said: “The enemies of Islam are not limited to a certain group or party; all atheists are enemies of Islam, and they take one another as friends”.³⁷ They urged Islamic governments to perform the duty of “armed jihad against the enemies of Islam. If Muslims are lax in their responsibility, the enemies of Islam will occupy the two holy mosques as well.”

While the Taliban regime banned television as the work of Satan and imposed death penalty for possessing one, Osama not only flouted this rule but also had satellite television, bounced from somewhere in Pakistan to a portable dish. He argued that it was not possible to keep abreast of international events without CNN, BBC and ABC. Even Osama’s son’s wedding was recorded on video camera.

The Taliban allowed more than 100 training camps and bases in Afghanistan for international terrorists. Obviously, the Taliban needed Osama and his terror network as much as he needed them. Osama’s military and financial support was vital both to offset the opposition forces and to maintain a firm grip over a disillusioned population weary of the regime’s social terrorism. Mullah Omar went to great lengths on behalf of Al Qaeda to deceive enemies as to the capabilities, and whereabouts of his most infamous guest.

These observations do point out that the Taliban and terrorism became synonymous with each other and the Taliban’s Afghanistan emerged as the focal point of international terrorism.

³⁷ *ibid.*, p. 233.

CHAPTER – IV

SECURITY IMPLICATIONS FOR CENTRAL ASIAN REPUBLICS

In recent years, international terrorism, religious extremism, arms trafficking, drug smuggling, organised crime, refugee influx water scarcity, etc. have been posing threat to peace, security, social order, political stability and economic development in Central Asia. All these were to a large extent emanating from Talibanised Afghanistan.

Despite their differences in terms of size, population, and economic and military capabilities, many societal, economic, political, security and geographic factors tie the Central Asian Republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan together, to the extent that the achievement and preservation of security in these countries cannot be the result of their individual efforts at the national level only. Common history, cultural similarities and ethnic ties on one hand and common economic problems, economic ties and shared concerns about security issues and political instability on the other, bind the Central Asian states together. The region's enormous oil and gas resources, which had been untapped, became a ground for the competing interests of big powers and neighbours.

The fall of Kabul brought a de-stabilising Islamic fundamentalist regime to the doorsteps of Central Asian Republics (CARs). Two of the CARs-Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have ethnic population that straddle their border with Afghanistan and are vulnerable to the changes in the ethnic power balance in Afghanistan.

There were fears among Afghanistan's neighbours about the Taliban's agenda of exporting their own brand of Islam. The Taliban's actions strengthened such fears by declaring their goals as being the capture of Samarkand and Bukhara.

Islamic countries immediately vied for influence in the region. Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Turkey, Iran all tried to have their brand of Islam in the CARs. Islamic

revival swept through the region. The people of Central Asia, who had kept their religious practices subdued during the seventy-four years of Communist rule, now saw an opportunity to reconnect spiritually and culturally with their Islamic past. Pakistan, Iran and Saudi Arabia funded hundreds of new mosques and distributed thousands of free copies of Koran. Millions of Central Asians seized this opportunity to rediscover their identity and heritage, all of which they linked intimately with Islam.

The rise of Taliban at the door-step of Central Asia brought a host of challenges and opportunity for these countries. A new brand of Islamic fundamentalism and international terrorism were waiting to invade the region. The meteoric rise of militant Islamic sects, each with its own brand of orthodoxy and sharia obscured one of the important aspects of traditional Central Asian Islam - its tolerance. The speed and method of the Islamic resurgence caught the ruling elite by surprise, increasing the gulf between the leaders and the people.

Even before the disintegration of the USSR, there had been a spurt in the building of mosques. In October 1990 Kyrgyzstan had fifty new mosques compared to a total of fifteen a year earlier; Turkmenistan, thirty compared to five; Tajikistan, forty compared to seventeen; and Kazakhstan, ninety compared to thirty-seven.¹ A year later in October 1991, there were more than a thousand new mosques in each Republics, and new mosques were coming everyday.

This indigenous Islamic revival was quickly radicalized by the arrival of outsiders. Koran, Islamic literature, and money arrived with preachers from Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States, Pakistan, Turkey and Iran as everyone in the Muslim world tried to win new adherents to their particular interpretation of Islam. The regimes depended on the old 'official Islamic' network of mosques and mullahs to keep the

¹ Ahmed Rashid, *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia* (New Delhi, 2002) p. 54.

Islamic resurgence under-control. But the official Islam had no money or influence; the people mistrusted it because it was considered part of the former Soviet system.

Widespread corruption, highly centralised bureaucracy, red tapism large scale unemployment all contributed to the rise of extremist opposition groups. Helping the militants and fundamentalists' cause were the shortsighted hard-line policies of the Central Asian regimes. The refusal of leaderships to consider democratic or economic reforms in countries that had been passing through a critical transition period, combined with their repression of religion, pushed moderates and political reformers into the camps of the radicals. The states' authorities launched repeated crackdowns against Islamic activism, in which not only fundamentalist but thousands of ordinary practicing Muslims were jailed or tortured. New radical parties like *Islamic Revival Party* (IRP), *Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan* (IMU), *Hizb-ut-Tahrir al Islam* (HT) etc. came up. These movements and the political pressure they brought posed new threats to security of the CARs.

The *Hizb-ut Tahrir*, a highly secretive, pan-Islamic movement, which originated in the Middle East and largely does not even address local public issues. It has become the most popular, widespread underground movement in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The challenge that the HT poses to the regimes of these countries can be judged by the fact that there are more HT prisoners in Central Asia's prisons than those of any movement, including the much better known IMU.

The HT's aims are probably the most esoteric and anachronistic of all the radical Islamic movements. The HT has a vision of uniting Central Asia, Xinjiang Province in China, and eventually the entire *umma* under a *Khilafat* that would reestablish the Khilafat-i-Rashida, which ruled the Arab Muslims for a short time after Prophet Muhammad's death in 632 AD. The period is revered by many radical Islamic movements, including the Taliban, as the only time in Islamic history when a true Muslim society existed. But the HT shows

unprecedented fervency in its demands for the return of the Caliphate. In the scenario envisioned in HT literature, one or more, Islamic countries would come under HT control, after which the movement will be able to win over the rest of the Islamic world. According to HT belief Central Asia has reached what they call ‘a boiling point’ and is ripe for take over.² Jihad, to the HT is a means to mobilize supporters against non-Muslims, but it does not advocate a violent removal of Muslim regimes as do other militant groups. It believes in winning over masses, believing that one day they will rise up in peaceful demonstrations and remove the Central Asian regimes.

The HT movement, though founded in Saudi Arabia and Jordan in 1953 by a Palestinian Sheikh Taqiuddin an-Nabhani Filastyni, was introduced into Uzbekistan in 1995 by a Jordanian named Salahuddin. It now has more than sixty thousand supporters in Tashkent alone and tens of thousands in other cities - a claim supported by the large number of arrests of HT members in all three countries between 1999 and 2001. Though HT relies on modern technology to spread its message, it rejects the modern political state, disavowing any interest in nationalism, democracy, capitalism or socialism, all of which are considered Western concepts. It also opposes most forms of culture and entertainment and seeks to restrict women’s activities to the home. Sharing its views similar to Wahabism and the Taliban, the HT claims that the imposition of sharia will resolve all the ethnic, social and economic problems of the people. The HT is opposed to Jews and Israel and a lot of HT literature portrays Karimov as a Jew, a “stooge” of Israel and the “worldwide Zionist conspiracy”.³

² *ibid.*, p. 116.

³ *ibid.*, p. 123.

It is surprising that neither its lack of common regional interests nor its intolerance for other forms of Islam has stopped HT's growing popularity in Central Asia. Unlike the IRP and the IMU, who draw their main support from rural areas and farmers, the HT recruits are mostly from urban intelligentsia: college students, educated unemployed youth, factory workers and teachers. Among the ethnic groups, Uzbeks in Uzbekistan and other countries constitute the large number of HT adherents, although the movement is gaining popularity amongst other ethnic groups in Central Asia.

In Uzbekistan a massive crackdown against the HT began in May 1998 after Karimov government passed the Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organisations, which severely restricted freedom of worship. According to the Independence Human Rights Organisation of Uzbekistan, out of 7,600 political prisoners in the summer of 2001, a staggering 5,150 belonged to the HT. Another 1,600 belonged to the IMU or other so-called Wahabi groups.

From Fergana Valley the HT movement spread rapidly into adjacent areas of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. More than 150 alleged HT supporters were being held in Kyrgyz jails by the summer of 2001, largely in Osh region. Kyrgyz National Guard Commander Lt. Gen. Abdy Chotbaev claimed in June 2000 that three hundred Kyrgyz citizens were training in Afghanistan for underground missionary work for HT and the IMU. Kyrgyzstan's seventeen percent of population is Christian. HT exploits the freedom given to Christians by the government.

The HT is also slowly gaining foothold in Kazakhstan. In 2001, for the first time, Kazakh police reported the arrest of HT activists in the south of the country, while Kyrgyz police arrested Kazakh HT militants in Kyrgyzstan. On July 6, 2001, HT leaflets appeared in thousands of mailboxes in Kazakhstan's largest city, Almaty. The day was chosen because it was the official birthday of President

Nursultan Nazarbayev, who only a few weeks earlier had urged his people to resist Islamic radicalism.

The HT is becoming popular even in northern Tajikistan. In 2000 more than a hundred alleged HT members were arrested in Tajikistan. By 2001, the figure had doubled. In April 2000, some 7,500 books and 1,500 leaflets were found in a garage in Sughd province and fifteen alleged members of the HT were arrested. Five HT members were arrested in the capital, Dushanbe on November 16, 2000 for possessing 5,000 HT leaflets.

Though HT leaders deny that they have formal links with the Taliban, Al Qaeda or IMU, Uzbek and Kyrgyz authorities dispute these denials. They cite a meeting in Kabul in September 2000 when the Taliban, the IMU, the HT, Chechen separatists, and binLaden held detailed talks about future cooperation.⁴ Several hundred HT activists were being trained in IMU camps in Afghanistan. Kyrgyz officials reported that during the IMU offensive in the summer of 2000, they discovered HT literature on the dead bodies of several IMU militants. Clearly there were links and cooperation between the two groups. In the first week of October 2001, a Tashkent court convicted nine HT members for belonging to illegal Al Qaeda.⁵

Poverty and unemployment drove many people to smuggling opium from Afghanistan. In 1999 Kyrgyz border police impounded 17,000 pounds of opium from traffickers; the following year 26,000 pounds of opium were seized. The UN Drug Control Program claimed that this amount was only a tiny fraction of what was actually being smuggled into Kyrgyzstan and then distributed to Russia and Europe. Heroin addiction has risen dramatically. Although there were only 4,500

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 133.

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 135.

registered heroin addicts in Kyrgyzstan, non-governmental organisations estimate the number to be at least 50,000.

Kyrgyzstan's President Askar Akayev admitted that religious extremism was being fuelled by the growing poverty of the people. "Religious extremists view Kyrgyzstan as a transit country. Their goal is the Fergana Valley, to extend the geographic range of Islam and even to set up a state - an Islamic caliphate. They are reckoning on the support of the local population, being well aware that poverty and social problems exist in both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. It is no accident that country people are following those preaching 'high Islam'. They are being lured by money. Show people a green dollar bill and the people succumb to temptation. We must urgently counter this," Akayev told a Russian newspaper in May 2001.⁶

The revival of Islamic militancy in Uzbekistan assumed seriousness in Fergana Valley in 1991 when the USSR disintegrated. Soon it turned violent by December 1991, when a handful of unemployed young men in Namangan town seized the building, which housed the head-office of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan after the Mayor refused to give them land to build a mosque. The young men were led by a local mullah Tohir Abdouhalilovitch Yuldeshev and Jumaboi Ahmadzhanovitch Khojaev or Juma Namangani. That incident set in motion a series of events across Central Asia. Abdul Ahad, an imam said, "we will ensure that first Fergana, then Uzbekistan and then whole of Central Asia will become an Islamic state."⁷ Government's crackdown compelled the two leaders to flee to Tajikistan. When civil war broke out in Tajikistan, Yuldeshev fled via Afghanistan to Peshawar, the centre of pan-Islamic jihadi groups. Under the ISI funds and sanctuary, Yuldeshev stayed there from 1995 to 1998. During this period he met

⁶ *ibid.*, p. 130.

⁷ *ibid.*, p. 139.

with Arab-Afghans' and was introduced to Taliban in Kabul in May 1997 and also to binLaden. Pakistan's *Jamiat-I-Ulema Islami*, raised funds for him and enlisted his young Uzbek, Tajik, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Uighur, Chechen activists in their madrassas, spreading from Karachi to Peshawar. Yuldeshev also received funding from Saudi, Arabia, Iran, Turkey and from Islamic charities and organisations in these countries. Meanwhile Namangani opposed the Tajik cease-fire and the peace settlement in 1997. Now with the rise of Taliban he became deeply involved in the transport of heroin from Afghanistan to Tajikistan and on to Russia and Europe, in an effort to keep his organisation growing. He joined the Taliban in Afghanistan in 1999. Yuldeshev who was in constant touch with Namangani travelled back to Tajikistan in 1997 to meet with Namangani in Hoit village in Karategin Valley on the main road to the Kyrgyz border.

With the arrival of the Taliban in Afghanistan, the militant Islamic offensive against the government in Uzbekistan increased. An Uzbek army captain was beheaded on December 2, 1997 in Namangan and his head was displayed outside his office. On December 11, 1997 a former chairman of a collective farm and his wife were also beheaded. Three policemen were killed in a shoot out on December 19, 1997.⁸ Nobody claimed responsibility for these incidents, but government reacted by arresting more than a thousand people in the Fergana Valley. When a group of Islamists arrested in Andijan admitted to having received training from Namangani, President Islam Karimov called for tougher actions against militants. In May 1998, parliament passed the repressive Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organisations, banning the use of unregistered mosques and requiring that all Muslim clergy be registered. By that time, there were some 4,200 mosques

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 146.

in Uzbekistan of which 2,430 were located in the Fergana Valley. Out of these, only 1,566 were ever registered by the government.

In 1998 Yuldeshev settled in Kabul, where the Taliban gave him a house in the diplomatic quarters of Wazir Akbar Khan. He was also given a residence in the southern city of Kandhar, where bin Laden and Taliban supremo Mullah Omar lived. In the summer of 1998 in Kabul Yuldeshev met Namangani and together they announced the creation of the IMU declaring jihad against the Karimov regime. According to Uzbek authorities and Tajik IRP leaders, it was bin Laden who encouraged Yuldeshev to set up a distinct Islamic party in order to replace Karimov's rule from Uzbekistan. Yuldeshev pronounced IMU's goals in an interview to Voice of America—"The goals of IMU activities are firstly fighting against oppression within our country, against bribery, against the inequities and also the freeing of our Muslim brothers from prison----who will avenge those Muslims who have died in the prisons of the regime? Of course we will. We consider it our obligation to avenge them and nobody can take this right away from us. We do not repent our declaration of jihad against the Uzbek government. God willing, we will carry out this jihad to its conclusion."⁹

Yuldeshev pledged to establish an Islamic state: "We declared a jihad in order to create a religious system, a religious government. We want to create a sharia system. We want the model of Islam which has remained from The Prophet, not like the Islam in Afghanistan or Iran or Pakistan or Saudi Arabia-these are nothing like the Islamic model."¹⁰

On February 16, 1999 an attempt was made to assassinate President Karimov when in the space of an hour, six car bombs exploded in the centre of Tashkent. 113 people lost their lives and 128 were injured in the incident.

⁹ *ibid.*, p. 148.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 148.

In May 1999 Kyrgyz government claimed that it had uncovered a terrorists plot to kill President Akayev. However, Karimov accused Kyrgyzstan of being too soft towards the extremists. He alleged that Tajikistan was harbouring the IMU. He also accused the Taliban, Pakistan, Turkey and Chechen rebels of training the bombers and giving sanctuary to the IMU militants.¹¹

On April 2, 1999 two shooting incidents left seventeen people dead. In the first incident police stormed a hijacked bus killing nine Islamic militants; then another eight Islamic militants were killed outside Tashkent during a security check.

Karimov even sent his foreign minister Abdulaziz Kamilov to meet Mulla Omar through Pakistan.¹² In the meeting on June 2 in Kandahar, Omar put a condition that Taliban would attend a UN-sponsored meeting on Afghanistan only if Uzbekistan recognized them as the government of Afghanistan. He even rejected the extradition of IMU guerrillas to Uzbekistan.¹³

Emboldened by the Talibani support, Namangani began in August 1999 a wave of kidnappings and killings before leaving for Afghanistan. Taliban had allowed Yuldeshev to send a constant supply of funds, material and even provided volunteers from different groups to the IMU. In connivance with the Taliban, the IMU extended its control over the heroin trade from Afghanistan through Central Asia to Europe, using its network of militants as couriers. The ever-expanding links and sources of supplies and funds proved critical to the IMU jihad against Karimov.

On August 9, 1999 a twenty-one-man unit kidnapped the Mayor and three officials of a small village west of Osh, demanding \$ 1 million in ransom, supplies, and a helicopter to fly them to Afghanistan in exchange for the hostages. Hostages

¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 151.

¹² *ibid.*, p. 151.

¹³ *ibid.*, p. 152.

were freed only after the Kyrgyz government gave the guerrillas safe passage back to Tajikistan. There were reports that Kyrgyz had also paid \$ 50,000 in ransom.

This incident heightened tension among Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. IMU also moved into the area around Batken, entering three villages and capturing a Major General of the Kyrgyz Interior Ministry. On August 23, 1999 an IMU group kidnapped seven more hostages, including four Japanese geologists. The incident occurred when Shanghai Five summit meeting was being held in Bishkek. At the summit Akayev denounced the armed terrorists who were trying to undermine Central Asia.

The IMU in an official communiqué issued on August 25, 1999 declared jihad on Karimov regime and called for its overthrow.¹⁴

On September 4 the IMU agreed to free all the hostages in return for a ransom, the release of fifty thousand prisoners being held in Uzbek jails, and safe passage into the Fergana Valley. Kyrgyzstan rejected these demands. The Uzbek and Kyrgyz army launched a joint offensive, seeking to cut off the guerrilla groups from one another and drive them back into Tajikistan. While talks were carried on with the kidnapers, heavy fighting continued until October 25, 1999 when the Japanese hostages were finally released. Western diplomats reported that Japan had secretly paid 2 to 6 million dollars for the release of their hostages.

After retreating to Tavidara, Namangani was pressurised by his IRP contacts in Tajik government to leave for Afghanistan. In the first week of November 1999 in a bizarre scene that was to be repeated in subsequent years, about six hundred IMU armed militants were flown by Russian army helicopters from Hoit and Tavidara to the Afghanistan border. Taliban and Yuldeshev received them in Afghanistan. They were housed in Mazar-i-Sharif. The Taliban allowed the

¹⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 247-249.

IMU to set up training camp, open political offices in Kabul, Kandahar and Mazar and take in fresh recruits. A deal was struck between the two in which the IMU was given free hand to carry out military operations against Uzbekistan in return for their fighting for Taliban against Masud.

The IMU, with active support from the Taliban-Al Qaeda nexus now had posed a significant security threat to Central Asia. They had caused consternation amongst the governments of the region, widening the existing rifts between Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan even as these governments repeatedly pledged cooperation with one another. The IMU-Taliban-Al Qaeda combine had proved that the poorly trained, ill-equipped armies of the nascent Central Asian Republics were no match for their tactics and planning. The threat of jihad now seemed imminent.

Now Namangani and Yuldeshev frequently met bin Laden and Omar in Kandahar to plan strategy and negotiate for arms, ammunition and money supplies. Much of the IMU's financing came from the lucrative opium trade from Afghanistan. Namangani was overwhelmingly involved in opium smuggling through Tajikistan. He used his IMU network in Central Asia and his links with the Chechen militants to increase his trade. In 2000, Ralf Mutschke, assistant director of Interpol's Criminal Intelligence Directorate, reported to the US Congress that 60 percent of Afghan opium exports now moved through Central Asia and that "the IMU may be responsible for 70 per cent of that heroin and opium transiting through the area."¹⁵ According to Tajik officials Namangani and other drug smugglers had set up laboratories in Tajikistan to refine the heroine, which explained the arrival of large quantities of raw opium from Afghanistan. The record seizure of 2.4 tons of raw opium by Russian border guards on July 2, 2001 confirmed it.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 165.

Namangani's funding sources were many and diverse. Western diplomats said that bin Laden paid for Namangani's purchase of two Mi-8 Russian-built transport helicopters from the Taliban. According to Lt. Gen. Boris Mulnikov, head of the CIS anti-terrorists centre, bin Laden had given Namangani \$26 million in early 2000, while Namangani's Saudi-Uzbek backers in Saudi Arabia provided another \$15 million for hi-tech fighting equipments. Namangani helped BinLaden in making contacts in former Soviet Union for acquisition of nuclear and biological weapons of mass destruction. The IMU's links with bin Laden offered the terror mastermind a new base of operations in Central Asia in which he previously had few contacts. Even the mighty United States was fearful of the trio-terror as its ambassador to Tajikistan remained in Kazakhstan and only visited Dushanbe for a few days a month. Thus the IMU built up a wide, diverse network of fund raising and weapons supply, ranging from Islamic terrorist and extremist groups from Afghanistan and Pakistan to sponsors in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries. This was in addition to the income Namangani derived from drug trafficking and hostage taking.

In July 2000 Namangani returned to the Tavildara Valley from Afghanistan with a force of several hundred armed militants. In August, 2000 the IMU launched multi-pronged attacks from several directions in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. In Batken, Surkhandarya and Bostanlyk, thousands of people fled in terror. President Akayev declared on August 8 that fifteen hundred IMU militants had crossed over from Afghanistan, and two hundred of them were inside Kyrgyzstan.

In Batken in early August, twenty-four soldiers and twenty-five militants were killed in assaults against Kyrgyz army posts. On August 11, 2000 an IMU group ambushed and killed twenty-two Kyrgyz soldiers at the Korbakha Canyon and next day they separately kidnapped twelve foreign mountaineers and a group of

four Americans. Mountaineers were rescued by Kyrgyz forces. One of the captured militants reported that he was paid \$ 500 a month to fight for the IMU. At the end of October, Namangani withdrew his forces and retreated into Afghanistan. The same month the Uzbek prosecutor general listed before a Tashkent trial court that “nineteen murders and thirty-five assaults were carried out between 1991 and 1999 in Tashkent, Samarkand and Khorezm regions and bomb explosions were carried out in February 1999 in Tashkent. Subversive activities were committed by armed groups under the leadership of Tohir Yuldeshev, Juma Namangani and Muhammad Solih in November 1999 in Yangiabad, and in August 2000 in Surkhandarya and Tashkent regions.”¹⁶

The final official tally for the IMU offensives in 2000 was 24 Uzbek soldiers and 30 IMU militants killed in Uzbekistan and 30 Kyrgyz troops and 120 IMU guerrillas killed in Kyrgyzstan. Independent sources however, put the death toll in both the countries much higher. The IMU incursions in 2000 prompted a massive international response. The US, Russia, China, Turkey, France and Israel flew in supplies and counter insurgency equipment to Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

On August 25, 2000, Karimov directly accused Mirzo Ziyoyev, the Tajik Minister of Emergencies, IRP leader, and former comrade of Namangani, of helping the IMU. On September 15, 2000 the US branded the IMU the fourth top-most terrorist group in the world because of its links with BinLaden, the drug trade, kidnapping and murder. The IMU had become a virtual partner in Al Qaeda’s global jihad. In addition to drug trafficking, guerrilla training and support for Al Qaeda to extend its cells into Central Asia, the IMU was providing vital intelligence to bin Laden about Central Asian authorities.

¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 172.

With the Taliban – bin Laden support, the IMU, now based in Mazar-i-Sharif and Kunduz in northern Afghanistan, was fast becoming a pan-Islamic force. From six hundred fighters with their families, IMU now numbered two thousand guerrillas, consisted of Uzbek, Kyrgyz, Tajik, Chechen and Uighur youth. Namangani dispatched six hundred of its fighters for the Taliban's late summer 2000 campaign against Masud forces. Some Sipah and Lashkar fighters had also joined Namangani in 1999. The Taliban used the IMU as a shield to protect themselves from criticism. When China pressurised Pakistan to force the Taliban to stop training Uighurs at the Rishkor camp outside Kabul, the Taliban withdrew the Uighurs from the battlefield and sent them up north to join the IMU in Mazar-i-Sharif, thus denying that the Uighurs were part of their armed forces. Similarly Chechens were sent to join the IMU when Russia asked for their extradition. In the process the Taliban made the IMU a multinational, pan-Islamic force providing militants from all over Central Asia.

Namangani again crossed back into Tajikistan with a multinational force in late November 2000. Central Asian leaders held a meeting in Almaty on January 5, 2001 to deal with his return. Karimov stated in the meet "In 1999 and 2000 we were the objects of aggression, but we must not let this happen again. All the Central Asian states need to take more measures to prevent a repeat of the same scenario in 2001".¹⁷ With Namangani's arrival in Tavildara another round of accusation and counter-accusation followed between the Uzbek and Tajik governments and even greater pressure on Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to curb all Islamists. Tashkent went to the extent cutting gas supplies to Dushanbe and Bishkek in order to try to force the governments to stamp out the IMU militants. It stepped up the barbed wiring and mining of its border with Tajikistan and

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 176.

Kyrgyzstan, further cutting off social and economic interaction. Uzbekistan also threw some Tajik refugees.

Tajikistan had been accusing Uzbekistan of giving shelter to several dissidents from Tajikistan, including Col. Makhmud Khudoyberdiev, the leader of an armed incursion into northern Tajikistan in November 1998 and Abdulmalik Abdullajanov, a former Prime Minister of Tajikistan. Namangani had to leave Tajikistan soon under pressure but he had made a mark in the region. The worsening economic and political situation in the region ensured ever greater support to the IMU and other destabilizing forces.

According to Uzbek State Planning Agency officials, 60 per cent of the population was under 25 and most of them were unemployed. Inflation was running at 60 per cent. Farmers had little to offer. Even President Karimov acknowledged "It would be fair to recognize that upheavals of religious fanaticism are not originated only and exclusively by religious contradictions in themselves, but predominantly are originated due to unsolved social, political and economic problems".¹⁸

In June 2001, it was reported that the IMU had changed its name to *Hizb-i-Islami Turkistan* and would now seek to bring Islamic revolution to the whole of Central Asia and Xinjiang Province. The IMU attacks in Central Asian Republics continued. The Kyrgyz government reported that "bandits had attacked two army posts on the Tajikistan-Kyrgyzstan border in the Batken region on the nights of July 24 and 25, 2001. On July 31 militants attacked a Kyrgyz television transmitter in the Batken region. Yuldeshev claimed in a BBC Uzbek service broadcast that the IMU was attacking Kyrgyz targets in the Batken region and that earlier in the summer IMU guerrillas had fought with Uzbek troops in the Surkhandarya region.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 120.

The Taliban made Namangani the deputy head of their military forces. Reacting on the appointment of Laden as the Taliban military head and Namangani his deputy, the Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement “such steps give vivid proof of international concerns that a centre of international terrorism and a bridgehead for expansion of militant extremism and separatism far beyond the region are being set up on the Taliban controlled territory of Afghanistan under the smokescreen of pseudo-religious values.”¹⁹ Juma Namangani even gave his life fighting for the Taliban. Russia’s Interfax agency reported on November 18, 2001 that Namangani was killed in fighting the US-led forces in Kunduz. Namangani was leading the Taliban in the area in the wake of the attack by US-led coalition forces.

While the killing of Namangani is a big setback to the pan-Islamic campaign in Central Asia, it may not be enough for rooting out extremism and terrorism from the region. There are three key factors that can keep terrorism alive in Central Asia: The funds for the IMU since 1999, which were controlled by the Al Qaeda network, can still be passed on to the hundreds of IMU supporters in the region. The smashing of the Al Qaeda’s funding network will be necessary to face the IMU. Namangani also received considerable funds from the narcotics business. The narcotics networks will be difficult to break because of the existence of a long chain of beneficiaries extending from Central Asia and Russia to Europe. Secondly, extremism is also rooted in the denial of political and economic rights. The Central Asian republics, such as Uzbekistan, may have to take other measures to address the discontent in the country in order to tackle terrorism successfully. The use of force only will not be appropriate. Lastly, the weakening of the IMU may not be enough as other organisations such as HT are still active in the region. Central Asian states will have to undertake parallel effort to strengthen the military capability of the Central Asian states.

¹⁹ *The Hindu*, 1 September 2001.

In the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terrorist strikes, America has gained greater influence in the region. The Central Asian countries may now have to depend greatly on Moscow and Washington to counter the emerging security threats.

Realising the security implications of the Taliban-IMU-Al Qaeda combine, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan offered to the US intelligence cooperation, use of their air space, and the use of Khanbad air base. Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan also offered use of their air space, landing rights for US aircraft and intelligence sharing. Uzbekistan went one step further granting the United States military bases and lifting the ban on conducting combat missions from Uzbekistan's soil. For the first time, Western forces started operating from the Central Asian Republics Central Asian states were more than satisfied with prospect of the demise of the Taliban, which had been harbouring the IMU and other extremist-terrorist groups.

The CIA had told the US Senate in February 2000: "We are becoming increasingly concerned about the activities of the IMU, an extremist insurgent and terrorist group whose annual incursions into Uzbekistan have become bloodier and more significant every year. In Central Asia, corruption, poverty and other social ills are providing fertile ground for Islamic extremists, terrorist networking and drug and weapons trafficking that will have an impact in Russia, Europe and beyond".²⁰ Subsequently the US announced the creation of a Central Asian Border Security Initiative which provided \$ 3 million each to Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan to help them fight terrorism. In 2001, US extended this aid to Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. They also stepped up joint military exercises with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan under the banner of NATO's Partnership for Peace programme.

²⁰ Rashid, n. 1, pp. 191-192.

Turkmenistan maintained a more optimistic view of the Taliban. Declaring a foreign policy of neutrality, Turkmenistan looked forward to the Taliban for the construction of a gas and oil pipeline across Afghanistan to Pakistan. On the one hand, it provided fuel to the Taliban and refused to become involved in Russia's Central Asian anti-Taliban alliance. But at the same time it kept a relationship with the anti-Taliban alliance and the government participated in the UN-sponsored peace talks on Afghanistan.

Both the Taliban and the IMU forged routes through Turkmenistan to help smuggle heroin to Europe with the help of corrupt Turmen officials. Turkmenistan functioned as one of the most significant transit corridors for the drug trafficking in the region. Chechen separatists and Al Qaeda militants used Turkmenistan as a corridor to travel to Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Kazakhstan, though located at a distance from the Afghan border, was also threatened by religious extremism and international terrorism emanating from Taliban's Afghanistan. *Alash* and *Adolat* – two extremist organisations have been quite active in Kazakhstan. To face the challenge posed by the IMU and other terrorist-extremist groups, it doubled its military budget to \$ 171 million in 2001.²¹ In May 2001, Kazakhstan joined Russia, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to set up a rapid-reaction force for Central Asia based in Bishkek and target such terrorist groups as the IMU.

China, concerned with separatism in its Xinjiang Province, formed along with Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia the “Shanghai Five” in 1996. Its annual summit meetings became a regular forum to discuss the threat of Islamic fundamentalism, drugs and weapons spreading from the Taliban's Afghanistan and

²¹ *ibid.*, p. 64.

destabilising Central Asia. In August 1999 when leaders of the five countries were holding their summit meeting in Bishkek, the IMU had launched its attacks in Kyrgyzstan taking four Japanese geologists hostage. At the end of the summit the five leaders signed a declaration to enhance cooperation in “fighting international terrorism, the illegal drugs trade, arms trafficking, illegal migration, separatism and religious extremism”. The Chinese Foreign Ministry confirmed the operations of separatist groups in and outside Xinjiang saying “the so-called east Turkistan terrorist force in Xinjiang has all along got support from bin Laden.”²²

In the next summit in 2000 in Dushanbe the Shanghai Five became the ‘Shanghai Forum’ as Uzbekistan was admitted as an observer nation. The summit agreed to create a joint counter-terrorism centre in Bishkek in order to meet the threat from the IMU and the Taliban. The mid-June 2001 Shanghai summit renamed itself to Shanghai Cooperation Organisation giving Uzbekistan full member status. Chinese President Jiang stated “the Shanghai Convention lays a foundation for the joint efforts to combat the forces of separatism, terrorism and extremism”. The Kazakh President Nazarbayev described Afghanistan as “the cradle of terrorism, separatism, extremism and instability.”

The threats from Afghanistan – the Taliban, Al Qaeda and the IMU – highlighted the weakness and vulnerability of the Central Asian Republics and forced them to fight the challenge together. The Taliban played host to most of the extremist Islamic groups in the Muslim world. In return, these groups fought for the Taliban and received military training, battle experience, funding, weapons, access to the drug trade and contacts with international terrorists and extremists.

²² *The Hindu*, 29 November 2001.

Countries like Pakistan intended to use these terrorist and extremist organisations as leverage in their policy towards Central Asia. Taliban-Al Qaeda-IMU nexus proved the biggest security threat to stability and development of Central Asia.

The presence of such a destabilising force like the Taliban compelled the CARs to allow foreign intervention in their internal affairs, thus raising another security problem.

Therefore, the international terror network still operative in different parts of the world combined with extremist forces' Islamicist movement continues to pose a serious challenge to the security and stability of the CARs.



CONCLUSION

Rise of Taliban in Afghanistan both as a political and military force was a significant development for Afghanistan, the Central Asian Republics and for the entire world. The success of the Taliban was primarily due to the extraordinary help provided by Pakistan and its allies. Pakistan's Pashtunistan issue, the concept of strategic depth against India, refugee problem, Kalashnikov culture, Islamic solidarity, oil politics and other factors shaped its Afghanistan policies and the creation of the Taliban. Pakistan's ISI and religious parties actively participated in membership drive for Taliban. Internal factors also contributed in the rise, extension and expansion of Taliban in political, military and religious areas. Economic collapse, war weariness of Afghan people, fighting among Mujahideen factions, shared Pashtun ethnicity, etc. provided Taliban space among Afghan restive population.

The West came forward in the hope that the Taliban would be able to bring peace and stability in Afghanistan, paving the way for harnessing Central Asian oil and gas resources and for their transportation through Afghanistan to outside markets. It also believed that the Taliban would control drug mafia and disarm rough warlords.

Arms and money supply, Osama bin Laden led terrorist network support, transport and drug mafia all worked to push the Taliban to power.

The Taliban and their masters presented a new model of Islamist extremism which rejected all accommodation with Muslim moderation and the West. Poorly tutored in Islamic and Afghan history and lacking knowledge of the Sharia and the Koran, the Taliban vehemently opposed modernism. With minimal exposure to the radical Islamic debate, the Taliban redefined religious extremism. Their extreme fundamentalist

interpretation of Islam was designed to create fear-psychosis among masses. Their ulterior motive was to acquire power and cling to it.

Women and children were the worst victims of Talibanisation of Afghanistan. Their freedom in every aspects of life were severely restricted by the Taliban regime. Men too, had to suffer in the hands of least literate, brain-washed Taliban. Entertainment and culture were the two fields which had to face the wrath of Taliban's medievalist ideology. Not only they allowed farmers to produce opium, though the Koran forbids Muslims from growing or imbibing intoxicants, they also used the drug money to finance their nefarious activities. Minority communities even the Muslim Shia, foreigners etc. were made to follow their Islamic rule and regulations.

Internal political compulsions, nature of their madrassa cadres and the urge and urgency to show themselves superior were some of the factors responsible for Taliban fundamentalist policy. It was aimed at strengthening themselves from all sides for retaining power in Afghanistan.

In the post-September 11 world, globalisation of terrorism was witnessed. The international terror network running from Taliban's Afghanistan was able to strike at will. Osama bin Laden and his Al Qaeda led network was the guiding force behind the terrorist attacks in South Asia, Central Asia, South-East Asia, Africa and also in the West. Taliban became so much involved and dependent on Osama bin Laden led network that it made Osama the head of their military forces. Another terrorist Namangani of Uzbekistan was made his deputy. Taliban and Osama terrorist network became complementary to each other. Both utilised drug money to terrorise masses at home and abroad. The cooperation was so much that the CIA concluded that Osama 'owns and operates' the Taliban, highlighting the pervasive influence that Osama and his terror network exerted within Afghanistan. It was this mutual cooperation and dependence that the Taliban's Afghanistan became the hub of international terrorism. Terrorists from Kashmir to Kenya were sheltered by the Taliban. More than 100 terrorist training camps and bases were

Taliban's rule. The Taliban's Afghanistan, for Osama and company was the safest place in the world.

At a time when the nascent Central Asian Republics have been in the difficult and challenging process of political and economic reconstruction, the rise of a destabilising militant extremist force, the Taliban on the neighbourhood had been a source of threat. The Taliban wanted to extend their brand of terrorism and religious extremism in the region thus creating more difficulties and destruction across the globe. The Central Asian Republics bore the brunt of Taliban-Al Qaeda terrorism and religious chauvinism. Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan suffered the most among the five Central Asian Republics. The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and other militant groups found shelter in Afghanistan posing a great challenge to the security and stability of the Central Asian Republics. The threats from Afghanistan – the Taliban, Al Qaeda and the IMU – highlighted the weakness and vulnerability of the Central Asian Republics and forced them fight the challenge together. The Taliban played host to extremist Islamic groups from across the globe. In return, these groups fought for the Taliban and received military training, battle-experience, funding, weapons, access to the drug trade and contacts with international terrorists and extremists.

Economic backwardness, lack of democratic space, authoritarian rule and conflicts among Central Asian Republics themselves – all contributed to the instability and tensions in Central Asia affecting its development and peace. Besides terrorism and religious extremism, Central Asian Republics also had to face narco-terrorism emanating from Taliban's Afghanistan. Uninterrupted supply of narcotics created added problems of crime, drug addiction and AIDS. Proliferation of arms, refugee influx and ethnic unrest were the other challenges introduced by the Taliban to Central Asian Republics.

Though the Taliban's demise and the sustained global campaign against terrorism do provide reprieve to the Central Asian Republics, the fragile peace, political instability and inherent weaknesses in Afghanistan plus the prevalent circumstances and external interference which were responsible for the rise of extremists and terrorists in Central Asia, do not provide a satisfactory scenario for wiping out the still existent remnants of extremism and international terrorism from the region. Religious extremism and terrorism continue to pose a serious threat to territorial integrity and security of the Central Asian Republics.

A stable and friendly Afghanistan is prerequisite for Central Asian Republics' overall security and development.

APPENDIX -I

A SAMPLE OF TALIBAN DECREES RELATING TO WOMEN AND OTHER CULTURAL ISSUES, AFTER THE CAPTURE OF KABUL, 1996.

(This translation from Dari was handed to Western agencies to implement; the grammar and spellings are reproduced here as they appeared in the original)

1.

Decree announced by the General Presidency of Amir Bil Maruf and Nai Az Munkar (Religious Police)

Kabul, November, 1996.

Women you should not step outside your residence. If you go outside the house you should not be like women who used to go with fashionable clothes wearing much cosmetics and appearing in front of every men before the coming of Islam.

Islam as a rescuing religion has determined specific dignity of women, Islam has valuable instruction for women. Women should not create such opportunity to attract the attention of useless people who will not look at them with a good eye. Women have the responsibility as a teacher or coordinator for her family. Husband, brother, father have the responsibility for providing the family with the necessary life requirements (food, clothes etc.) In case women are required to go outside the residence for the purposes of education, social needs or social services they should cover themselves in accordance with Islamic Sharia regulation. If women are going outside with fashionable, ornamental, tight and charming clothes to show themselves, they will be cursed by the Islamic Sharia and should never expect to go to heaven.

All family elders and every Muslim have responsibility in this respect. We request all family elders to keep tight control over their families and avoid these

severely punished as well as the family elders by the forces of the Religious Police (*Munkrat*).

The Religious Police (*Munkrat*) have the responsibility and duty to struggle against these social problems and will continue their effort until evil is finished.

2.

Rules of work for the State Hospitals and private clinics based on Islamic Sharia principles. Ministry of Health, on behalf of Amir ul Momineen Mullah Mohammed Omar. Kabul, November, 1996.

1. Female patients should go to female physicians. In case a male physician is needed, the female patient should be accompanied by her close relative.
2. During examination, the female patients and male physicians both should be dressed with Islamic *hijab* (veil).
3. Male physicians should not touch or see the other parts of female patients except for the affected part.
4. Waiting room for female patients should be safely covered.
5. The person who regulates turn for female patients should be a female.
6. During the night duty, in what rooms which female patients are hospitalized, the male doctor without the call of the patient is not allowed to enter the room.
7. Sitting and speaking between male and female doctors are not allowed, if there be need for discussion, it should be done with *hijab*.
8. Female doctors should wear simple clothes, they are not allowed to wear stylish clothes or use cosmetics or make-up.
9. Female doctors and nurses are not allowed to enter the rooms where male patients are hospitalized.
10. Hospital staff should pray in mosques on time.

11. The Religious Police are allowed to go for control at any time and nobody can prevent them.

Anybody who violates the order will be punished as per Islamic regulations.

3.

General Presidency of Amir Bil Maruf. Kabul, December, 1996.

1. To prevent sedition and female uncovers (Be Hejabi). No drivers are allowed to pick up women who are using Iranian *burqa*. In case of violation the driver will be imprisoned. If such kind of female are observed in the street their house will be found and their husband punished. If the women use stimulating and attractive cloth and there is no accompany of close male relative with them, the drivers should not pick them up.
2. To prevent music. To be broadcasted by the public information resources. In shops, hotels, vehicles and rickshaws cassettes and music are prohibited. This matter should be monitored within five days. If any music cassette found in a shop, the shopkeeper should be imprisoned and the shop locked. If five people guarantee the shop should be opened the criminal released later. If cassette found in the vehicle, the vehicle and the driver will be imprisoned. If five people guarantee the vehicle will be released and the criminal released later.
3. To prevent beard shaving and its cutting. After one and a half months if anyone observed who has shaved and/or cut his beard, they should be arrested and imprisoned until their beards gets bushy.
4. To prevent keeping pigeons and playing with birds. Within ten days this habit/hobby should stop. After ten days this should be monitored and the pigeons and any other playing birds should be killed.
5. To prevent kite-flying. The kite shops in the city should be abolished.

6. To prevent idolatory. In vehicles, shops, hotels, room and any other place pictures/portraits should be abolished. The monitors should tear up all pictures in the above places.
7. To prevent gambling. In collaboration with the security police the main centers should be found and the gamblers imprisoned for one month.
8. To eradicate the use of addiction. Addicts should be imprisoned and investigation made to find the supplier and the shop. The shop should be locked and the owner and user should be imprisoned and punished.
9. To prevent the British and American hairstyle. People with long hair should be arrested and taken to the Religious Police department to shave their hair. The criminal has to pay the barber.
10. To prevent interest on loans, charge on changing small denomination notes and charge on money orders. All money exchangers should be informed that the above three types of exchanging the money should be prohibited. In case of violation criminals will be imprisoned for a long time.
11. To prevent washing cloth by young ladies along the water streams in the city. Violator ladies should be picked up with respectful Islamic manner, taken to their houses and their husbands severely punished.
12. To prevent music and dances in wedding parties. In the case of violation the head of the family will be arrested and punished.
13. To prevent the playing of music drum. The prohibition of this should be announced. If anybody does this then the religious elders can decide about it.
14. To prevent sewing ladies cloth and taking female body measures by tailor. If women or fashion magazines are seen in the shop the tailor should be imprisoned.

15. To prevent sorcery. All the related books should be burnt and the magician should be imprisoned until his repentance.
16. To prevent not praying and order gathering pray at the bazaar. Prayer should be done on their due times in all districts. Transportation should be strictly prohibited and all people are obliged to go to the mosque. If young people are seen in the shops they will be immediately imprisoned.

A P P E N D I X - I I
THE CALL TO JIHAD BY THE
ISLAMIC MOVEMENT OF UZBEKISTAN

The following document was issued in August 1999 by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan as a declaration of jihad against the government of Uzbekistan. Originally written in Uzbek, it has appeared on the Internet in English.

In the Name of Allah the Most Compassionate the Most Merciful
A Message from the General Command
of the Islamic Movement Uzbekistan

“And fight them until there is no more fitnah and
the religion is all for Allah”

Al Anfaal: 39

The Amir (commander) of the Harakatul Islamiyyah (Islamic Movement) of Uzbekistan, Muhammad Tahir Farooq, has announced the start of the Jihad against the tyrannical government of Uzbekistan and the puppet Islam Karimov and his henchmen. The leadership of the Islamic Movement confirm the following points in the declaration:

This declaration comes after agreement by the major ulema and the leadership of the Islamic Movement.

This agreement comes based on clear evidence on the obligation of Jihad against the *tawagheet* as well as to liberate the land and the people.

The primary objective for this declaration of Jihad is the establishment of an Islamic state with the application of the Sharia, founded upon the Koran and the Noble Prophetic sunnah.

Also from amongst the goals of the declaration of Jihad is:

The defense of our religion of Islam in our land against those who oppose Islam.

The defense of the Muslims in our land from those who humiliate them and spill their blood.

The defense of the scholars and Muslim youth who are being assassinated, imprisoned and tortured in extreme manners – with no rights given them at all.

And the Almighty says:

“And they had no fault except that they believed in Allah, the All Mighty, Worthy of all praise!” Al Buruj: 8

Also to secure the release of the weak and oppressed who number some 5,000 in prison, held by the transgressors. The Almighty says:

“And what is the matter with you that you do not fight in the way of Allah and the weak and oppressed amongst men, women and children” An Nisaa: 75

And to reopen the thousands of mosques and Islamic schools that have been closed by the evil government.

The Mujahedeen of the Islamic Movement, after their experience in warfare, have completed their training and are ready to establish the blessed Jihad.

The Islamic Movement warns the Uzbek government in Tashkent from propping up or supporting the fight against the Muslims.

The Islamic Movement warns tourists coming to this land that they should keep away, lest they be struck down by the Mujahedeen.

The reason for the start of the Jihad in Kyrgystan is due to the stance of the ruler Askar Akayev Bishkek, in arresting thousands of Muslim Uzbeks who had migrated as refugees to Kyrgyzstan and were handed over to Karimov’s henchmen (i.e., Uzbek regime).

The Most High says:

“Verily the oppressors are friends and protectors to one another.”

The Islamic Movement shall, by the will of Allah, make Jihad in the cause of Allah to reach all its aims and objectives.

It is with regret that Foreign Mujahedeen (Al Ansaar) as of yet have not entered our ranks.

The Islamic Movement invites the ruling government and Karimov leadership in Tashkent to remove itself from office – unconditionally, before the country enters into a state of war and destruction of the land and the people. The responsibility for this will lie totally on the shoulders of the government, for which it shall be punished.

Allah is Great and the Honor is for Islam.

Head of the Religious Leadership of the Islamic Movement of

Uzbekistan

Az Zubayr Ibn ‘Abdur Raheem

4th Jumadi Al Awwal (ah)

25 August 1999

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