

The Characteristic Traits of Terrorism and Interpretation of Jihad by Al-Qaeda and the Taliban in the Pak-Afghan Society

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ABSTRACT

Counterinsurgency description is attaining impetus, as Pakhtun territory in Afghanistan and Pakistan remains engulfed in conflict. The War on Terror announced in the US just after 9/11 is fought in the region with full force and might. However, the use of excessive military force has yet not mustered positive results. Operation Geronimo (killing of Osama Bin Ladin) could not gain any sympathies for the allies; rather Pakhtuns are angry over the violation of their territorial integrity. Focusing upon them (Al Qaeda and the Taliban), it will become clear how the two perceive terrorism and Jihad with their varying attitudes towards one another vis-a-vis Pakhtun society. Terrorism does not have static characteristics; tactics employed and targets adopted have evolved over time. The Taliban and Al Qaeda's interpretation of jihad, and the conviction and tactics of their undertakings command similar influence over the Pakhtun society in particular and the international community in general.

KEY WORDS: Terrorism, Jihad, Al-Qaeda, Taliban, Pakistan, Afghanistan

Introduction

“Western thought, heavily influenced by the medieval Christian crusades has always portrayed jihad as an Islamic war against unbelievers. But essentially jihad is the inner struggle of a Muslim to become a better human being, improve himself and help his community” (Rashid, 2001:87). However it is also a “mistake to see jihad as merely a tactic aimed at achieving a specific worldly

goal...fundamentally, acts of jihad are conceived of as demonstrations of faith performed for God by an individual” (Burke, 2004:33). Both the Al Qaeda and the Taliban for that matter believe themselves to be acting in the best Islamic interests, and by the dictates of God. As it is said, “one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter”(Wilkinson, 2006: 193). However, I further contend, as the Quran prescribes, “Fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you, but begin not hostilities. Lo! Allah loveth not aggressors” (Qur’an 2:190), we understand that any terrorist actions without provocation are unwarranted.

There is a complex and interwoven relationship between the Pakistani Taliban, the Afghani Taliban and Al Qaeda. I will begin by discussing acts of terrorism in Afghanistan by the Taliban and the role Al Qaeda have played before turning to the situation in Pakistan to compare their differing agendas, long term goals and the interaction between the two states. Focusing on the Pakistani and Afghani Taliban it will become clear how the two have developed varying agendas and have differing attitudes towards one another in the Pakhtun belt. Terrorism does not have static characteristics; tactics employed and targets adopted have evolved over time.

Thus in this essay I attempt to establish the Taliban and the Al Qaeda’s interpretation of jihad, and the conviction and tactics of their undertakings, and whether these two movements command similar influence over the international community.

Despite widespread use, the term ‘terrorism’ is still heavily disputable, as reported acts of terror spread across the globe the sphere of interpretation has widened; Pillar (2003) describes it as being ‘sometimes applied to just about any disliked action associated with someone else’s policy agenda’. Narrowing this down, terrorism is usually exercised as a coercive mechanism and part of a strategy where actions create a threat of worse to come if political demands are not met (Booth and Dunne 2002). The United States army manual provides a rather broad definition; ‘the calculated use of violence or threat of violence to attain goals that are political, religious, or ideological in nature, through intimidation, coercion or instilling fear’ (TRADOC pamphlet in Booth and Dunne 2002). As expected this is fairly encompassing of almost any act of violence with apparent pre-meditations. A further definition from the U.S. Government in Pillar (2003) provides terrorism with four main characteristics which act as a useful base from which to proceed, terrorism being ‘premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets sub national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience’. Although there are exceptions, the characteristic actions displayed by both Al Qaeda and the Taliban bear relevance to this description. A key note to highlight, expressed by Pillar (2003) is ‘what all terrorists have in common and separates them from other violent criminals is that they claim to be serving some greater good’, it will become clear through comparison that despite major variations in characteristics and agendas, acts of terror within Pakistan and Afghanistan follow this underlying principle.

The Taliban

“After the withdrawal of Soviet forces and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet-backed regime in 1992, Afghanistan entered a disastrous period of civil strife and warlordism” (Byman, 2005:189). The country was divided into several “autonomous mini-states” (Byman, 2004:189) under what one can call “warlord fiefdoms” (Rashid, 2001:21), where warlords continued to struggle against each other to establish their supremacy. The disintegration of society, the dominance of the warlords and spread of violence, especially violence against Afghans inflicted by fellow Afghans, fuelled many to seek a solution for societal reform.

The religious schools or *madrassas*, financed by the Gulf countries in the time of the Soviet invasion, and set up in the border areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan Pakhtun society (The largest ethnic group in Afghanistan) considerably influenced the Taliban movement (Nojumi, 2001:119). As most of the dissatisfied were part-time or full-time students in *madrassas*, the name of the organisation was obvious- Taliban, which came from the Arabic for ‘students’ (of Islam). The Taliban believed that Afghan society had fallen prey to the criminal activities of the warlords, the moral order had washed away with the guerrilla war against the Soviets and an Islamic way of life had been compromised with the excessive corruption prevalent (Rashid, 2001:23). In a bid to distance themselves from the party politics of the *Mujahideen* and to cleanse society, the Taliban “chalked out an agenda which still remains the Taliban’ declared aims- to restore peace, disarm the population, enforce Sharia law and defend the integrity and Islamic character of Afghanistan“ (Rashid, 2001:22).

“The obsession of radical Islam is not the creation of institutions, but the character and purity of its leader, his virtues and qualifications and whether his personality can emulate the personality of the Prophet Mohammed” (Rashid, 2001:86). Thus Mullah Omar was chosen as the leader of the Taliban, “not for his political or military ability, but for his piety and for his unswerving belief in Islam” (Rashid, 2001: 23). He “emerged as a robin hood figure, helping the poor against the rapacious commanders (warlords). His prestige grew because he asked for no reward or credit from those he helped, only demanding that they follow him to set up a just Islamic system” (Rashid, 2001:25). His call for action of taking up arms against “Muslims gone wrong” (Omar in Rashid, 2001:25) ‘to achieve the aims of the Afghan Jihad and save our people from further suffering at the hands of the so called Mujahideen” (Omar in Rashid, 2001:23), was a battle cry of sorts for a jihad against wrongdoers. In efforts to purge society of its evils, the Sharia law implemented by the Taliban was the strictest interpretation ever known. Girls’ schools were closed down disallowing them an education; women were required to wear a ‘hijab’, were not allowed the use of cosmetics and banned from working; and men were compelled to grow beards. Also all forms of entertainment such as games, sports, music and dance (even at weddings) to name a few were banned (Rashid, 2001:29).

“Islam sanctions rebellion against an unjust ruler, whether Muslim or not and jihad is the mobilizing mechanism to achieve change” (Rashid, 2001:87). Ergo the Afghan Jihad was a revolution from the top, where the Taliban tried to act along the lines of the Prophet’s jihad, but against the power-hungry warlords. However the Taliban suffered from an “all-inclusive ideology, they rejected the idea rather than integrated the vastly social, religious and ethnic identities that constituted Afghan society” (Rashid, 2001:86). They were a majority Pashtun movement in a country with a very rich multi-ethnic background, and their interpretation of Sharia was deeply influenced by the Pashtun code of conduct called *Pashtunwali*. While the Taliban claimed they were fighting jihad against Muslims gone astray, ethnic minorities saw it as a ploy to cleanse Afghan society of non-Pashtuns; “jihad doesn’t sanction the killing of fellow Muslims on the basis of ethnicity or sect” (Rashid, 2001:87) yet the Taliban interpretation differed.

“The Taliban was a highly ideological movement...its leader Mullah Mohammad Omar, appeared to genuinely believe that Afghanistan’s foreign and domestic policies should follow his interpretation of Islam, not realpolitik or domestic politics” (Byman, 2005:192). The Taliban swelled with the ranks of many Afghan students from madrassas in Pakistan. Most had spent their lives in refugee camps in Baluchistan and the NWFP, imbibing education in madrassas run by Afghan mullahs or Pakistani Islamic clerics. They studied the Quran, sayings of Prophet Mohammed (SAW), and the basics of Islamic law as interpreted by their mostly illiterate teachers. These men had no formal grounding in math or social sciences. They were “from a generation that had never seen their country in peace” (Rashid, 2001:32). The orphans of the war, the rank of the Taliban were rootless, restless, jobless and the economically deprived with little self-knowledge. War was the only occupation they could adapt to, while their simple belief in a messianic, puritan Islam which had been drummed into them by simple village mullahs was what drove them and gave their lives some meaning (Rashid, 2001:32).

The Madrassa education in rural areas of the Afghan-Pakistan border, subscribed to the Deobandi ideology, with several of the Taliban leaders being from these madrassas, the “links between the Taliban and some of the extreme Pakistani Deobandi groups are solid because of the common ground they share” (Rashid, 2001:92). The Taliban “fostered Pashtun nationalism, albeit of an Islamic character and it began to affect Pakistani Pashtuns” (Rashid, 2001:187), the Taliban further supported extremist Pakistani Sunni groups, who killed Shias, wanted a Sunni state and an Islamic revolution (Rashid, 2001:187). As a result, the Pakistani Deobandis appealed for a Taliban style Islamic revolution in Pakistan (Rashid, 2001:93), for the borders between the two countries were quickly eroding, and the ‘Talibanization’ of Pakistan was inevitable (Rashid, 2001:187).

“Pakistani leaders valued Afghanistan for the perceived strategic depth it offered in a war with India, (Pakistani forces would presumably regroup in Afghanistan if pushed back by Indian forces) and as a bridge to Central Asia”

(Byman, 2005:196). But over time, the Taliban ensured its autonomy to guarantee that they were not mere puppets of the Pakistani state (Byman, 2005:197). On the other hand, Pakistan had been a patron of the Taliban ever since the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, and had offered support from the government, political parties, religious networks and even ordinary citizens (Byman, 2005:195).

Pakistan had so much faith in their idea of a “Pakistan-led Islamic block of nations” (Rashid, 2001:195) that no one was “willing to point out the damage being inflicted upon Pakistan” (Rashid, 2001:193). The Taliban weakened the Pakistani state by creating social unrest with its support of the Sunni/Pashtun radicals and refused to give up claims to the territories in the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, but most importantly they did not appreciate being subjugated by the Pakistani authorities, which furthered their jihad in these areas.

People like Joe Klein believe that the Taliban are, in effect, the Pashtun Liberation Army. They don’t see the same border that we– the Pakistanis–do. Their motivation is, in part, religious, but very largely nationalist–and traditionally xenophobic. They don’t like outsiders, whether they are Americans, Pakistanis or Tajiks (Afghanistan’s Northern Alliance). They had made common cause with the “Arabs”–Al Qaeda–because of religious affinity and the existence of common enemies (namely the US) (Joe Klein, 2009). However, in recent times, they have distanced themselves from Al-Qaeda. This shows that the nationalist feelings are left without any religious affinity in the region.

Al Qaeda

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, drew many Muslim volunteers from the Arab world and Pakistan to participate in the Afghan jihad; it was these volunteers for whom the chief ideologue of the “Arab-Afghans” (Rashid, 2001:132) and mentor for Osama bin Laden, Abdullah Azam used the word Al Qaeda, to “describe the role he envisaged the most committed of the volunteers playing once the war against the Soviets was over” (Burke, 2004:2). Defining ‘al Qaeda’ proves a complex task, it is commonly misconceived to be a distinct organisation or group headed by Arab leader Osama bin Laden, however in reality it is much more subtle, Burke (2004) describes the term as ‘a loose network of networks’. The term “Al Qaeda is a messy and rough designation, often applied carelessly in the absence of a more useful term” (Burke, 2004:1). It is actually a common Arabic word that can mean base, foundation, a rule, a principle, a method or maxim. The above translations are helpful in understanding the use of the term in reference to terrorist and extremist organisations. Abdallah Azzam, an early mentor of bin Ladin used the phrase in 1987 to describe the ‘strong vanguard’ of committed individuals who would continue on to ‘achieve victory’ after the withdrawal of the Soviets from Afghanistan in 1989 (Burke 2004). He saw the Al Qaeda as a “base that was to be composed of individuals committed to the cause who would, through accumulative weight of their actions instigate great change”; he referred to

a tactic, or a 'mode of activism', not an organisation (Burke, 2004: 2). At that time, the aim of the movement was to "keep alive the Jihadist spirit among Muslims in general" (Byman, 2005:198), additionally the after war years had left the speculation that the defeat of the Soviets (barring all the other causes) by the Jihadists could indeed lead to the defeat of the other superpowers like the US (Rashid, 2001:130). The evolution of the phrase can be traced from this point. Once the Afghan-Soviet war came to an end the common purpose which had provided unity between disparate groups of Islamist extremists began to disintegrate, bin Ladin, in an attempt to overcome these re-emerging divisions aimed to create an 'international army' for the purpose of 'defending Muslims from oppression' (Burke 2004). Ollapally (2008) describes how 'the Soviet invasion was clearly the catalyst' for growing religious militancy 'but in 1979 hardly anyone familiar with Afghan society would have predicted the religious extremism and terrorism that would evolve'. It was after Azam's death in 1989, however that Osama bin Laden took charge of the Al Qaeda and spearheaded the movement. It was not until bin Ladin moved to Afghanistan after leaving Sudan in 1996 with a small number of followers, that he was provided with opportunity to develop a real terrorist entity, from this point until 2001 was the closest al Qaeda came to being the commonly conceived 'base' (Burke 2004). The ISI had always wanted royal patronage for the Afghan jihad, Bin Laden, a close friend of the Saudi Prince Turki bin Faisal, though not royal, was deemed fit for the cause. Bin Laden is on record to have said "to counter these atheist Russians, the Saudis chose me as their representative in Afghanistan" (Rashid, 2001:132). In 1997 the US Department of State accurately described al Qaeda not as a group but as an 'operational hub, predominantly for like minded Sunni extremists' (in Burke 2004). Money from Saudi Arabia allowed bin Ladin and his followers to effectively buy themselves a country, Afghanistan, to use as a base (Booth and Dunne 2002), and so between 1996 and 2001 a central focus was provided to local extremists around the provision of resources and facilities, including training, expertise, money and a safe haven (Burke 2004). Burke (2004) suggests that al Qaeda grew to consist of three main elements; a 'hardcore' basis of around a dozen associates of bin Ladin's since the 1980's and a number of 'pre-eminent militants active around the world' who formed the 'heart of al Qaeda's capability' and were 'committed to a similar agenda' (Scheuer, 2003). Secondly a network of localised groups in some way linked to bin Ladin or his associates, with their own leaders and own agendas (Burke 2004). Lastly a third element of ideology, Burke (2004) describes al Qaeda as 'a way of thinking about the world, a way of understanding events' and not 'being part of a group'.

Bin Laden, dismayed over the Saudi royal family's decision to involve the USA in the Gulf War, instead of using the trained Arab-Afghans from the Soviet Jihad as he had suggested, announced Jihad against the Americans, moreover because they still occupied territories of Saudi Arabia, by stating "the walls of oppression and humiliation cannot be demolished except in a rain of bullets"

(Rashid, 2001:133). Increasingly disillusioned with Muslim countries allying with the USA, Bin Laden issued a manifesto that claimed “the US has been occupying the lands of Islam in the holiest of places, the Arabian peninsula, plundering its riches, dictating to its rulers, humiliating its people, terrorizing its neighbours, and turning its bases in the peninsula into a spearhead through which to fight the neighbouring Muslim peoples” (Rashid, 2001:134). He further called for the liberation of the Middle East by issuing a Fatwa- “The ruling to kill the Americans and their allies-civil and military- is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to” (Rashid, 2001:134). The radical Islamist Ayman Zawahiri, who believed in the use of terror tactics to aid Laden’s idea of global jihad, also played a great part in setting out the aims of Al Qaeda. The movement aspired to establish Sharia law in the Muslim countries, to expel the American infidels from the Middle East and decrease their influence, and bring down the Muslim regimes that were US allies or supported its policies. Most importantly, they wanted to institute a Pan-Islamic caliphate and wage Jihad against the USA, by setting up a ‘World Islamic Front for Jihad’ (Wilkinson, 2006:40). The *modus operandi* of Al Qaeda, in carrying out these aims included the killing of large numbers of people, cause the maximum economic damage possible and disrupt society and create a climate of fear. These attacks were usually coordinated and carried out without any previous warning; common tactics were suicide bombs and car bomb attacks. As Burke said, “Al Qaeda specifically aims to have a lot of people watching as well as a lot of people dead” (Burke, 2004:44).

Considerable media attention was given to a video aired in June 2007 showing an Afghan Taliban Commander with 300 masked men claiming to be suicide bombers prepared for terror attacks in Western countries (Stenersen: 2009). However such attacks were never put into action (Stenersen: 2009), the Afghan Taliban have displayed no history of attacks on Westerners outside of the states border. However, terror tactics displayed by the Afghani Taliban have evolved in recent years. Leaders have used ‘al Qaeda style anti Western rhetoric’ and endorsed suicide bombing as a tactic, which was previously unknown, indicating that the group are not static in the attacks they will pursue (Stenersen: 2009). Martyrdom operations were not typical in Afghanistan; in 2002 there were only two in the whole country. Today however a suicide attack occurs approximately every three days’ (Riedel: 2007), indicating how readily the Taliban have adopted al Qaeda style tactics. Most Afghani Taliban attacks have been aimed at Afghani police and security forces, and international troops, importantly attacks against foreigners have been limited to within the state. Enmity towards the West has been expressed only in retaliation, such as the bombing of the German Embassy in Kabul in 2008 was claimed to have been because the German forces in Afghanistan were involved in taking innocent lives. Western countries perceived as insulting Islam have been the subject of Afghan Taliban threats, in 2008 the Netherlands were threatened twice after they released an Islam-critical movie

entitled *Fitna* (Stenersen: 2009). Critically these retaliatory threats were limited to Dutch troops inside Afghan borders (Stenersen: 2009), a marked difference from the Pakistan Taliban who were associated with an attempted terrorist plot on public transport networks in Barcelona in 2008.

Al Qaeda has made a 'spectacular resurrection' in Pakistan after they lost their base in Afghanistan from the US lead invasion in 2001, and now have a 'secure operating base' from which to become 'a growing force in Pakistan itself' (Riedel 2007). While the Pakistani Taliban did not emerge with the Afghani Taliban under Mullah Omar. It has developed its own distinct identity and cleverly cut deals with the Pakistani government to create a space and develop its own autonomy (Abbas: 2008). Its tactics to gain territorial control involved establishing themselves as alternative leaders to the tribal elders in the South and North Waziristan, in total killing around 200. A movement of the Pakistani Taliban has evolved since December 2007 the Tehrik-I-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), under founding leader Baitullah Mehsud, before his death in 2009, and forty senior Taliban members, were estimated to be in command of 5,000 members (Abbas 2008). The TTP's terrorist campaign has been predominantly aimed at the Pakistani Military and Mehsud has openly pursued tactics to challenge the Pakistani government. In August 2007 Mehsud moved 'aggressively against them' when he 'captured 250 army soldiers, who were only returned when the government released 25 militants associated with the TTP' (Abbas 2008). Terrorism from the TTP has taken the form of suicide bombings against the Military, of the '56 suicide bombings that occurred in Pakistan in 2007, 36 were against military related targets including the ISI and military headquarters in Rawalpindi', of which the Pakistani government blamed the majority on Mehsud. As the TTP's resources and geographic reach expands it is clear they aim to exacerbate Pakistan's military instability (Abbas 2008).

The limited decline in and shifting patterns of terrorism-related fatalities and incidents over the past year offer poor consolation against this backdrop. Total fatalities have certainly dropped from the unnatural peak of 11,585 in 2009, to 7,435 in 2010, but are still higher than any preceding year, including 2008, when the figure stood at 6,715 [all data from the *South Asia Terrorism Portal* database; the figures are likely to be gross underestimates, since reportage from areas of conflict is poor, as authorities deny access to reporters, international observers and other independent institutions]. Civilian fatalities registered a 22 per cent drop between 2009 and 2010, while militant and Security Force (SF) fatalities declined by 54 and 37.5 per cent, respectively, essentially indicating that some of indiscriminate slaughters that were being engineered in the name of counter-terrorism, what some of the US State Department correspondence described as "ham handed military tactics, which included indiscriminate artillery bombardment" and "blind artillery and F-16 bombardments" which had displaced millions of innocent civilians from their target areas, particularly in Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), had been selectively scaled back in 2010 (SATP: 2011).

Fatalities in Terrorist Violence in Pakistan: 2003-2011

| Year | Civilians | Security Forces (SFs) | Terrorists | Total |
|--------------|-------------|-----------------------|--------------|--------------|
| 2003 | 140 | 24 | 25 | 189 |
| 2004 | 435 | 184 | 244 | 863 |
| 2005 | 430 | 81 | 137 | 648 |
| 2006 | 608 | 325 | 538 | 1471 |
| 2007 | 1523 | 597 | 1479 | 3599 |
| 2008 | 2155 | 654 | 3906 | 6715 |
| 2009 | 2307 | 1011 | 8267 | 11585 |
| 2010 | 1796 | 469 | 5170 | 7435 |
| 2011* | 226 | 98 | 384 | 708 |
| Total | 9620 | 3443 | 20150 | 33213 |

* Data till February 20, 2011, Source: SATP

Significantly, KP accounts for the overwhelming proportion of the dramatic drop in fatalities and violence, essentially indicating active disengagement between the SFs and extremists in this Province, as the total killed declined from 5,497 in 2009 to 1,202 in 2010. Terrorism related fatalities also fell in the Punjab, from 441 to 316 over the same period. However, FATA saw 5,408 killed in 2010, as against 5,304 in 2009; in Balochistan, fatalities rose from 277 to 347; while Sindh saw an increase from 66 to 162 (SATP: 2011).

The TTP have encouraged different tribes to form their own Taliban affiliated militias, in an attempt to expand their control over Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), which they have had relative success in (Amir Rana: 2008). Acts of terrorism from the TTP have been pursued to maintain their control of tribal areas, 'Taliban groups have imposed a ban on NGO's, have targeted electronics shops and attacked schools, as many as 29 between January and May 2008, especially female institutions' (Amir Rana: 2008). They have also pursued a tactic of kidnapping security and state officials to 'effectively demoralize security personnel' and to elevate themselves into a position where they can negotiate with the Pakistani government on their own terms (Amir Rana: 2008). 2008 also saw the Pakistani Taliban successfully move their control into North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) when the Pakistani government declared 8 out of 24 districts as being 'high security zones', meaning that terrorist activity and the chance of an attack had increased (Abbas 2008). The Taliban's attacks in the NWFP have been characterised by enforcing an 'extremist version of religious ideals' with targets regularly including girls schools, but also video and music shops and barber shops

which practice the shaving of beards, these attacks cannot be described as retaliatory, suggesting that the Pakistani Taliban's fight has changed in characteristic from mainly targeting the state, the military and its associates to a broader civilian basis. These terrorist attacks have instilled fear and had a strong psychological effect on civilians (Abbas 2008).

Drone attacks in Pakistan's Pakhtun Territory: 2005-2011

| Year | Incidents | Killed | Injured |
|--------------|------------|-------------|-------------|
| 2005 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| 2006 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2007 | 1 | 20 | 15 |
| 2008 | 19 | 156 | 17 |
| 2009 | 46 | 536 | 75 |
| 2010 | 90 | 831 | 85+ |
| 2011 | 59 | 548 | 52 |
| Total | 216 | 2092 | 244+ |

Source: SATP 2011

The TTP and Baitullah Mehsud, unlike the Afghani Taliban have gone on to launch international terror campaigns and release explicit threats to the West. On the 12th January 2008 twelve Pakistanis and two Indians were arrested during a counter terrorist operation in Barcelona after plot to attack the Spanish capital's transport system was uncovered (Reinares 2009). At first it appeared that the group had connections to the TTP, which was later confirmed by a spokesman from the organisation Maulvi Omar who took responsibility for the plot (Stenersen 2009) and claimed that the twelve Pakistani men were 'under pledge to Batullah Mehsud' (Reinares 2009). The motivation behind this terror campaign outside Pakistan's border stemmed from 'Spain's military presence in Afghanistan', such characteristics of terrorism are in stark contrast to those from the Afghani Taliban who have not been associated with plots to launch attacks in Western countries (Reinares 2009). The Afghan Taliban have gone so far as to deny having any organisational associations with the Pakistani Taliban or any ambitions to carry out attacks outside their state borders (Reinares 2009). On the contrary the TTP have displayed support for the Afghani Taliban, Mehsud is described in 2008 as

having ‘successfully developed human resources, which he is using to support the insurgency in Afghanistan’ (Amir Rana 2008).

Since 2001 there has been a shift in the nature of al Qaeda’s relations with the Pakistani state, ‘Pakistan was not at the forefront of bin Ladins mind in the mid 1990’s’ and before 9/11 the country was ‘not on the operational or ideological radar for al Qaeda’ (Brachman 2008). However Rassler (2009) suggests that the shift witnessed in recent years has been to promote increased confrontation with the Pakistani state. When it became clear that in the post 9/11 era, the Musharraf government was not willing to support their call for mass mobilisation against the US, bin Ladin demanded in 2003 that his Pakistani followers overthrow the government to save the nation (Brachman 2008). There are clear parallels here between the objectives of al Qaeda and those pursued in the terror attacks associated with the rise of the TTP later on. Al Qaeda have attempted to assassinate Musharraf several times (Riedel 2007) and had intentions to ‘polarize the country into warring factions and to break civil and secular society’ in order to ‘see it’s allies in the Pakistani Islamist movement seize power’ (Riedel 2007). Al Qaeda’s operations in Pakistan have been an attempt to promote co-operation among Pakistani militants in order to challenge the states authority undermine its support for the US invasion of Afghanistan (Rassler 2009). Al Qaeda’s primary action within Pakistan has been the provision of expertise to act as ‘force multiplier’ and to mediate coalitions between militant groups to further their own aims (Rassler 2009). Predominantly al Qaeda’s behaviour has been characterised as ‘lying low’, illustrating how they can have a dangerous role despite not being primarily responsible for dangerous operations (Rassler 2009). Since 9/11 al Qaeda has been committed to strengthening the jihad in Afghanistan, part of this tactic has been to undermine the Pakistani army and portray the Government as ‘un-Islamic’ (Rassler 2009). Responsibility has been claimed for few attacks enabling them to manage local perceptions and disassociate themselves with controversy (Rassler 2009). Al Qaeda has shown it does not need to ‘conduct bombings’ to be successful, by deferring attacks to local groups they are more likely to produce a successful revolutionary moment, the September 2008 bombing of the Marriot Hotel in Islamabad is a cited example of this (Rassler 2009). Terrorist activity from al Qaeda in Pakistan has sought to encourage co-operation between localised groups and to unite militant Islamic factions in order to strengthen their aims of insurgency in Afghanistan.

Bin Laden having lost citizenship of Saudi Arabia and being asked to leave Sudan, settled in the Pakistan-Afghan border region, where he was given sanctuary by the Taliban, in exchange of infrastructural assistance, and military guidance by virtue of the Arab-Afghans. It was here that he managed to collect the many extremist factions in the world under a common focus, his provision in Afghanistan allowed for degrees of success- he had means of training, expertise, money, munitions and a safe haven for any military activity (Burke, 2004: 8). He formed a network of extremist groups that was “more of a transnational movement

than an organisation in the traditional sense” (Wilkinson, 2006, 41). All groups associated with Bin Laden did not swear allegiance to him but did so to Al Qaeda, or the dictum. The Al Qaeda was in fact a horizontal structure with many affiliated networks. Different factions held dynamic relations, all funds, expertise, or training etc weren’t necessarily sourced from Bin Laden, as a multitude obtained it locally from donors, also many didn’t care for Laden or for his global jihad (Burke 2004:11). So Bin Laden may have provided ideological guidance but the affiliated networks carried out the groundwork. “It is not about being part of a group. It is a way of thinking about the world, a way of understanding events, of interpreting and behaving.” (Burke, 2004:14). Therefore we can say that Al Qaeda is a “worldwide network of networks” (Wilkinson, 2006, 42). I contend that Al Qaeda preaches Islam, as the “war is fundamentally religious” (bin Laden, in Pillar, 2003:17) but the core ideology is to revolutionize international politics through their global jihad. The Al Qaeda is a collection of the common elements of so many different factions and strands of Islamic thought...labelled as the Al Qaeda (Burke, 2004:14).

Conclusions

The Taliban and Al Qaeda share ideological similarities, but the two do not overlap perfectly (Byman, 2005:200). The Taliban laid an emphasis on bringing around their ‘fallen’ and immoral society back to reflect traditional Islamic beliefs, ergo their jihad was internal. While the Al Qaeda stressed the need of defending their Islamic culture in the face of the West, and from westernising factions within Muslim states, ergo an international jihad. However the two ideologies converged over the years, the Taliban and Al Qaeda shared a reciprocal relationship where both were willing to destroy things noxious to their ideals.

Crucially a major distinguishing characteristic of terrorism between the Afghani and Pakistani Taliban has been their approach to externalised attacks. While the latter have claimed association with anti-West terror campaigns abroad, the former have limited these to foreign troops within their state boundaries. Both have claimed acts of terror to be retaliatory, for the Afghan Taliban this was due to a perceived anti-Islam rhetoric from the Dutch, the Pakistani Taliban were allegedly responding to a Spanish military presence in neighbouring Afghanistan. There is clearly a level of support provided from Pakistan towards the Afghani Taliban while the latter have pursued efforts towards disassociation. Al Qaeda has evidently played a supportive role towards the Pakistani Taliban, while retaining their agenda of enmity towards the allied occupation of Afghanistan, indeed their supportive role of the TTP has strengthened their capabilities towards this goal, Pakistans interior advisor has said publicly that the TTP “is an extension of al Qaeda” and that the two organisations “have extensive ties” (Abbas 2008).

With the “War on Terror’ and Taliban’s loss of power in Afghanistan as the price paid for sponsoring the Al Qaeda, and the Al Qaeda being affected by

extensive measures, it may seem that it will die out. Nonetheless, even with the loss of the current leadership, the “Qaeda” or the precept will live on, with many other eager revolutionaries waiting in the wings. “The terrorist organisation believes that it is entrusted with an eternal mission: to lead the world into the apocalypse” (Jacquard, 2002, 159), thus as bin Laden said, “After me, the world of the infidels will never again live in peace” (Jacquard, 2002:159).

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