



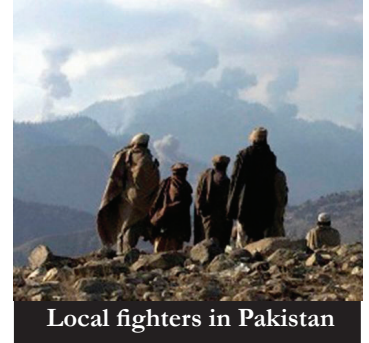
Terrorism Monitor

In-Depth Analysis of the War on Terror

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Local fighters in Pakistan

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AFGHAN MUJAHIDEEN DETERMINED TO CLOSE KABUL TO KANDAHAR CORRIDOR

Shaykh Nur ul-Haqq Mujahid bin Mohamed, the Taliban military commander in the Maydan Shahr district of Wardak province, stated in a recent interview that Taliban forces are trying to block a major supply corridor south of Kabul and “close it permanently.” One of Afghanistan’s most important highways passes through Maydan Shahr, connecting Kabul with the Taliban stronghold of Kandahar. The interview appeared in the 44th issue of *al-Somood*, the monthly magazine of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (posted to jihadi websites on July 22).

In the prologue to the interview, Shaykh Nur ul-Haqq is described as a high-standing graduate of a Peshawar theological school who joined the Taliban movement in its early stages in the mid-1990s, eventually becoming head of military security in Nangarhar province. He has been in charge of military operations in Maydan Shahr since 2002.

According to the Taliban commander, the “Crusader” forces in Maydan Wardak have military positions in the provincial capital of Maydan Shahr as well as at various points along the Kabul-Kandahar highway. “Battles between the mujahideen and the Crusaders occur to control the corridor and the two sides will swap control of it during the day, but at night the mujahideen will take complete control of it and all the roads leading to the district,” stated the shaykh.

Shaykh Nur ul-Haqq insists the growing number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan is not as important as their morale, which he claims is in a state of decline, saying, “This ailment cannot be evaded by increasing the number of troops.”

Fighting in Maydan Wardak can be difficult, the Taliban commander admits. The “huge capabilities of the enemy” are posed against the limited resources of local fighters, and the district’s close proximity to Kabul makes it easy for the Coalition to move troops quickly to Maydan Wardak in response to any Taliban attack. Despite this, the shaykh affirms that successful attacks on military and supply convoys continue in the district.

Shaykh Nur ul-Haqq also described the various Taliban strategies and tactics used throughout Afghanistan, noting that what works in one province will not necessarily work in another:

For example, in Kunar and Nuristan provinces, the most suitable military method is a military clash because those two provinces possess a geographic situation suitable for this military strategy. Meanwhile, in Helmand and the southwest of Afghanistan the preferred method is to plant mines and use explosives because the terrain of those areas is desert terrain, which does not afford the mujahideen secure places to hide. As for Kabul, martyrdom operations and surprise attacks are best because the open concentration of large numbers of invaders there gives the mujahideen an opportunity to launch those kinds of campaigns against their bases and barracks.

For now, however, Shaykh Nur ul-Haqq’s focus on closing the highway through Maydan Wardak may be disrupted by an outbreak of fighting between the Taliban and their former ally, the Hizb-i-Islam militia of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar (*Weesa* [Kabul], July 26). Mullah Zabiullah, a Maydan Wardak Taliban commander, was reportedly killed in separate fighting with Afghan security and intelligence forces on July 31 (Bakhtar News Agency, July 31).

LEADER OF YEMEN’S ADEN-ABYAN ISLAMIC ARMY REJECTS SOUTHERN SECESSION

In a recent interview with a pan-Arab daily, Shaykh Khalid Abd al-Nabi (a.k.a. Khalid Abdulrab al-Nabi al-Yazidi), the leader of Yemen’s Aden-Abyan Islamic Army

(AAIA), condemned the Southern secession movement as the work of “Jews and Christians,” while claiming he was the victim of accusations by “atheistic communists” who had infiltrated the Sana’a government (*al-Quds al-Arabi*, July 9, 2009).

The AAIA was established in the early 1990s by Abu Hasan Zayn al-Abadin al-Mihdhar. When al-Mihdhar was executed in 1998 for his role in the deaths of four Australian and American tourists, al-Nabi took over leadership of the group (*al-Hayat*, October 11, 2005). A member of the Yafa’i tribe and a native of the al-Yazid district of Lahaj Governorate, al-Nabi left socialist-ruled South Yemen in the 1980s for religious training in Saudi Arabia. In 1994 he received military training from the Taliban in Afghanistan but returned to Yemen to participate in the civil war against the South Yemen socialists. After this he became a senior member of the AAIA. By 2003 al-Nabi was leading his followers in clashes against government forces in the Hutat Mountains of Abyan Governorate. According to al-Nabi, the “atheistic communists” of South Yemen had merely been dispersed rather than defeated in the civil war. “Some remained in Yemen as members of the opposition, others became members of the opposition outside Yemen, and some donned the garb of the state and joined the ruling [General People’s] Congress Party. Outwardly, these people pretended to owe allegiance to the Congress Party but inwardly they owed their allegiance to the socialist party,” stated al-Nabi.

In 2005, al-Nabi turned himself in to authorities and received an official pardon. He was released to his farm where authorities maintained he was leading a peaceful life despite numerous reports he was raising and training an Islamist militia. Al-Nabi has repeatedly denied having ties to the government, especially Major General Ali Muhsin al-Ahmar, the president’s brother and commander of Yemen’s First Armored Brigade (*Asharq al-Awsat*, April 4, 2006; January 8).

The AAIA takes its name from an apocryphal prophecy by the Prophet Muhammad that predicts an army will arise from Aden-Abyan in the last days to fight for victory in God’s name. Al-Nabi believes in this prophecy, though he stops short of claiming to represent its fulfillment. According to him, “The Prophet (p.b.u.h.) preached about this army and about the fact that such an army will emerge either now or in the future. When this will happen exactly, only God knows. I believe that the global prophecies of our Prophet (p.b.u.h.) will inevitably take place. No one can stop them or interdict

them... [Regarding the AAIA] I cannot say definitively whether it actually exists and is effective or anything else.”

Al-Nabi claims his difficulties with the government are inflated by those seeking revenge for their defeat in 1994. “For instance, the authorities may receive information that I am carrying arms in a certain location. Now this is not a big deal. The majority of the Yemeni people carry arms and even the women carry arms these days,” he said. Al-Nabi also complains that the strength of the AAIA was consistently exaggerated in the past to the point where a band of some 20 followers was treated as the equal of the national army. According to him, “The media inflated the issue because, as you know, more media coverage means more U.S. support and aid in the name of fighting terrorism.”

Al-Nabi continues to defend al-Mihdhar’s murder of four Western tourists in 1998, saying, “I believe... he was killed unjustly because, at the end of the day, even the killing of thousands and thousands of Christian unbelievers is not equal to one drop of blood of a believer.” He points to a fatwa by Shaykh Muqbil bin Hadi al-Wadi, who ruled in his book *Al-Burkan fi Nasf Jami’at al-Iman* that the tourists “had come in war and were spies and corrupters on earth.”

The AAIA leader holds a conspiratorial view of Yemen’s political violence, claiming the Huthist rebel movement in north Yemen is a creation of the state supported by the United States, though he does not explain how this would benefit either party. He believes the southern secession movement is likewise the work of “Jews and Christians,” saying it is “certain that the United States and Britain are involved.”

Though resolute in his advocacy of national unity, al-Nabi has elsewhere acknowledged there are numerous problems facing the people of southern Yemen, including “injustice, racism, usurping the money of the people, looting the land, oppression, barbarism, the use of violence and force, a corrupt judiciary, corrupt security, and many other reasons. In fact, if we look at the situation of the people in the southern regions, you might excuse them for demanding secession” (*Asharq al-Awsat*, January 8).

Half-Hearted Security Operations in Punjab Do Little to Restrain Taliban Attacks

By Arif Jamal

Nobody in the Punjab security establishment was aware of how deep the Taliban had penetrated local society when the police and law enforcement agencies started a half-hearted operation against the Punjabi Taliban in the last days of June. The operation came in response to simultaneous suicide attacks on two Ahmadi Muslim mosques in Lahore on May 28 that killed 95 people (*The News* [Islamabad], May 29; see also *Terrorism Monitor*, June 12). Up to this time, successive Punjab governments had looked at Talibanization as an Afghan-Pashtun problem of little relevance to Punjab.

Within a few days, law-enforcement agencies arrested scores of Islamist radicals and recovered 28,000 kilograms of explosives, anti-aircraft guns, rocket-propelled grenades, suicide vests, small arms and ammunition (*Asia Times Online*, June 30). During the operation, law enforcement agencies specifically avoided targeting the Lashkar-e-Taiba (and the associated Jama’at ud-Da’wah) and the Jaish-e-Mohammad led by Maulana Masood Azhar. Had they targeted these groups as well, they would have faced bigger surprises. Instead of continuing the operation, the government mysteriously asked the law-enforcement agencies to slow it down. [1]

In the aftermath of the suicide attacks on the Ahmadi mosques in Lahore, a war of words started between Federal Interior Minister Rehman Malik and the Punjab provincial government. Malik supported a military operation against the Punjabi Taliban, particularly those entrenched in the south of Punjab, while the Punjab government denied their existence, objected to the use of the expression “Punjabi Taliban” and accused the Federal Minister of trying to destabilize the province (*Dawn* [Karachi], June 3).

As the Punjab government came under growing pressure by the federal government and the media to take action against the terrorists, a slow moving operation was launched in Lahore in the second week of June. In the third week, more than 2,000 police cracked down on suspected terrorist hideouts in their search for some 1,785 terrorists in Lahore (*Tribune* [Karachi] June 18).

The reaction to the suicide attacks on the Ahmadi mosques in Lahore seemed to have surprised the Taliban as well. For more than a month, they did not carry out any major terrorist attacks inside Pakistan. However, they came back with a vengeance on July 1 when they struck Lahore's Data Darbar, Punjab's largest and most revered Sufi shrine.

Instead of accelerating the operation against the Taliban, the Punjab government slowed it down. In what was no more than a cosmetic gesture, the Punjab government announced it would ban 17 terrorist groups, most of which were already banned by the federal Ministry of the Interior last year (Geo News, August 5, 2009). These included Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LJ), Sipah Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), Sipah-e-Muhammad Pakistan (SMP), Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM), Tehrik-e-Jafriya Pakistan (TJP), Tehrik Nifaz Shariat-e-Muhammadi (TNSM), Millat-e-Islamiya Pakistan (MIP), Khuddam ul-Islam (KuI), Islami Tehrik Pakistan (ITP), Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HuT), Jamiat-ul-Ansar (JuA), Jamiat-ul-Furqan (JuFO), Khair-un-Naas International Trust, Islamic Students Movement (ISM), Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and Jamaat-ud-Daawa (JuD). It also placed the Sunni Tehrik under observation. Nine of these groups belong to the Deobandi sect, three are Shi'a-based and three belong to the Ahl al-Hadith (Salafi) movement. The BLA is a Baloch nationalist organization, while the ISM is a student organization. Interestingly, the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) did not appear on the list (*The News* [Islamabad], June 5).

Although a leisurely search-and-arrest police operation continues in Punjab, police are not likely to get the arrested terrorists convicted in the courts of law, as they are not receiving cooperation from the army and its intelligence agencies. In a secret report, the Punjab police accused the army of not sharing information on terrorists with them (*The News*, July 7). The report claimed that the army "neither assisted nor showed any interest in the trial of the accused" in some very high profile suicide attacks, including the February 25, 2008 attack on the head of the Pakistani Army Medical Corps, Lieutenant General Mushtaq Beg, and the February 4, 2008 attack on an army bus carrying students of the Army Medical Corps (Pakistan Times, February 26, 2008). The report, which describes the role of the army as "deplorable," says that the army did not share any information on the accused or the forensic evidence, although the accused remained in the custody of the army for one year (*The News*, July 7). Nine men

charged with the attacks, including alleged ringleader Dr. Abdul Razzak, were acquitted in May for lack of evidence (*Dawn*, May 13; BBC, May 13).

Explaining the sluggish pace of the operation, a police official in Punjab cited the above mentioned report and said that they had been given the list of terrorists by the army and secret agencies, but these provided little information. The army and the secret agencies have not shared any evidence on the terrorists either. "Police can arrest them but cannot get them convicted in the absence of the evidence," said the police official. "If they did not share any information on such high profile attacks on the army itself, how can we expect them to share any information on the Punjabi Taliban?" [2]

It seems that the Islamist radicals are now aiming at a full blown Iraq-style terrorist campaign in the urban centers of Punjab. Pakistani investigators found evidence of the use of "shaped charges" – an explosive charge designed to focus the explosive's energy – at the scene of the twin suicide attacks at the Sufi shrine in Lahore. Al-Qaeda has previously used these charges in improvised explosive devices. According to a senior Pakistani counter-terrorism official, "This is simply preparation for urban guerrilla warfare in Pakistan, like al-Qaeda previously launched in Iraq." (Asia Times Online, July 21) The emerging situation shows that the importance of a full military operation against the Punjabi Taliban cannot be overstated.

Arif Jamal is an independent security and terrorism expert and author of "Shadow War – The Untold Story of Jihad in Kashmir."

Notes

1. Author's interview with a Punjab security official, July 2010
2. Ibid

Bombings in Bangkok: A Return to Political Violence for the Red Shirts?

By Derek Henry Flood

After barely two months of calm in the Thai capital following a bloody end to the April-May protests, a pair of explosions in Bangkok threaten to mark a new wave of political violence in the confrontation between the “Red Shirts” (supporters of the United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship-UDD) and the “Yellow Shirts” (supporters of the People’s Alliance for Democracy-PAD) (see *Terrorism Monitor*, May 28). The Red Shirts support the return of exiled Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who has reportedly spent a good amount of time in the United Arab Emirates since his 2006 ouster in a bloodless military coup (AFP, November 16, 2008).

A by-election marked Thailand’s first political test since May 19, when the Royal Thai Army put a forcible end to protests which left 89 dead and some 1,900 wounded (*Bangkok Post*, June 19). Due to the death of a parliamentarian in June, a by-election was held on July 25 in Bangkok’s suburban 6th district that pitted a leading UDD politician, Korkaew Pikulthong (currently jailed on terrorism charges), against PAD candidate Panich Vikitsreth. The Thai electoral commission allowed the Red Shirt’s Pikulthong to run from behind bars, in part to prove Thailand’s democratic bona fides. No sooner were the votes beginning to be tallied for an apparent victory by Vikitsreth’s pro-army, pro-establishment Yellow Shirt faction than a terrorist attack shook downtown Bangkok. The victory of Panich Vikitsreth, an ally of Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva, may have been a relief to those craving a return to stability, but may have further enraged radicals on the violent margins of the Red Shirt movement who believe they are acting in Shinawatra’s name, despite his pleas for calm and non-violence. After his candidate’s defeat, Shinawatra said to his passionate followers via his Twitter account, “People who love me and wish me well need to persevere against injustice and cruelty. Please don’t solve the problem through violence because I don’t like it and disagree with it” (*Pattaya Daily News*, July 26). [1]

The explosive device was an American-designed M-67 fragmentation grenade rigged with an alarm clock to delay detonation until a preset time. The explosive

detonated during the evening rush hour at a bus stop on congested Ratchadamri Street. The stop was located in front of the burned out hulk of a Big C department store in Bangkok’s upscale Ratchaprasong shopping district, much of which was destroyed in the Red Shirt violence this spring. The grenade, containing Composition B explosive (a mixture of RDX and TNT), killed one and injured 10, including a Burmese national. Police General Panupong Singhara Na Ayutthaya stated that the electrical circuitry used in the attack indicated that the bomber was likely an explosives expert who was either politically motivated or was “intent on creating a ‘situation’ in the nation” (*Pattaya Daily News*, July 26). A Red Shirt spokesman, Prompong Nopparit, stated that the Ratchadamri attack was carried out by proponents of PM Vejjajiva’s Yellow Shirt agenda. “I believe the bomb came from a group who support the government and want emergency rule to be continued,” Nopparit said (*Bangkok Post*, July 26).

The M-67 grenade is stocked by the Royal Thai Army. In early March, a robbery occurred at a barracks in southern Thailand’s Phatthalung Province that resulted in the loss of 69 M-67s. The culprits, a group of army privates, slipped up and a portion of the arms cache was later recovered. Though it is not publicly known precisely how many M-67s were recovered and how many were returned, it is believed that some of the grenade stock is still loose in the country (*Khao Sot* [Bangkok], July 30). Several weeks after the southern depot theft, an M-67 was hurled at the house of another former prime minister, Banharn Silpa-archa, shortly before the April-May troubles erupted (Reuters, May 14; *The Nation* [Bangkok], March 30).

While the Thai capital was still on edge after the July 25 attack, a second grenade exploded on July 30, when an unfortunate rubbish scavenger happened upon it hidden in a trash pile (Mass Communications Organization of Thailand, July 30; *Bangkok Post*, July 30). The second grenade had the pin removed prior to its placement with the safety lever held in place by a rubber band. It exploded when it was accidentally jostled by the man, who suffered cranial shrapnel wounds, as he picked through rubbish bags across from the well-known King Power duty-free shopping center on Bangkok’s Rongnam Road. It was very likely meant to explode amidst a crowd later in the day to instill more fear after Sunday’s bombing. On July 31 three more grenades were discovered in a drainage ditch outside the Government House in Bangkok (Thai News Agency, July 31).

No one has claimed responsibility for these incidents, nor has the Thai security apparatus yet affixed blame. Though the Thai military immediately stated that the July 25 incident was not related to the by-election, many Bangkokians have their doubts (Bernama [Kuala Lumpur], July 26). The central government has been gradually lifting the emergency rule orders, though the decree still remains in effect in ten provinces, including Bangkok. PM Vejjajiva indicated that the normal rule of law will eventually be restored, with Bangkok being the last district to eventually return to normalcy upon the completion of the investigation into the spring uprising by the Centre for the Resolution of the Emergency Situation (*Bangkok Post*, July 30). For the moment, Thailand's political narrative is in deadlock, with billionaire media mogul Thaksin Shinawatra positioned as a hero to Thailand's poor and sitting PM Abhisit Vejjajiva positioned as part of the pro-royalist elite only interested in furthering his own gains at the cost of genuine democracy. The government suggests, without being entirely direct in its approach, that non-state actors backed by political power brokers are using urban terrorism to make it appear weak. The opposition claims the elites in power, the Yellow Shirts, are actually using the explosions to prolong the state of emergency in Bangkok and consolidate rule, which the Red Shirts believe to be unconstitutional. Thailand's Deputy Prime Minister, Suthep Thaugsuban, told the press, "It is regrettable that the bomber wanted to incite further unrest to show that the government cannot control the situation" (AFP, July 30). Red Shirt spokesman Nopparit denounced the July 25 bombing, saying that it "gives the government a reason to extend the ongoing emergency decree" (*Pattaya Daily News*, July 27).

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Note.

1. For the original Thai, see Thaksin Shinawatra's Twitter account, www.twitter.com/Thaksinlive

Al-Qaeda's Ambitions in Pakistan: Changing Goals, Changing Strategies

By Zafar Imran

President Obama's Afghanistan-Pakistan strategy, by defining a goal of "disrupting, dismantling, and defeating al-Qaeda," on the one hand gives direction to this otherwise directionless war, and on the other emphasizes targeting al-Qaeda over all other anti-terrorism efforts (Associated Press of Pakistan, August 2). Al-Qaeda, as innovative as it is, at least in terms of inflicting terror, has clearly taken advantage of America's narrow focus by assuming more of a supervisory role, delegating the active terrorism responsibilities to its local franchises. Another important step al-Qaeda has taken in response to America's stepped up military approach in Afghanistan is to focus more aggressively on the "near enemy" – Pakistan – in order to maintain a safe haven and save its high command (and ideology) from total extinction. These two fundamental changes in strategy have rattled global security strategists in general and Pakistan's security apparatus in particular. Not used to dealing with an enemy as unconventional in nature as al-Qaeda, the rank and file of both the political and military establishments in Pakistan has been clearly outplayed by the terrorists. Moreover, Pakistan's controversial strategic depth doctrine, which finds India at the root of every destabilization attempt, not only results in providing cover to the terrorists but the consequential anti-India sentiment also sends more and more youth into the jihadists' fold every day. What is more frightening than the terrorism itself is the erosion of Pakistan's social fabric and the increasing number of people, mostly from the country's educated middle class, who embrace extremist values.. [1]

Changing Battlefields

One of the biggest breakthroughs made by al-Qaeda has been shifting the center of gravity of terrorism from Pakistan's lawless tribal region to the more settled urban areas of Punjab and Sind provinces. Having penetrated into Pakistani society through local terrorist outfits, al-Qaeda's goal in Pakistan is twofold:

- Exacerbate the already existing fault lines which divide Pakistanis into different ethnic, political and religious factions, as well as encourage social

divisions between the rich and poor by fueling violence between the two social classes.

- Refashion the socio-political identity of Pakistanis in the spirit of al-Qaeda's interpretation of Islam – a system that promises harsh Shari'a-compliant justice and "freedom" from "godless" democratic systems of governance that breed corruption and "moral decadence" in society. [2]

These seemingly ambitious goals, which may have looked impossible only two years ago, are very much a reality today. According to recent opinion surveys, discontent among Pakistanis has risen to an alarming 84%, more than 60% of its youth are cynical about democracy and one third strongly supports the implementation of Shari'a law. [3] In this environment, al-Qaeda surely sees a window of opportunity in Pakistan. Moreover, the government's inability to provide even the basic amenities of life to the masses, let alone to curb terrorism, is only expediting the disaster and has the potential to jeopardize the security of the whole region.

Al-Qaeda's longing to convert Pakistan into a Shari'a state is not new. In his attempt to discredit Pakistan's political structure, Osama bin Laden's deputy, Dr. Ayman-al-Zawahiri, has penned a series of statements and articles, including a 130 page monograph entitled *The Morning and the Lamp: A Treatise Regarding the Claim that the Pakistani Constitution Is Islamic* (see *Terrorism Monitor*, March 19). In this monograph, Zawahiri carried out an in depth analysis of Pakistan's constitution, arguing that all the institutions of state in Pakistan are in conflict with Islam and that it is virtually impossible to promulgate Shari'a in a Western-style democratic system.

The Campaign Against the Pakistani State

Despite al-Qaeda's vociferous attacks on the state of Pakistan since 2001, it was not until about two years ago that the movement started taking concrete steps towards realizing its dream of tearing down the Pakistani state. The late Abu Mustafa al-Yazid, al-Qaeda's chief of operations in Afghanistan and Pakistan before being killed in a South Waziristan drone attack in May, established the organization's "Pakistan bureau" by forging alliances with local organizations like Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), Harkat ul-Jihad al-Islami (HuJI), and Ilyas Kashmiri's 313 Brigade, to name the most prominent. This change in policy allowed Pakistanis for the first time to rise in the ranks of al-Qaeda - previously

an Arab (mainly Egyptian) dominated organization. In order to please its local partners, al-Qaeda also started taking responsibility for activities in which it had not shown much interest before, such as terrorist attacks on India by Pakistani groups, as well as providing support for the military struggle in Kashmir. [4] Since then, the partnership between the two has only strengthened, and terrorist activities have intensified in Pakistan. Never articulated in such depth before, al-Qaeda's long term vision of Pakistan was elaborated by its chief media spokesperson for Pakistan, Ustadh Ahmad Farooq – another Pakistani – in a recent interview with al-Qaeda's media wing:

We are trying to create and to liberate a Pakistan that will be a pure Shari'a governed state and that will be a safe center for all Muslims from any place in the world, irrespective of their color, race or geographical origin. We are doing jihad for a Pakistan that will be a center of the mujahideen and of Muslims who would be able to come to Pakistan without any restrictions (As-Sahab Media Productions, July 12).

An Expanding List of Targets

Recent Lahore attacks on Ahmadi mosques (May 28) and the Data Darbar Sufi shrine (July 1) indicate the broadening of the terrorists' agenda, which previously had a narrow focus on military and intelligence officials. Intent on forcibly changing the fabric of Pakistani society, al-Qaeda's Pakistan bureau seems to have expanded the list of its targets by including centers of power that have the potential to affect its agenda by shaping the public discourse against stricter interpretations of Islam. Notable scholars of the majority Barelvi sect like Maulana Sarfaraz Ahmed Naeemi (assassinated by the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan [TTP] on June 12, 2009), as well as educated members of the Shi'a and Ahmadi minorities, seem to match the profile and are taking the brunt of the emboldened Salafist campaign (*Dawn* [Karachi], June 13, 2009). At least 4,000 Shi'a have been gunned down in targeted killings throughout the country in the last two years (*Dawn*, June 24). In Punjab alone, since 2006 1,312 security personnel and civilians have been killed in 174 terrorist attacks (figures from South Asian Terrorism Portal). Unlike the Pashtun Taliban, which recruits mostly from local tribes, the Punjabi Taliban represent a wide cross-section of Pakistan's rural and urban middle class and are therefore difficult to find among the common people. Moreover, these loose outfits, which previously used to operate

independent of each other, have emerged under the supervision of al-Qaeda as a “network of networks,” with each constituent terrorist organization specializing in a particular city/region or terrorist activity.

An example of this coordination is found in the recent wave of terrorism in Punjab. According to intelligence reports, the LeJ, with its strong intelligence network throughout Punjab, carried out the task of identifying the targets and conducting surveillance of specific installations (*Daily Times* [Lahore], July 12). Responsibility for providing logistical support, i.e. suicide vests, explosives and safe havens, was delegated to HuJI, while the TTP provided suicide bombers. Such a sophisticated and coordinated campaign of violence against the Pakistani people is a clear indication that the terrorists’ agenda is to forcibly change the outlook of Pakistani society and is not merely focused on isolated attacks against Pakistan’s security apparatus, as argued by many.

Conclusion

The response from the government of Pakistan to this most dangerous of threats is puzzling, to say the least. The nation’s political leadership, which wholeheartedly supported the military operations in the tribal areas, is more than divided on chalking out a similar strategy against an al-Qaeda-Punjabi Taliban nexus. Huge gains achieved against the terrorists in initially successful military operations in Swat, Buner, Bajaur, and South Waziristan have been squandered by self-serving politicians who impede the capture of terrorists hiding in their constituencies in Punjab. The expanding number of self-proclaimed analysts who thrive on made-up conspiracy theories mislead the people by fueling anti-American sentiment. The confusion that is created in the resulting mayhem is doing little to pacify the concerns of the Pakistani public who, having lost faith in politicians and democracy, are beginning to look towards the promised Shari’a state to at least bring order to their lives.

Pakistan has a troubled history of ethnic feuds, sectarian bloodshed and linguistic politics. There are layers upon layers of confused identities which have kept 170 million individuals from becoming one nation. Exploiting these social fractures to its benefit is the heart of al-Qaeda’s well-planned strategy to break into Pakistani society and to use it as a base for terrorist operations in the rest of the world. Indifferent to the looming danger of potential state failure at the hands of terrorism, the

Pakistani leadership seems to underestimate the level of this threat, while terrorists chip away at its legitimacy one attack at a time.

Zafar Imran is an independent analyst, and researches on state building in fragile and failed states, with a special focus on Pakistan and Afghanistan. His current research focuses on fragmentation in Pakistani society as a source of rising radicalism, and its implications on regional security.

Notes

1. According to the Pew Global Attitudes survey “Pakistani Public Opinion” (August 2009), a growing percentage of Pakistanis favor strict implementation of Shari’a and harsh punishments. The survey suggested that 83% support stoning people who commit adultery; 80% favor punishments like flogging and amputation of hands for crimes like theft and robbery and 78% support the death penalty for people who leave the Muslim religion.

2. Al-Qaeda’s vision for Pakistan, although not presented by its leadership in a coherent strategic document, can be cobbled together by reviewing statements and essays produced by its leaders over the last 10 years. See especially “The Morning and the Lamp – A critique of the Constitution of Pakistan,” by Dr. Ayman al Zawahiri; see also “Why Jihad in Pakistan” – a recent statement by al-Qaeda’s spokesperson for Pakistan, Ustadh Ahmad Farooq, laying out al-Qaeda’s vision of a Shari’a state in Pakistan; and Zawahiri’s message “To the Pakistan Army and the People of Pakistan,” August 10, 2008.

3. 22 Nations Pew Global Attitudes Survey, June 17, 2010, <http://pewglobal.org/files/pdf/Pew-Global-Attitudes-2010-Pakistan-Report.pdf>; British Council Survey of Pakistani youth, November 2009, (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/nov/20/pakistan-younger-generation-democracy-report>).

4. In a posthumously released audio message, Mustafa Abu al-Yazid accepted responsibility for the attack on the German Bakery in Pune India, which killed 20 people on February 13 2010, and praised Ilyas Kashmiri, a Pakistani jihadist, by saying, “The person who carried out this operation was a heroic soldier from the ‘Soldiers of the Sacrifice Brigade,’ which is one of the brigades of Qaedat al-Jihad [al-Qaeda’s formal name] in Kashmir, under the command of Commander Illyas Kashmiri, may Allah preserve him” (*The Hindu*, July 10).