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HAVE DARFUR REBELS JOINED QADDAFI'S MERCENARY DEFENDERS?

A handful of unconfirmed reports from Libya have cited the presence of Darfur rebels in the ranks of the African mercenaries defending the regime of President Mu'ammarr Qaddafi (*al-Intibaha* [Khartoum], February 21; Reuters, February 22). A spokesman for the Sudanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs told a press gathering that authorities were investigating the claims (Sudan Tribune, February 22). Darfur has strong historical ties to Libya, its northern neighbor, and Qaddafi has played a large role in hosting peace talks and encouraging the unification of Darfur's many rebel groups. Perhaps mindful of his own future, Qaddafi has also been one of the main defenders of Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir from possible arrest and prosecution by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for war crimes in Darfur, using his influence in the African Union to pressure other African leaders on the issue, many of whom are also mindful of the precedent that could be set by al-Bashir's prosecution.

Officials of the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), the strongest of Darfur's rebel movements, reacted with anger to the allegations, saying JEM has no fighters in Libya, has no interest in interfering with Libyan affairs and will hold Khartoum responsible for any harm that comes to the thousands of Sudanese citizens working in Libya (Sudan Tribune, February 22). When a Sudanese Foreign Ministry spokesman later announced that his ministry now had proof (as of yet undisclosed) that Darfur rebels were engaged in the fighting in Libya, JEM official al-Tahir al-Feki responded: "These allegations are very offensive and show no sensitivity towards the hundreds of thousands of Sudanese who reside in Libya who will be put in jeopardy as being seen as mercenaries or taking sides. To say that there are JEM fighters in Libya fighting for Gaddafi, this is

just provoking the Libyans to go after all the Sudanese” (Reuters, February 23). There are an estimated half million Sudanese living in Libya and Sudanese officials say they are working on an evacuation plan should that prove necessary (SUNA [Khartoum], February 21).

JEM’s leader, Dr. Khalil Ibrahim, has been harbored in Libya since May 2010, when he was refused re-entry to Chad, JEM’s former base (Sudan Tribune, May 19, 2010). The relocation was the result of a peace agreement between Chad and Sudan that ended a long-running proxy war across the Chad-Sudan border (see *Terrorism Monitor* Brief, October 28, 2010). Khartoum was extremely displeased with the Libyan decision to offer the JEM leader refuge and it would not be surprising to see Sudanese officials taking the opportunity to try and discredit JEM by linking its fighters to the mercenaries firing on civilians in Libya.

There is something of a precedent here; JEM rebels were active in the defense of their Chadian host when Chadian rebels operating out of Darfur attacked the Chadian capital of N’Djamena in February 2008. There were different circumstances at work, however; JEM stood to lose their Chadian bases if a Sudanese-backed faction took power in Sudan. There were also tribal ties between the Chadian leadership and the leadership of JEM, both of which are dominated by members of the cross-border Zaghawa tribe. In this context, however, it should also be mentioned that the Chadian rebels were Zaghawa as well (see *Militant Leadership Monitor*, July 30, 2010). A number of Zaghawa are believed to have served in Qaddafi’s Islamic Legion in the 1990s.

As the protesters grow in strength, suspected mercenaries are being dealt summary justice in the streets, often through hanging. Growing numbers of suspected mercenaries are also being detained by revolutionary committees, including alleged gunmen from Chad, Niger and Sudan (Reuters, February 24). Libya has a substantial black African work force and student population that are likely to come under suspicion in the chaotic events engulfing that nation. As mercenaries in Libya come to realize they are both expendable and unlikely to be paid, they will likely use violent and unpredictable means to extricate themselves from the situation.

The reported use of mercenaries in a desperate attempt by Qaddafi’s regime to retain power in Libya is threatening to blow up into a pan-African scandal. It is difficult to believe that gunmen with military experience

were hired and flown out of various African nations without the knowledge of security services in those countries, suggesting some African governments have cooperated with the plan or at the very least looked the other way. The issue has been raised in the parliaments of Kenya and Zimbabwe, with the defense minister of the latter nation skirting the question by saying he had “no mandate in my duty as Minister of Defense to investigate activities happening in another African country” (*News Day* [Harare], February 23; *Daily Nation* [Nairobi], February 23).

AQAP DEPUTY LEADER SA’ID AL-SHIHRI OUTLIVES REPORTS OF HIS DEATH

Despite a series of reports suggesting that al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) Deputy Leader Sa’id al-Shihri (a.k.a. Abu Sufyan al-Azdi) had died in an explosion while manufacturing a bomb on February 9, there are now indications that the veteran jihadist is still alive (for al-Shihri, see *Terrorism Monitor*, September 9, 2010; January 14).

A native Saudi, al-Shihri spent six years in the Guantanamo Bay detention center before being released to a Saudi rehabilitation program in 2007. After completing the apparently ineffective rehabilitation, al-Shihri left for Yemen, where he joined up with al-Qaeda elements, soon becoming a high-ranking member of the newly formed al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, which united Yemeni and Saudi militants.

Initial reports claimed that al-Shihri was killed together with five other members of AQAP (including an unnamed senior figure) while building an explosive device in the Lawdar district of Abyan governorate (Yemen Post, February 12; *al-Ittihad* [Abu Dhabi], February 12). Lawdar was the scene of heavy fighting between government forces and al-Qaeda fighters last summer (see *Terrorism Monitor* Brief, September 16, 2010).

Brigadier Abd al-Razaq al-Maruni, the security chief for Abyan governorate, was quoted by a Saudi daily as having told the paper by telephone that “We have received confirmation that al-Shihri was killed in Lawdar in Abyan.” However, Interior Ministry spokesman General Mansur al-Turki said his ministry had no such information, as did the Yemeni embassy in Riyadh (*al-Watan* [Riyadh], February 14).

The next day, Brigadier Abd al-Razaq al-Maruni used

the Defense Ministry website to deny reports of al-Shihri's death (including any statements attributed to him by local media), describing such reports as a likely effort to mislead security forces (26sep.net, February 14; Saba [Sana'a], February 15).

A tribal figure from the Lawdar area who works as a mediator between the government and AQAP told a Yemeni daily that al-Shihri's death was "absolutely not true. We are among them [al-Qaeda] and nothing happened." The report was also denied by other local residents, who said such an event could not take place without them hearing about it (*Yemen Observer*, February 15). AQAP has yet to release a statement on the alleged incident.

Female relatives of al-Shihri scandalized Saudi officials earlier this month when they protested the detention of family members outside the Interior Ministry in Riyadh. The women were unaccompanied by male guardians and authorities promised an investigation into how they were able to travel to the Saudi capital without male relatives as escorts (*Gulf News*, February 6).

Government Offensive Triggers Taliban Reprisal Attacks in Pakistan's Mohmand Agency

By Animesh Roul

The ongoing anti-Taliban offensive in Pakistan's Mohmand Agency has triggered a humanitarian emergency in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) as well as the prompting of Taliban militants to carry out revenge attacks against security forces beyond the zone of operations. Thousands

of civilians have fled the region since late January as search and sweep operations continue, accompanied by heavy aerial bombing, artillery fire and ground assaults. Pakistan's military started the operation with the objective of clearing the Saafi, Khwezai, Pentialay and Ambar areas of Mohmand, where heavy concentrations of Taliban militants have been reported in recent months (*The Nation* [Islamabad], January 29). According to intelligence inputs, these tribal pockets have become a sanctuary for Taliban militants and other criminal elements that have fled military operations in Waziristan, Bajaur, Swat and elsewhere in the semi-autonomous tribal belt.

Over 50,000 people have been displaced so far and are presently sheltered in two UN-sponsored refugee camps. [1] The United Nations refugee agency warned that military operations could displace up to 90,000 people by the end of February if the fighting intensifies (*Pakistan Today*, February 6). Mohmand Agency is one of the seven tribal agencies of FATA and has been under the control of the Tehrik-e-Taliban (TTP) since July 2007, when Taliban militants seized the Turangzai Sahib Mosque (named for a prominent Pashtun religious leader who led anti-colonial efforts in the early 20th century) and a nearby shrine in Lakaro. Militants painted the mosque red in emulation of Islamabad's Lal Masjid (Red Mosque) and vowed to continue the anti-government legacy of cleric Maulana Abdul Rashid Ghazi, who was killed in the 2007 siege of Lal Masjid (*Dawn*, July 30, 2007; August 2, 2007).

The Mohmand chapter of the TTP is headed by Omar Khalid (a.k.a. Abdul Wali Raghieb). Mohmand has become a hub for al-Qaeda and Taliban militants and is often used as a training ground for new recruits. The inaccessibility of the region and its proximity to the Afghanistan border make Mohmand Agency a safe haven for militants who escaped military operations in Afghanistan and elsewhere in Pakistan's tribal region.

In early December 2010, reports emerged from intelligence and local sources that remnants of Swat militant groups were regrouping in Mohmand Agency under Qari Abdul Jabbar with the intention of launching guerilla attacks in Swat and elsewhere in FATA (*Express Tribune*, December 9, 2010). A surprising spurt in militant attacks since late last year included suicide bombings, targeted killings of security and peace committee personnel, landmine blasts targeting security convoys, bombings of schools and ambush attacks on security checkpoints in and around Mohmand

Agency. These activities convinced Pakistan's security establishment to launch a coordinated operation in the agency. Besides the roadside bombs and stray mortar fire which are responsible for a heavy civilian toll in the tribal areas, the Taliban have also raised the number of attacks against schools to an alarming level, with 74 schools already destroyed by militants.

Prior to the current operation, Taliban militants perpetrated a number of major attacks in Mohmand Agency. On December 6, 2010, a twin suicide bombing in Ghalanai (the administrative capital of Mohmand) killed 45 people, including tribal elders, security personnel and journalists attending a peace *jirga* (tribal council) (*Daily Times* [Lahore], December 7, 2010). Mohmand TTP chief Omar Khalid claimed responsibility, saying "Those who will work against the Taliban and make lashkars (tribal militias) or peace committees will be targeted... [Our] war is to enforce Shari'a and anyone who hinders our way or sides with America will meet the same fate."

Over one hundred armed TTP militants attacked five security checkpoints in Saafi and Baizai Tehsils (counties) on December 23, 2010. Unconfirmed media reports indicated that the ensuing clashes left nearly 40 security personnel and militants dead, though TTP spokesperson Sajjad Mohmand denied any Taliban loss of life (*Dawn*, December 24, 2010). On January 5, an ever resilient Taliban attacked a checkpoint in the Bhai Corr area of Mohmand Agency, triggering a brief encounter that led to the arrest of 39 militants by security forces. Three days later, four Frontier Corps (FC) personnel were injured in a roadside landmine blast and mortar attack in the Qandharo area of Safi Tehsil.

The Taliban achieved a notable success on January 13, when militants assassinated Mohammad Salam Khan in an attack outside a Tablighi *markaz* (center) in Peshawar. Mohammad Salam Khan was the chief of a Mohmand Agency peace committee and a leader of anti-TTP forces (*The News*, January 14). TTP Mohmand chapter spokesman Sajjad Mohmand claimed responsibility for the killing, saying it came as a result of Mohammad Salam Khan's support for government policies in the tribal region and his anti-Taliban stand.

Though security forces claim to have inflicted major blows to the militants during the ongoing offensive, the Taliban has continued to orchestrate major suicide strikes while threatening "bigger attacks" to avenge U.S. drone strikes and Pakistani military operations in

the tribal areas. The TTP and the Mangal Bagh Afridiled Lashkar-e-Islam (LeI) militant group have reportedly joined hands against the government in an attempt to halt military operations in the tribal regions.

On the ground, the military offensive has resulted in a recent spate of TTP attacks in neighboring Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province:

- January 31: Two explosions targeted police vehicles at different places in Peshawar. A suicide attack killed senior police official Rashid Khan and three others in the Garhi Qamardin area of the city. Another blast hit a police patrol in the Taj Abad area, killing two policemen (*The Nation*, February 1).
- February 2: At least ten people were killed and 26 others wounded in a car bomb blast in a crowded market in the Badhaber area, located on the outskirts of Peshawar. According to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa legislator Bashir Ahmed Bilour, the target was a police station (*Daily Times*, February 3).
- February 8: Two Policemen were killed and several others injured when a remote-controlled bomb blast targeted a police patrol at Kaladag in Peshawar (*Daily Times*, February 9).
- February 10: The deadliest Taliban retaliation occurred at the Punjab Regiment parade grounds in Mardan. Triggered by a teenage boy, the suicide attack killed over 35 soldiers (Online News [Islamabad], February 10).

Officials argue that retaliatory attacks against soft targets and security checkpoints are to be expected as the Taliban network inside Mohmand is successfully disrupted and dismantled by the present operation. However, unlike military operations in early 2009, this operation seems relatively smaller, more secretive and more selective. Almost three weeks have passed since the military offensive began and despite claims by the security force to have cleared 90% of the Taliban's hideouts, the militants seem to have gained the upper hand and continue to employ hit and run tactics against their rivals (mostly pro-government peace committees, tribal lashkars and levies) and security forces beyond their traditional strongholds.

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Note:

1. The FATA Disaster Management Authority (FDMA), with the support of the UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies, has been working to mitigate this emergency. For details, see www.fdma.gov.pk.

After Mubarak: Egypt's Islamists Respond to a Secular Revolution

By *Hani Nasira*

When Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi took the stage in Tahrir Square on February 18, it was the first time in decades that the leading member of the Muslim Brotherhood and influential Doha-based TV commentator on Islamic issues had spoken publicly in Egypt. Before hundreds of thousands of people, al-Qaradawi warned the gathering against those who might usurp their revolution: “We want a new government that doesn’t include the old faces ... When people see the old faces, it reminds them of hunger, poverty, misery.” He went on to call for the release of political prisoners, the disbandment of the state security services and an end to the Egyptian-enforced blockade of Gaza (*Gulf Times*, February 19).

The return of the native Egyptian shaykh was in many ways markedly different from the impact of local Islamists on the Egyptian revolution. Before and after the removal of President Hosni Mubarak, Egypt’s Islamists have been divided between the strategies of “immediate change” and “organized peaceful transformation.”

While the approaches of Islamists have varied, they have almost unanimously agreed on the legality of the demands presented by the youth revolution. The Salafists were the lone exception, fearing the concept of a civil-secular state. While the Muslim Brotherhood widened its political presence, the Salafists issued strong calls for the rule of Shari’a in Egypt. The once-militant Egyptian Islamic Group (EIG) looked for a means of participating in the new political era, either through unification with some other Islamist group or by founding a political party of their own.

After a shaky start, the Muslim Brotherhood managed to successfully adopt its strategies to the events. The Brothers joined the demonstrations in Tahrir Square on January 25; as Islamic scholar and author Mamdouh Salem put it, to do otherwise would have rendered the Muslim Brotherhood little more than “a group of undertakers.” [1]

The Brotherhood has also successfully eliminated all doubts and skepticism regarding its aspirations. The group said it participated but never claimed to own this great event. It also pacified existing fears by declaring it had no intention of nominating any of its leaders to compete for the presidency. The Brothers also expressed clearly their belief in and support of a civil state with Islamic foundations. The motive behind this series of statements was to put an end to concerns expressed in the media and elsewhere inside and outside Egypt.

The Muslims Brotherhood also accepted the national dialogue and participated in it with the vice president and other national forces on February 8 (*BBC*, February 11). In a clear attempt to reap the fruits of their participation and reassuring statements, the Brothers described the results of this dialogue as unsatisfactory in order to win the support of the masses in the streets and to maintain their legitimacy from one regime to the next. One cannot deny that this has been a responsible stand in favor of the Egyptian society, and it reveals a certain strategic intelligence. [2]

Exactly as the position of the Muslim Brotherhood maintained harmony with its own history and culture, the stand of Salafi groups also respected an allegiance to their basic beliefs.

The Salafists stood at a nearly equal distance from the revolution and the regime. Though they were apparently closer to the revolution, on February 1, they issued a statement denying a report by al-Jazeera saying that the Salafis used loudspeakers in the Muharram Baik neighborhood of Alexandria to call upon people to avoid participating in the demonstrations. [3] The Salafis also repeated in many statements issued since the beginning of the revolution that they support change for the better, but not a change leading to chaos. This is one of the main concerns that haunt many people of the political elite and the demonstrators in Tahrir Square, especially in the case of a sudden and direct confrontation or the creation of a political void.

The Salafists do not claim that they have adopted the same demands as the demonstrators. Salafist preacher Abdul Monem al-Shahhat describes the current scene as follows: “Each party can follow its own path. History has taught us that consuming the energy of the Islamists in futile arguments does not resolve the conflict but intensifies sedition; accordingly, the Salafi movement has abstained from repeating its declared position” [4]

For their part, the Salafist groups found their role in maintaining security at demonstrations, forming popular committees in the schools of Alexandria and calling upon the people not to resort to confrontations and give wise mediators a chance. This position has been represented by Sheikh Muhammad Hassan and Shaykh Khalid Abdullah and others. The movement also called upon the opportunists and the criminals wreaking havoc in the country to refrain from committing crimes. Generally, the Salafists have restrained themselves from exploiting the achievements of the secularists or other groups like the Copts and the Muslim Brotherhood in their own favor (al-Arabiya, January 30).

The Egyptian Islamic Group has stressed the unique nature of the Tunisian experience. Emphasizing that Egypt is different from Tunisia, the EIG refused to participate in the demonstrations, though they did not deny the legitimacy of the protesters’ demands and their right to organize peaceful demonstrations. In this regard, the group developed its rhetoric in an attempt to find a constitutionally-based solution that would guarantee an organized change of regime. The

EIG suggested a scenario that would include immediate guarantees and constitutional reforms during the remainder of Mubarak’s term, but after his removal they issued a statement congratulating the people and thanking the army “for keeping the country’s stability and for protecting the Egyptian people’s interests.” The movement also called on the Supreme Council for the Armed Forces “to initiate a national dialogue with representatives of the protesters and the other political forces” (egyig.org, February 11).

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Notes:

1. http://www.islamway.com/?iw_s=Article&iw_a=view&article_id=7019
2. <http://www.ikhwanonline.com/Default.aspx>
3. <http://www.forsanelhaq.com/showthread.php?t=207715>
4. <http://www.anasalafy.com/play.php?catsmktba=24133>

Sufi Militants Struggle with Deobandi Jihadists in Pakistan

By Arif Jamal

As Punjab governor Salman Taseer came out of a restaurant in an upscale area of Islamabad, one of his bodyguards uttered the slogan “Allahu Akbar” and fired on the man he was supposed to guard, killing him on the spot. The assassin in the January 4 killing, Malik Mumtaz Qadri, belonged to the Elite Punjab Police, a force specially trained in counterterrorism work and the protection of important individuals (*Dawn* [Karachi], January 5). Qadri was also believed to be associated with the South Asian Barelvi Sufi movement. The other bodyguards from the

elite force did not try to stop him and the smiling Qadri surrendered to his fellow officers after he made sure the governor was dead. He later told the police that he had killed the governor because Taseer had insulted the Prophet of Islam by describing Pakistan's controversial blasphemy laws as "black laws." Within hours of the assassination, Barelvi *ulema* (religious scholars) and more than 500 leading members of the Jamaat Ahle Sunnat ("The Community of People of the Traditions of Muhammad," a Barelvi Sufi religious organization) had issued a fatwa against leading the deceased governor's funeral prayers or even attending his funeral (*The News* [Islamabad] January 5). When the police brought the assassin to court a day later, hundreds of lawyers showered him with rose petals. There were widespread demonstrations in Qadri's favor throughout the country. With all opposition to Islamism and jihadism in Pakistan falling silent since, Sufi Islamism has succeeded in doing what Deobandi jihadism had failed in the past.

Pir Mohammad Ilyas Attar Qadri and the Struggle against Deobandism

The most unusual and disturbing aspect of the assassination was that the killer belonged to the Dawat-e-Islami, a Barelvi Sufi group which normally shuns violence and has been in the forefront of the struggle against Deobandism (a conservative Sunni religious movement that has become associated with militancy) and the Ahle Hadith jihadi groups. Founded in 1984 as a small group around Pir (spiritual leader) Mohammad Ilyas Attar Qadri, Dawat-e-Islami grew into a formidable organization by the mid-1990s when more than 100,000 persons gathered at its periodic *ijtimahs* (conventions). [1] Pir Ilyas Attar Qadri had sensed Deobandi extremism would grow as a result of the Afghan jihad and wanted to organize the Ahle Sunnat to face that challenge. However, Pir Ilyas believed in peaceful resistance. [2] Surprisingly, the Dawat-e-Islami is loosely structured on the model of the Deobandi Tablighi Jamaat (an international Islamic reform movement). All Dawat-e-Islami members, however, are required to wear parrot-green turbans and *shalwar-kurta* (traditional South Asian clothing) like their Pir.

Pir Ilyas Attar Qadri has sworn *bay'at* (allegiance) to four of the leading orders in Sufi Islam; the Qadriya, Chishtoya, Naqshbandiya, and Suharwardiya. He, however, took the suffix of Qadri as his title because he had sworn *bay'at* at the hands of Pir Ziaud Din Ahmed Rizvi Qadri, a successor of Imam Ahmed Reza Khan Barelvi, the 19th century Ahle Sunnat imam who

challenged the rise of Deobandism by issuing a fatwa against the movement. As the group grew larger, most of his followers started calling themselves "Attari-Qadri," turning the group into a mystic sub-order. [3] Like most Barelvi spiritual leaders, Pir Ilyas Qadri places more stress on *zikr* (devotional acts) and less on *shariat* (Islamic teachings and doctrines). However, unlike most modern pirs, he does not ignore *shariat* altogether. In this way, he serves as a bridge between the Barelvi *ulema* (Islamic scholars) and the pirs (traditional spiritual leaders). This is one of the reasons why he attracts students from the Barelvi madrassahs. Pir Ilyas is called "Amir Ahle Sunnat" by his followers, which reflects his desire to lead the Ahle Sunnat.

Formation of the Sunni Tehrik

Pir Ilyas Qadri's reluctance to adopt violence against Deobandi jihadi groups led to a mini-rebellion among his followers, particularly those who had studied at Barelvi madrassahs. Consequently, a small group led by Saleem Qadri founded the Sunni Tehrik in 1990. Saleem Qadri wanted to meet Deobandi violence with more violence, as Pir Ilyas Qadri's "non-violence was not taking the Barelvis anywhere." [4] However, Saleem Qadri did not break his religious allegiance to Pir Ilyas Qadri even after leaving his group, nor did he ask his followers to break links with the Dawat-e-Islami. This approach worked and soon the ranks of the Sunni Tehrik swelled. The membership of the Dawat-e-Islami and the Sunni Tehrik also overlaps at the lower levels with several other Barelvi groups.

The Sunni Tehrik was the first Barelvi group to articulate the demands of the majority Barelvi sect and to use violence to achieve them. Their four basic demands were:

- The protection of Ahle Sunnat beliefs.
- The protection of the rights of the Ahle Sunnat.
- The protection of Ahle Sunnat mosques.
- The protection of the Ahle Sunnat *awqaf* (religious endowments), such as shrines. [5]

The Sunni Tehrik was ready to use violence to achieve the last two demands in response to Deobandi groups' use of violence to take over Barelvi mosques and *awqaf* property. Soon after its founding, the Sunni Tehrik started using force to take back the mosques the Deobandis

had allegedly taken from the Barelvi *ulema*. [6] The Dawat-e-Islami and the Sunni Tehrik cadres complained bitterly that the state had helped the Deobandi and Ahle Hadith groups and *ulema* to grow at the expense of the majority Barelvis. One of their most consistent demands has been for Barelvi imams to be appointed to army-owned mosques. [7] The rise of the Sunni Tehrik posed a direct challenge to the Deobandi jihadi groups. Consequently, Saleem Qadri was assassinated in Karachi in early 2001 by Arshad Khan (a.k.a. Polka), a Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan/Jaish-e-Mohammad operative (*The News* [Islamabad] April 9, 2001).

The Jamaat Ahle Sunnat Challenges the Military's Pro-Jihad Policies

Before he was assassinated, Saleem Qadri had played an important role in radicalizing the Barelvi youth, though neither he nor his spiritual leader, Pir Ilyas Qadri, were able to provide effective leadership to the ever growing numbers of restless Barelvi youth. This leadership was eventually provided by the hitherto dormant Jamaat Ahle Sunnat, the religious party of the Ahle Sunnat *ulema*. Dawat-e-Islami and the Sunni Tehrik had played an important part in reviving the Jamaat Ahle Sunnat, which held a convention in Multan on April 1-2, 2000. It was the biggest gathering of Barelvi groups in more than a century. The convention was very critical of the Pakistani military's pro-jihad policy and support to Deobandi groups. In his speech, Jamaat leader Syed Riaz Hussain Shah came down hard on the military, saying: "If the civil war in Kashmir is the right policy, the government must involve all the Muslims in it. It will be dangerous, as is becoming evident, to arm only a few sects [such as the Deobandis]." [8] However, the most important thing was that the Jamaat Ahle Sunnat had adopted the Sunni Tehrik narrative of a forceful defense of Barelvi interests as its own. The Jamaat Ahle Sunnat emerged much stronger after the convention and began to play a major part in the country's Islamist politics.

The first opportunity for the Jamaat Ahle Sunnat to show its strength came in the fall of 2005, when Denmark's *Jyllands-Posten* newspaper published 12 cartoons depicting the Prophet of Islam as a terrorist. The cartoons created anger among Muslims across the world. The fiercest demonstrations took place in Pakistan, where the Jamaat Ahle Sunnat and other Barelvi groups (including Dawat-e-Islami and the Sunni Tehrik), remained in the forefront of the demonstrations and sustained them for months. Every time the government indicated its intention of amending the blasphemy laws,

the Islamists descended to the streets with a vengeance. Again, each time the Jamaat Ahle Sunnat and other Barelvi groups were in the forefront of the protests. The Jamaat Ahle Sunnat also led demonstrations against the release of Aasia Bibi, an illiterate Christian farm worker and mother of five who was accused of committing an act of blasphemy (insulting the Prophet Muhammad) and sentenced to death by a lower court based on the evidence of her lone accuser.

Conclusion

Although the Barelvis are the majority Muslim sect in Pakistan and in South Asia, Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), under Saudi pressure, never allowed or encouraged them to take part in the Afghan and Kashmir jihads. When the jihad in Afghanistan started in 1980, the Saudis agreed to match American donations dollar for dollar, but also made sure that only their favorite sects, such as the Ahle Hadith, the Deobandis and the Jamaat-e-Islami, were allowed to take part in it, keeping Barelvis and Shias out of the jihad. Although the Barelvis are more hardline than the Deobandis in some respects, they are not armed like the latter. [9] Neither are they trained in guerrilla warfare like the Deobandis and the Ahle Hadith, who have been actively waging jihad for more than a quarter century. However, the Barelvis can show their street muscle through their numerical strength. The groups discussed in this article make up the backbone of the growing Barelvi/Sufi extremism in Pakistan. While the Dawat-e-Islami prepares the masses and the Sunni Tehrik counters violence from Deobandi and Ahle Hadith groups with more violence, the Jamaat Ahle Sunnat dominates the street with its madrassah-educated cadres to promote Sufi Islamism. The assassination of Governor Salman Taseer shows that Sufi Islamism can be a bulwark against or an alternative to Deobandi and Ahle Hadith jihadism but it is in its own way as great a threat to international security as the militancy of the Deobandi and Ahle Hadith movements.

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Notes:

1. The author was present at several of these ijtimahs between 1997 and 2007, after which their frequency slowed in view of the threats from Deobandi extremists.
2. Author's interview with Mohammad Ilyas Attar Qadri, May 2001, Rawalpindi.

3. Author's interviews with several followers of Pir Ilyas Attar Qadri.
4. Author's interview with Saleem Qadri, Karachi, February 2001.
5. According to leaflets and flyers distributed by the Sunni Tehrik on different occasions.
6. Based on a large number of reports in the Pakistani press in the 1990s and early 2000s.
7. Sunni Tehrik pamphlets and author's interviews with a number of Dawat-e-Islami and Sunni Tehrik cadres.
8. The author attended the convention for two days.
9. Barelvis do not say their prayers behind a Deobandi imam while the Deobandis can say their prayers behind the Barelvi imams.