

THE ISLAMICIZATION OF POLITICS: MOTIVATIONS FOR VIOLENCE IN KASHMIR

Gaurav Bhatnagar

The conflict over Kashmir is the longest unresolved conflict on the UN Security Council docket. It began in 1947 and has continued for six decades without any significant progress toward peace. Due to the rapid rise in the influence of pan-Islamic groups operating in Kashmir over the past decade, scholars have tended to cast the conflict as an Islamic conflict. This paper seeks to address two related questions: first, why has the conflict in Kashmir been interpreted by scholars and commentators as one motivated primarily along religious lines, as a battle between Islamic militant groups in response to religious persecution by a Hindu government? Second, is that characterization accurate? In other words, is the motivation for violence in Kashmir best explained by religious or secular and political factors? In addressing these questions, this paper will focus on the motivations for conflict with specific attention to the various militant groups operating in the region and how both the groups and their grievances have shifted over time. Accurately identifying the motivations for conflicts—especially those that are cast as Islamic conflicts—is important in order to prevent the spread of misconceptions, as these false impressions of conflicts often shape the opinions of the conflict and proposed solutions.

This paper concludes that although the original motivations for the conflict were primarily political, the recent surge in influence of pan-Islamic groups has caused the media and scholars to mischaracterize the essential nature of the conflict as primarily religious. Though religion has influenced how militant groups have mobilized and used symbolism, this popular depiction is flawed because the fundamental grievances and motivations are predominantly political.

Gaurav Bhatnagar is in his second year at Emory University, where he is majoring in International Studies with a focus in the Middle East and minoring in Journalism.

Definitional Note: Political vs. Religious

This paper will characterize separatist groups operating in Kashmir as being primarily motivated by either political or religious reasons. Politically-motivated groups are drawn to violence in an attempt to address their secular grievances and pursue their secular goals. Secular grievances include rigged elections, human rights violations, and poor governance, such as corruption and bureaucratic inefficiency. Secular goals include demands for the establishment of a democratic government and for self-determination and independence. While the grievances and goals of politically-motivated groups are secular, Kashmir also houses an overwhelming number of Muslims who regard the mosque as a place of social gathering and political planning as well as a house of worship. Thus, even secular goals and the process of political organization that accompanies their realization often occur along religious lines.

Religiously-motivated groups, on the other hand, are drawn to violence in an attempt to address their religious grievances and pursue their religious goals. Their primary religious grievance stems from the perception of religious oppression. For example, Hindu government oppression of a Muslim minority population may lead these groups to support a merger with Pakistan or the creation of an independent Islamic state. Some religiously-motivated groups—particularly those who ascribe to a pan-Islamic ideology—are also motivated by the desire to spread Islam.

Methodology

This paper employs a two-part methodology. The first section divides the conflict into distinct time periods, starting with the outbreak of violence in 1989 and highlighting the primary actors involved in the militancy within each era. The second part assesses the relative importance of religious and political factors in the motivation of violence during each time period. In order to determine whether militant groups operating in Kashmir are primarily motivated by political or religious factors, I examine three

sub-areas: first, the background of each group including the nature of its establishment and composition; second, the ideologies and objectives of the groups, including the ultimate visions for Kashmir; and third, the tactics and activities each group uses in its advocacy and campaigns, including the source of its funding and the targets of its attacks.

Although this paper divides the groups into separate time periods, it does not argue that groups were only active in the time period under which they are listed. Rather, they are categorized by the time periods in which they either emerged as important players in the conflict or by the time periods in which they played a prominent role. This division helps to organize the conflict into different time periods and to illustrate how groups with similar ideologies arose during the same period.

Relationship to Current Academic Writing

The conflict in Kashmir has spurred debates amongst scholars over the validity of historical claims made by India and Pakistan to the region. One aspect of the conflict that has not been sufficiently examined in the existing literature is the comparative motivations of a wide range of separatist groups involved in the conflict; few scholars have attempted a nuanced discussion of the ideological dynamics of Kashmiri separatism. This paper seeks to build on the existing literature about Kashmir to present a more comprehensive treatment of the varying motivations and ideologies of separatist groups in the region.

Ashutosh Varshney, a professor at the University of Michigan, has argued that the conflict is rooted in the clash of Kashmiri, secular, and Islamic nationalisms. This paper adopts and expands Varshney's recognition of the role that nationalism has played in motivating violence. Instead of speaking of the conflict as monolithic, this paper assesses the comparative role that nationalism has played—vis-à-vis religion and other secular factors, including levels of governance and the democracy—during the various phases and within the various separatist groups of the insurgency.

Indian journalist and scholar Prem Shankar Jha has argued that the conflict stems from middle-class frustrations. He contends that the lack of employment opportunities available to the middle class has fueled growing economic unrest and that the revolts have arisen due to frustrations caused by the lack of economic opportunities. However, Jha's theory of economic deprivation does not explain the distinctly anti-Indian animus of the violence, nor does it explain the affinity of separatist groups for a merger with Pakistan, which had a track record of failed economic development in Pakistan-administered Kashmir. This paper builds on Jha's economic argument in two important respects. First, this paper recognizes the role played by economic frustrations in motivating violence while also explaining the anti-Indian nature of the insurgency by situating it within the broader context of poor governance and repression by the Indian government. Second, this paper analyzes the ideological motivations of the pro-Pakistan and pan-Islamic groups, which extend well beyond the desire for economic stability.

Sumit Ganguly, a professor at the University of Indiana, argues that the origins of the conflict are rooted in a combination of political mobilization and institutional decay. Specifically, he posits that increased education and widespread access to mass media, such as newspapers, television, and video and tape recorders, have spurred the revolts. Although this paper agrees with his fundamental premise that the conflict originated in response to secular political factors, it seeks to extend significantly beyond the scope of his argument. Ganguly's heavy emphasis on politics in his explanation lacks nuance, as it does not explain why different groups mobilized and fought in different ways; specifically, he does not address the fact that the groups mobilized in a manner that was under the aegis of religion and unrelated to the state, and thus immune from the developments in education and media he emphasizes. Hence, this paper provides a comparative taxonomy for understanding why specific groups chose to fight, recognizing the role that religion played in both ideology and mobilization.

Kashmir is often viewed by scholars and political commen-

tators as a religious issue: a battle between Indian secularism and Pakistani Islamism. Samuel Huntington's renowned "clash of civilizations" theory serves as an example, identifying tension between the Hindu and Muslim "civilizations" of South Asia. Huntington argues that cultural and religious identities have served and will continue to serve as the primary source of conflict in the post-Cold War world. This paper attempts to expose this understanding as overly simplistic and inherently inaccurate, as conflicts assumed to be the product of religious binaries can often be explained by a more nuanced relationship with politics. This paper concludes that in Kashmir, conflict was primarily motivated by political factors even though actors mobilized along religious lines. In order to best understand this dynamic, this paper examines the ideology and tactics of the primary militant actors from 1989 to the present.

THE CONFLICT IN KASHMIR

Before the 1947 Partition of British India, there were approximately 650 independent princely states that were forced to accede to either India or Pakistan. Kashmir, the largest and only centrally-located kingdom, refused to accede; the King of Kashmir at the time, Hari Singh, yearned for an independent Kashmir (Bose 16). Frustrated by Singh's equivocations, Pakistani-sponsored tribesman invaded Kashmir and compelled Singh to request protection from the Indian government. India pointed out the illegality of sending in troops without Kashmiri accession to India and pressured Singh to formally accede. Primarily because of his dislike of Pakistan, Sheikh Abdullah, the leader of Kashmir's largest political party, the National Conference, lent his support to the accession and became Prime Minister after the accession. In response to Kashmir's accession, India introduced Article 370 to the Constitution, which granted Kashmir a special status within the Indian Union. Under Article 370, Kashmir would be allowed to maintain a separate flag and constitution and had immunity from any law passed by the Indian Parliament unless the state legislature also

ratified it. There were exceptions, however: “the maharaja’s accession to India in October 1947 had limited the jurisdiction of India’s central government to three categories of subjects: defense, foreign affairs, and communications” (Bose 58). By conditioning the extent of the accession, this article allowed India to pacify Kashmiri demands for independence.

From the time of accession until the elections in 1987, Indian governance of Kashmir was rampant with corruption and mismanagement. The Indian government used its own laws to vindicate its corrupt actions; Articles 356 and 357 of the Indian Constitution “empower the center to dismiss elected governments of India’s states in the event of a breakdown of law and order and to assume their legislative mandate” (Bose 81). On multiple occasions, India declared democratically-elected governments void and instead installed governments that were sympathetic to Indian interests. In effect, these articles gave India the power to dissolve state governments and place them under federal control. Although the articles specify “a breakdown of law and order” as a precondition for the use of this power, the Indian government retained the ability to categorize any event as such; unsurprisingly, arbitrary determinations were made in order to secure control over the state. Despite decades of negligence by the Indian government, the primary outbreak of violence occurred after the 1987 elections in Kashmir. Farooq Abdullah, Sheikh Abdullah’s son and the chief minister of Kashmir at the time, was viewed as a puppet of the Indian state because of his pro-Indian stance during the rigging of general elections. The 1987 elections pitted two major political groups against each other: the separatist Muslim United Front (MUF) and the pro-India National Conference (NC). Candidates for the MUF asserted that the elections were rigged because the National Conference had defeated them in many areas that were regarded as strongholds of MUF supporters. These allegations sparked immediate violence and riots throughout Kashmir.

The example of Muhammad Yusuf Khan and his campaign manager Yasin Malik best exemplifies the corruption that plagued the elections. Khan ran for office within the jurisdiction of the

MUF, resulting in a landslide victory. The decision was then annulled by Indian troops, who awarded the victory to the opposition and incarcerated both Khan and Malik for a year. The Indian government denied both individuals court appearances while subjecting them to torture and other human rights violations. The cruel treatment and undemocratic behavior displayed by the Indian government prompted both to cross the Line of Control—the line that separated Pakistan-controlled Kashmir from India-controlled Kashmir—into Pakistan for arms training in hopes of liberating Kashmir from the Indian government (Bose 49-50). Many Muslims, particularly youth, fled to Pakistan for similar reasons and joined a host of insurgent groups, fighting for the right of self-determination for Kashmir, whose population was rapidly growing.

The 1947 partition created two countries: India and Pakistan. The primary difference between these two countries was the dominant religion: Islam was prevalent in Pakistan while Hinduism was prevalent in India. The high percentage of Muslims living in Pakistan-administered Kashmir and the high percentage of Hindus and Buddhists in Indian-administered Kashmir make this religious distinction clear. Islam's prevalence in Pakistan demonstrates that militant groups with Islamic ideology, which will be discussed below, favor the integration of Kashmir with Pakistan. Although some groups cite corruption by the Indian government, the dominance and spread of Islam in Kashmir is at the core of some groups' ideology.

TRAJECTORY AND ANALYSIS OF THE CONFLICT

This part of the paper divides the Kashmir conflict into three separate time periods in order to differentiate between the types of separatist groups that have operated in Kashmir. Though the groups continued to operate during multiple time ranges, the time divisions are assigned in order to illustrate when different separatist groups first emerged and when they were recognized as the most prominent separatist players in the conflict. This part tracks the rise of secular Kashmiri nationalism from 1989 to 1993, the emer-

gence of pro-Pakistani ideology from 1994 to 1999, and the rise of pan-Islamic groups from 2000 to 2009.

Period 1: 1989-1993—Secular Kashmiri Nationalism

The first stage of the Kashmiri insurgency began with the violent aftermath of the rigged elections and was marked by the reign of secular nationalism. The primary separatist activity during this period was conducted under Kashmir's first major militant group: the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF).

Background

Although the JKLF was founded in Birmingham, England in 1977 by Kashmiri expatriates, the initial group of Kashmiris that crossed the Line of Control for arms and training established the organization in Srinagar, the capital of Jammu and Kashmir, in 1987. The HAJY (Hamid, Ashfaq, Javed, and Yasin)—comprised of members from the aforementioned first group—was the core leadership of the JKLF in its early years. By the mid-90s, all members of the JKLF, save one, had died in their quest for azaadi or freedom. The significance of these martyrs resides in the influence they had on other young Kashmiris “to take up arms and continue the struggle,” thereby enlarging the size and scope of the JKLF (Bose 104).

The JKLF's initial attack occurred in 1989 with the much-publicized kidnapping of the daughter of Rubiya Sayeed, the Indian Minister of Home Affairs. The JKLF continued to carry out targeted attacks, such as the killing of government and security officials as well as other general attacks that resulted in the deaths of innocent bystanders (Ganguly). The two primary leaders of this rising movement were Yasin Malik and Anamullah Khan. Malik was imprisoned, and after his release in 1995 he embraced a non-violent approach to liberating Kashmir primarily because Pakistan had cut its funding of the JKLF. Khan, however, refused to adopt a similar approach and the JKLF split into two groups, one led by

Khan and the other by Malik (Schofield 268). Thus, Malik's faction focused on arousing public opinion to support its objectives while Khan's faction promoted itself as a struggle on three fronts: political, diplomatic, and armed. After denouncing the use of violence in the conflict, Malik expressed his desire for a democratic approach involving representatives of Jammu and Kashmir. Malik remained consistent with his non-violent approach and reiterated the JKLF's intention of including Jammu and Kashmir in the independence talks. In a 2005 interview Malik said, "We are not against the democratic process. I want the Kashmir issue to be resolved through democratic means. Now what problem does India have in holding an election for the sake of electing true [Jammu and Kashmir] representatives? If they are sincere in resolving the Kashmir problem then they can discuss the issue with these elected representatives" (Hakim).

Ideology

The JKLF has a simple goal: to establish an independent Kashmir linked by a common history and nationalism, not religion (SATP). Paradoxically, throughout their history they have supported a broad referendum in which the residents of Kashmir vote on the end status of Kashmir, thereby allowing the possibility of a merger with Pakistan or a pan-Islamic alternative. Despite this, they have openly maintained their desire for an independent Kashmir. In fact Malik has specifically denounced the Line of Control becoming the permanent border. He contends, "When the Kashmiris themselves want to live together, and for which they have sacrificed one lakh [100,000] people, what are you offering them in the name of peace?... Now if the status quo is to form the basis of the solution, how will we be able to ensure peace" (Hakim)?

Although the JKLF originally received funding for its missions in Pakistan, Pakistan ceased its financial support because the JKLF did not support their goal of Kashmir's integration with Pakistan. Moreover, its transformation from a group focusing on international support to a group focusing on domestic support has

diminished its allies in terms of other groups able to provide it with members and funding. The group has, however, maintained the same goals and has been consistent in articulating its ideal resolution to the conflict. For example, in interviews conducted with high-ranking members of the JKLF, such as Yasin Malik, members of the group have consistently indicated their desire for Kashmir to become an independent state and for the involvement of Kashmiris in peace talks that currently only occur between India and Pakistan (Hakim).

The JKLF has also cited corruption within outside governments as a basis for an independent Kashmir immune from the Indian and Pakistani governments. Furthermore, Malik contended that the primary reason for the increase in militancy was the incessant atrocities committed by the Indian government. He believes that if the Indian government “stops the atrocities and the suppression in Kashmir, and allows a genuine space for the nonviolent struggle,” there would be less militancy (Lal). Malik has brought the corruption rampant throughout the Indian government to the forefront in an attempt to gain support for the JKLF cause, specifically addressing the government’s claims that news from Kashmir was exaggerated.

Tactic/Symbols

The JKLF flag—composed of a small white triangle, a red stripe, and a green stripe—is meant to symbolize the group’s ideals. The white color represents the religious minorities of the state and the group’s peaceful efforts on political and diplomatic fronts to achieve its objective; the red stripe represents the group’s revolutionary ideas and its members’ belief that they could not achieve their objective unless they shed their own blood and that of the enemy too; and the green stripe represents the Muslim majority and the greenery of the state (JKLF).

Additionally, although the JKLF was primarily motivated by political compulsions—specifically, an independent Kashmir—it has an inescapable Muslim character due to the fact that currently

99 percent of the valley (after the exodus of Kashmiri Hindu Pandits in the early 1990s) is Muslim. Despite these religious affiliations with Kashmir, however, the JKLF's support for a referendum as well as its consistently articulated goal of an independent Kashmir are indicative of its primarily political motivations.

Moreover, Sumit Ganguly, in his article "Explaining the Kashmir Insurgency: Political Mobilization and Institutional Decay," attempts to identify the structural cause of the initial outbreak of violence for which the JKLF was responsible. He contends that the conflict arose due to political and primarily secular motivations. He argues that "growing levels of literacy, higher education, and media exposure" resulted in greater political mobilization, with the inevitable result of greater political demands; this mobilization, when coupled with the ethnic tension present in the region, had forced the state to accommodate the demands. Ganguly argues that institutional decay, which prevented the accommodation of these demands, proved to be the lynchpin for the conflict when it was coupled with Pakistani propaganda targeted towards insurgent groups.

Period 2: 1994-1999—Pro-Pakistan Groups

The second time period is composed of pro-Pakistan groups that were supported by the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), Pakistan's intelligence agency. Although the JKLF was still active during this time, they had become weaker because Pakistan had begun patronizing the Hizbul Mujahideen. Further, JKLF leader Yasin Malik was incarcerated, temporarily halting the JKLF's activity.

Hizbul Mujahideen—Background

Of all the extremist groups currently operating in Kashmir, Hizbul Mujahideen is the largest. Hizbul Mujahideen was formed in 1989 as a militant wing of an Islamic organization named Jammāt-e-Islami, which was under the leadership of Ahsan Dar. The

group was primarily composed of a mixture of foreign and Pakistani forces, and was commanded by Muhammad Yusuf Shah, a former politician who ran for office in Kashmir and later changed his name to Syed Salahuddin (SATP). Similar to the JKLF, Hizbul Mujahideen split into two factions, with Salahuddin and Hilal Ahmed Mir as their respective leaders.

An important event that involved the Hizbul Mujahideen was the Kargil War that occurred in 1999. The war took place as a result of Pakistani soldiers and members of Hizbul Muhajideen penetrating the Indian side of the Line of Control. This culminated in a lengthy war between India and the militant forces in which India ultimately regained control of military posts and drove the opposition forces across the Line of Control (Bose 141). Hizbul Mujahideen not only participated in aggressive physical combat, but also worked in collaboration with Pakistani forces. For example, they aided the Pakistani soldiers by helping to capture Indian army posts during the Kargil War.

Hizbul Mujahideen—Ideology

Hizbul Mujahideen's ideology is far more Islamist than the JKLF's secular nationalism. A clear departure from the JKLF era, Hizbul Mujahideen supports integration of Jammu and Kashmir with Pakistan. This has earned it the political and military support of the Pakistani government, and the ISI is a major source of financing for the group. In addition to Pakistani aid, it has gained support in the Kashmir Valley and in the Doda, Rajouri, and Poonch districts as well as branches of the Udhampur district in Jammu (SATP). Moreover, Hizbul Mujahideen has strong relations with Jammat-e-Islami, an Islamist Pakistani political group, and is supported by both political and religious groups overseas. Salahuddin, Hizbul Mujahideen's commander, has often justified his group's violence by citing the Indian government's retaliation against the family members of militants. For instance, he contends that "[t]his sort of revenge precipitates retaliation," while making clear that his battle is with the Indian government and not the Indian people (Rediff India Abroad). Saluhuddin insisted this govern-

ment persecution has only aided the cause of Hizbul Mujahideen by fostering more recruits that are disgusted with the ruthlessness of the Indian government.

Moreover, Saluhuddin has used the failing dialogue process as a justification for violence. He believes the process “does not hinge on the core issues of Kashmir” and thus believes that diplomacy will not be able to resolve the issue. Still, he has raised the possibility of a ceasefire if India were to accept four conditions: “India should recognise that Kashmir is a disputed issue; it should release all the political and jihadi leaders; it should withdraw forces from the Kashmir valley and send them back to the 1989 position; and it should stop human rights violations in Kashmir” (Rediff News).

Hizbul Mujahideen—Tactics/Symbols

The Hizbul Mujahideen is strongly opposed to the idea of an independent Kashmir to the point where it has both conducted military campaigns against the JKLF and assisted the Indian government in its battle against the JKLF by providing intelligence (SATP). It has assisted the Indian government in an attempt to destabilize the JKLF because of its agenda of Kashmiri independence, as opposed to a Pakistani merger. Despite this information sharing, its members continue to fight against the Indian government. This was clearly illustrated in Hizbul Mujahideen’s role in crossing the Line of Control and its consequent involvement in the Kargil War.

Hizbul Mujahideen’s motivations are both religious and political. They can be seen as harboring religious motivations because part of their ideology contends that Pakistan was formed as a homeland for the Muslims in South Asia; furthermore, they wanted Kashmir to integrate with Pakistan because they wanted a unification of Muslim groups and forces. Despite their religious rhetoric, it is difficult to determine their true motivations because of their close ties to the ISI, which uses them as a political weapon and is not truly interested in their ideology. ISI’s neglect of Hizbul Mujahideen’s ideology may seem to indicate that the ISI has co-

opted them. The two groups, however, share the same ultimate goal and therefore their relationship should be seen as more balanced. Although it is unfair to characterize their motivations as entirely religious or political, this paper concludes their motivations are primarily political due to their role established by the ISI as a de facto second army of Pakistan fighting for Kashmir's accession rather than as an ideological Islamic goal. Although fighting for Kashmiri accession may be seen as an ideological Islamic goal in some cases, Hizbul Mujahideen has framed their ideology in political terms. They have justified their actions by citing misconduct by the Indian government as well as the deteriorating peace negotiations, both political reasons. While the presence of these political reasons does not entirely rule out religious motivations, it indicates that Hizbul Mujahideen's motives are primarily political.

Period 3: 2000-2009—Pan-Islamic Extremism.

The third time period can be described as the emergence of pan-Islamic groups that tend to possess a more extremist mindset than the previous groups. There were two primary groups operating during this time: Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashkar-e-Toiba.

Jaish-e-Mohammed—Background

Jaish-e-Mohammed, roughly translated as "The Army of Mohammed," was founded by Maulana Azhar in 2000 in Pakistan shortly after he was released by Indian authorities. It is primarily composed of foreign individuals, many of whom fought the Soviets in Afghanistan (SATP). Jaish-e-Mohammed is well known for the December 2001 attacks on the Indian Parliament in which five gunmen opened fire in the Parliament House resulting in nearly a dozen deaths (Bose 142). In fact, Azhar was detained in connection with this attack but was never formally charged. This attack increased tensions between India and Pakistan, ultimately leading to a standoff between the two nations. Both nations gathered and placed troops along the international border and the Line of Con-

trol. News of the standoff sparked conversations regarding potential nuclear war between the two rivals. Tensions receded, however, following an international diplomatic meeting, which resulted in both Indian and Pakistani withdrawal of the troops from the border regions.

Jaish-e-Mohammed—Ideology

Jaish-e-Mohammed places a large emphasis on Islam and its universal potential. As a result, its objective is to liberate Kashmir, unite it with Pakistan—both are motivations shared by Hizbul Mujahideen—and spread Islam throughout India, specifically to Delhi, Amritsar, and Ayodhya. Its emphasis on Islam has led to associations with groups that share similar beliefs regarding religion and Islam, such as the former Taliban regime of Afghanistan, Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda, and other Sunni militant groups. These organizations now provide funding and support to Jaish-e-Mohammed. Apart from the high-profile 2001 attack on the Indian Parliament, Jaish-e-Mohammed has carried out its operations primarily in the Jammu and Kashmir region. Its attacks have been categorized as mainly suicide attacks, focusing on high security targets such as military bases and other security camps (SATP). This is indicative of the approach Jaish-e-Mohammed takes to the conflict: its members are willing to approach their goal without much concern for the loss of human life. This makes it essential for law enforcement officials to be able to detect their attacks further in advance.

Jaish-e-Mohammed—Tactics/Symbols

A combination of militants from Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashkar-e-Toiba hijacked an Indian Airlines Flight in 2000 and held the flight hostage. The separatists ultimately released the hostages but not before tensions between India and Pakistan increased. India accused Pakistan of plotting and supporting the hijacking while Pakistan retaliated with allegations of Indian-spon-

sored terrorism. This attack was one of many that were targeted at non-Muslims and, specifically, Hindus and Sikhs.

Lashkar-e-Toiba—Background

The second group that was prominent during the pan-Islamic period was Lashkar-e-Toiba, which translates as Army of the Pure. This group was founded by Hafiz Muhammad Saeed in 1990 during the last days of the Afghanistan resistance against Soviet occupation. Although their first involvement in the Kashmir conflict occurred in 1993, they did not reach prominence until 1999. Similar to Jaish-e-Mohammed, Lashkar-e-Toiba is primarily composed of foreigners who fought the Soviets in Afghanistan and have a Muslim background (SATP).

Lashkar-e-Toiba—Ideology

The primary goal articulated by Lashkar-e-Toiba, like Jaish-e-Mohammed, is to implement Islamic rule throughout India as the first step to Islamic world dominance (SATP). Consequently, they want Pakistan to become a part of a universal Islamic state because Saeed believes that “Muslims throughout the world are one country” (Bearak). Although support for their objectives is not widespread, they have gained funding through two primary methods. First, the ISI has funded them because they have been viewed as a useful tool in fighting India and Afghanistan. Second, they have been involved in earthquake relief and have established houses, clinics, and temporary mosques for the victims; this has given credibility to their name and has increased sponsorship by Muslim communities and individuals. In addition to these forms of support, Lashkar-e-Toiba has built relations with numerous insurgent groups that also focus on Islam as a center point, specifically the Taliban, al-Qaeda, and other prominent terrorist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt.

Lashkar-e-Toiba—Tactics/Symbols

While their primary areas of operation are within Jammu and Kashmir, Lashkar-e-Toiba has carried out attacks in parts of India including New Delhi and Mumbai. Moreover, their networking and growing ties with Islamic extremist groups across India has allowed them to coordinate attacks within India while receiving necessary support.

They are notorious for their unique methods of attacks. Their primary mode of aggression is *fidayeen*, which are squad suicide attacks. Moreover, their well-planned raids on villages and often deceptive tactic of wearing uniforms of security forces has caused officials to dedicate a larger amount of time and focus to them compared to other extremist organizations (Bose 144-145). Their ultimate goal is not only to make Islam the dominant religion but also, in the words of their leader, “to destroy the forces of evil and disbelief...to bring death to oppressors” (Bearak). Therefore, as Lashkar-e-Toiba’s goal of Islamic supremacy suggests, their primary motivations are religious: they are not concerned with the self-determination of Kashmiris, but rather, a universal following of Islam.

Emergence of Religious Motivations

The emergence of pan-Islamic groups brought religion to the forefront of the conflict. Prior to this emergence, militant groups such as the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front and Hizbul Mujahideen placed the status of Kashmir—whether it would become independent or integrate with Pakistan—at the forefront of the discussion. The rise of pan-Islamic groups including Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed marked the first time the leading militant groups did not support self-determination. Instead, Islam became the primary discussion topic: the pan-Islamic groups expressed their desire for an agenda that “includes the restoration of Islamic rule over all parts of India” (SATP).

Although there is no academic consensus for the explanation

of why pan-Islamic groups suddenly turned to Kashmir to further their cause, one potential explanation is that Kashmir presented itself as an easy target as a predominantly Muslim region torn by over a decade of incessant conflict and polarization. Pan-Islamic groups may have seen the region as an opportunity to expand their battle to a new front—South Asia—by changing their rhetoric to emphasize spreading Islam throughout the region and continent. Engaging themselves in the Kashmir conflict brought attention to their ideology and attracted supporters within South Asia who were opposed to the current players and political options. Furthermore, the Indian government's record of abuse and corruption resulted in the persecution of a primarily Muslim population in Kashmir, which may have also sparked Islamic nationalism: in this case, political actions sparked religious retaliations. In an attempt to take vengeance against the Indian government for its brutal actions, many Muslims turned to the ideology of pan-Islamic groups as an expression of their feelings toward a "secular" Indian government that they believe had neglected them.

CONCLUSION

The evolution of Kashmiri militancy since 1989 demonstrates the complexity of motivations for the violence. The conflict cannot be deemed solely a religious or political conflict; rather, both factors played a significant role in shaping the motivations of different groups. While it is evident that the pan-Islamic groups, which joined the conflict later, emphasize Islam and are motivated by religion, other groups such as the JKLF and Hizbul Mujahideen, which represented the vanguard of violent Kashmiri separatism, have predominantly political grievances and motivations. This paper concludes that although groups that placed less emphasis on the religious dimensions of the conflict initiated the violence for political reasons, the mobilization occurred on religious lines. This was inevitable because of the overwhelming Muslim population in Kashmir and the centrality of the mosque to political mobilization in light of the Indian government's crackdown on political activity.

As the conflict has progressed, Kashmir has witnessed an influx of foreign-based militant groups giving the conflict a decidedly religious turn in terms of the composition, ideology, and motivations of those fighting. The recent emphasis on religion has seemingly corroborated the interpretation that the conflict in Kashmir is a religious battle being pitched between Islamists and a Hindu government. This interpretation misrepresents the conflict by ignoring the political motivations responsible for the past two decades of the conflict.

This paper's more nuanced understanding of the motivations has practical implications for efforts at conflict resolution. Despite the religious context often accorded the conflict, any attempt to remedy the causes of violence must address both the religious and political components of the conflict. Given the significant political dimensions of the conflict's origin and ongoing grievances, the Indian government—though perhaps less able to mollify the religious extremist groups in Kashmir—should attempt to mitigate the secular motivations for violence through the arsenal of political remedies and reforms, including good governance, free and fair elections, and respect for civil liberties.

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