

SHIA-SUNNI SECTARIANISM: IRAN'S ROLE IN THE TRIBAL REGIONS
OF PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis analyzes Shia-Sunni sectarianism in the northern tribal areas of Pakistan, and the role of Iran in exacerbating such violence in recent years. The northern tribal regions have been experiencing an unprecedented level of violence between Sunnis and Shias since the rise of the Tehreek-e-Taliban militant party in the area. Most research and analysis of sectarian violence has marked the rise as an exacerbation of theologically-driven hatred between Sunnis and Shias. Moreover, recent scholarship designates Pakistan as a self-deprecating “failed” state because of its mismanagement and bad governance with regard to the “war on terror.” However, the literature ignores the role of external factors, such as Iranian’s foreign policy towards Pakistan playing out in the tribal areas of Pakistan in the period since the Soviet-Afghan War.

Some of the greatest threats to the Shia population in Pakistan arise from the Islamization policies of General Zia-ul-Haq in the 1980s. Policies in favor of Sunni Islam have since pervaded the nation and have created hostile zones all over the nation. The implementation and enforcement of religious edicts by a political leader like Zia is the product of influence by the Iranian Revolution of 1979. These two events have created a blueprint for the efforts to create a theocracy.

As question of identity ignites passions and tragic violence, Pakistan needs to adopt a new narrative that can help counter the militant’s obsession with the “other.” There is a

need to find a theory that can help promote relationships and peacebuilding. The avenues for that are madrassas, and they have been a remarkable feature of the militant agenda. Peacebuilding methods must seek to take back those centers of learning.

Ultimately, Iran's activities indicate that its influence in the tribal areas of Pakistan has extended beyond religious solidarity to militant operations that are contributing to instability in Pakistan and the South and Central Asian region.

DEDICATION

I am eternally grateful to God for His endless guidance and for blessing me with amazing experiences and people in my life. I dedicate this thesis to my family and my teachers: my parents, Aftab and Iffat Kamal, who have championed education in all its forms, and have demonstrated the harmony between love for God and country. I also want to dedicate this work to my dear husband, Akbar Farook, who has been an endless fountain of love, support and inspiration in my personal and professional endeavors. I thank my sister, Sameea Kamal, who has been a source of light and balance for me throughout our lives. My grandmother, *Nana*, whose countless prayers I am lost without. I also dedicate this thesis to my beloved father-in-law and mother-in-law Farook Sharif and Zubeida Farook, and my sister-in-law Arshia Farook. Although we are all far away, their love, prayers, and care are the closest to my heart. I want to also thank my best friends who have given me the sustenance of laughter, love and prayers to take on the world.

Finally, I want to thank my mentor, Dr. John Esposito, whom I first saw speak at a fundraising dinner for the Council on American-Islamic Relations in Anaheim, California. Simply awestruck by his pursuit to provide accurate information about Islam and the Muslim world, I followed his work all the way across the country to Georgetown University. I am so grateful to have been his student and gain his mentorship for this thesis.

And to the people of Pakistan: My prayers and faith are with you in your quest
for justice, equality and freedom.

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INTRODUCTION

In October 2014, Muslims across the globe began the observation of Muharram, the first month in the Islamic calendar. While some Muslims welcome the new year through fasting and prayer, others begin a month-long ritual of remorse and repentance. This ritual is carried out in honor of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn- a figure who fought valiantly in defense of Islam and the Muslim community. While these types of observations do not appear mutually exclusive, especially as part of the same religion, they have been sources of conflict throughout history, and have given way to heinous acts of violence.

Sunni-Shia divisions have become magnified in recent years, growing increasingly violent, and most notably in the northern tribal areas of Pakistan- an area already engulfed in troubles from internal and external factors like terrorism and drug smuggling.¹ The intense campaigns led by the Taliban of Pakistan and Afghanistan, Al-Qaeda, and other offshoot organizations to institute Sharia law in the region have created deep rifts between Shias and Sunnis and the region at large. The interpretation of Sharia law held by these violent extremists is that only Sunni Islam is ‘proper’ Islam, and anyone who chooses another path should not only be deterred, but extinguished.

The violence between the two groups cannot be simplistically described as a battle of beliefs. Conflicts between the two groups have been features of the Umayyad and Abbasid empires, Iraq under the regime of Saddam Hussein, and pre- and post-9/11 Afghanistan. These instances have contained political elements, but the details of Sunni-

¹ “Illicit Drug Trends in Pakistan,” *Paris Pact Coordination and Analysis Unit, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime* (April 2008): 23, accessed October 7, 2014, https://www.unodc.org/documents/regional/centralasia/Illicit%20Drug%20Trends%20Report_Pakistan_rev1.pdf.

Shia relations in the Umayyad and Abbasid Empire, as well as Iraq under Saddam Hussein, are discussions that are too broad for this paper.

This thesis examines the role of the country of Iran with regard to sectarianism between Sunni and Shia communities in the northern tribal areas of Pakistan. Some questions to be explored are: Why has the period since 9/11 been especially violent between the two groups? What is the relationship between Pakistan and Iran with respect to society, politics and national security? Chapter One will provide an overview of the origins of the Sunni Shia division through the lens of theology. Chapter Two will show how Iran consolidated its theological, social and political Shia identity to become the only Shia majority nation in the world. Chapter Three analyzes the relationship between Iran and Pakistan as two nations grappling with religion and identity and how they interact regarding the issue of sectarianism. Chapters Four and Five analyze the exacerbation of sectarianism under the regime of General Zia-ul-Haq and in the post- 9/11 arena.

At another level, this paper will pursue strategies for peacebuilding amidst deep-seated sectarian violence in the northern areas of Pakistan. In addressing these efforts, the paper will reflect upon the values of tolerance, communal cooperation and justice.

CHAPTER ONE

THE ORIGINS OF THE SUNNI-SHIA DIVIDE

In a world where sectarian strife is killing entire populations, it is important to examine the roots of communalism, especially those that possess a religious dimension. Sunni-Shia conflicts have unfortunately occurred in various parts of the Arab and Muslim world, and Pakistan is not immune to such conflict. Thus, understanding the historic roots of the Shia-Sunni divide provide some explanations for reasons of conflict.

While most literature attributes the development of Shia praxis to the Persian Safavid Empire, the roots of this religious community are found amongst Arabs.¹ Upon the death of Prophet Muhammad, one party supported Abu Bakr Siddiq as the next successor, or Caliph, while another party (who eventually became the Shiites), went on to support the Prophet's son-in-law Ali Ibn Ali Talib, stating that leadership belongs to the family of the Prophet. The reason for the ardent split in votes goes back to an announcement by the Prophet Muhammad after his Farewell Pilgrimage in a place called Ghadir Qom, where he stated, "He of whom I am the mawla (master) of him Ali is also the mawla. Oh God, be the friend of him who is his friend, and be the enemy of him who is his enemy."² Jafri writes as follows:

[T]he real disagreement is in the meaning of the word mawla used by the Prophet. The Shia unequivocally take the word in the meaning of leader, master, and patron, and therefore the explicitly nominated successor of the Prophet. The Sunnis, on the

¹ Fouad Ibrahim, *The Shiis of Saudi Arabia* (London: Saqi, 2006), 56.

² S.M.H. Jafri, *The Origins and Early Development of Shia Islam* (The Arab Background Series):19, accessed October 20, 2014, <http://samensterk.files.wordpress.com/2010/11/shm-jafri-the-origins-early-development-of-shiaa-islam.pdf>.

other hand, interpret the word mawla in the meaning of a friend, or the nearest kin and confidant.³

While Ali did become the fourth Caliph (the last “rightly guided Caliph”), the Shias had already embarked upon their own separatist journey. A seemingly uncontroversial debate about the meaning of a word turned into the origin of one the biggest debates and unfortunate circumstances of violence in Muslim history.

Shia religious doctrine has involved a history of splits and secessions that have found disagreement over Imams, or the leaders of the Shia community. The Al-Khwaraj (also known as Kharijites), or seceders, were the first to break away from the emerging Muslim community. It was not that the Kharijites were on the side of those who would eventually be called Sunnis; rather, they disagreed with both sides because they believed that Ali’s position as Caliph was a divine mandate and not just a political matter. Meanwhile, Ali agreed to negotiate with the opposition party led by Mu’awiya, who had been in discord with Ali because Ali did not present the assassin of the former caliph Uthman. Eventually, Muawiya came to rule the community as the forefather of the Ummayyad Dynasty. Another reason for the divergence of the Kharijites was revenge for their defeat in the Battle of Nahrawan.⁴

Peace in the burgeoning Muslim community was a façade however, as the supporters of Ali continued the battle for the rightful succession. Their allegiance continued from Ali to his sons Hasan and Husayn. The events surrounding these three figures set the foundations for the tangible emergence of the *Shi’a Ali*, or party of Ali. These figures were

³ Ibid., 21.

⁴ Kelly F. Kafeyan, “Sunni and Shiite Martyrdom: A Comparative Analysis of Historical and Contemporary Expressions” (master’s thesis, Navy Postgraduate School, December 2010), 23.

a source of spiritual fortitude and emblems of sacrifice that serve as defining features of the Shia tradition, regardless of geographic locale.

Shi'ism as an Arab Phenomenon

While today's Shia identity is popularly understood to have origins in Iran, Iraq is actually the birthplace of Shia theology and practice.⁵ The sites of Karbala, Najaf and Qum, located in Arab lands, demonstrate the fluidity of identity between the Arab and Persian worlds. It was in crossing Arab Karbala that the Prophet's grandson Husayn and his entire convoy were killed, and al-Husayn's head was carried to the governor to confirm the victory of Yazid. Husayn, son of Fatima, was then by supporters to take on the Caliphate upon the death of Muawiyya in leaving Yazid as a major obstacle in that path.⁶ As Halm says, "The decisive events of the Shia passion history took place in Iraq..." Yet there is little attention paid to the idea of Shiism as an Arab phenomenon today- mostly due to the political features attached to the region.

Karbala thus became the physical and symbolic point of departure for Shia tradition and remembrance. Halm asserts that the specific point of *religious Shi'ism* began with the martyrdom of al-Husayn, the third Imam.⁷ This site marked the beginning of the pain, suffering and protest that has been remembered and rehearsed for centuries. He writes, "There was no religious aspect to Shi'ism prior to 680."⁸ The events of Karbala have been memorialized in various ways, most importantly through writing. Later on, this

⁵ Heinz Halm, *The Shiites: A Short History* (Princeton: Marcus Weiner Publications, 2005), ix.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., 17.

memorialization took the form of passion plays and dramatizations. Specifically, Halm argues that Shi'ism attained a religious or spiritual dimension sometime “between the dramatic events of Karbala (680) and the death march of the Kufan penitents in the year 684.”⁹ This group was comprised of those who adopted the blame and guilt felt by the Shia who did not come out to defend Husayn at Karbala. The penitents felt the need to continue to show remorse and guilt for abandoning Husayn. This ritual of remorse, combined with the passion play of the battle of Karbala, creates the fabric of Shia spirituality. The connection to scripture is found in an early text by Abu Mikhnaf, which links the language of remorse and guilt to Quranic verses about the Israelites who ignored the commands of Moses and succumbed to worshipping a calf.¹⁰ The comparison to the Israelites became a metaphor for the penitents. From this point forward, sin, remorse, and repentance within the framework of the martyrdom of Husayn became fundamental aspects of Shia spirituality.

The concept of missionary or proselytizing pursuits were not a priority for Shias until the Penitents began their activities. ¹¹Daftary claims, “The movement of the Tawwabun (penitents)... marks the end of what may be regarded as the Arab and unified phase of early Shi'ism.”¹² Generations later, Shi'ism would encompass a diversity of sects internally, as well as fluidity with Sunni groups- all spanning across the globe. Yet, it would continue to remain a minority group.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.,18

¹¹ Farhad Daftary, *A History of Shi'i Islam* (London: I.B. Taurus Publishers, 2013), 33.

¹² Ibid.

The next defining moment in the development of Shia theology was the movement led by al-Mukhtar bin Abi Ubayd al-Thaqafi, who was part of the new class of non-Arab leaders. Determined to avenge the death of al-Husayn, he created his own campaign that not only mobilized the masses of Shias, but also led to the concept of the Mahdi. Al-Mukhtar proclaimed Muhammad bin al-Hanafiya, the half-brother of al-Hasan and al-Husayn, as the divinely guided Mahdi. Al-Mukhtar deemed him to be “the messianic savior imam and the restorer of true Islam who would establish justice on earth and deliver the oppressed from tyranny.”¹³ Hanafiya’s significance was embedded in his lineage, not his actions—a feature promoted by al-Mukhtar, the zealous devotee of al-Husayn.

Daftary marks the following phase of Shia development as the time between the revolt of al-Mukhtar and the Abbasid revolution.¹⁴ In this period, more divisions began as different groups began to follow different imams that claimed links to the family of Prophet Muhammad. Ultimately, two main branches of Shi’ism were formed as results of various allegiances to familial lines— the Kaysaniyya and the Imamiyya. The Kaysaniyya were comprised of non-Arab “mawlas,” mainly from South Iraq and Persia, who added the concept of *ghayba*, or occultation of the last Imam.¹⁵ The debates about the Mahdi continued to evolve into more complex levels that shaped the Shia doctrine.

The Kaysaniyya branch continued to condemn the first three Caliphs that came before Ali. One sect within the Kaysaniyya was the *ghulat*, or exaggerators, who were considered “radical” by other Shias because they considered ideas like prophecy after

¹³ Ibid., 36.

¹⁴ Ibid., 39.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Prophet Muhammad superhuman attributes of God.¹⁶ These radical ideas were compounded by calls for physical actions to topple the authority of the status quo.

The Imamiyya branch “adopted a quiescent policy in the political field while doctrinally they subscribed to some of the radical views of the Kasaniyya, such as the condemnation of the Caliphs before Ali.”¹⁷ At this profound moment, Shii legal interpretation began to take its own distinct course, when the fifth Imam-Imam Baqir, chose to use the word “hadith” to refer to the sayings of the Imams in addition to the sayings of Prophet Muhammad.¹⁸ Henceforth, Shia law added a phrase to the call to prayer, and permitted muta, or temporary marriage.¹⁹ This was the beginning of a legal corpus of the Shia tradition.

As years passed, more factions and sects grew depending on allegiances to certain Imams, but the eagerness to overthrow the Umayyads was still alive amongst these factions. The Abbasid clan began to plan a revolt to topple the Umayyads and gain popularity by calling for a return to the leadership of the Ahl-al-bayt. By 762, Baghdad had become the new seat of the Abbasid dynasty.²⁰

The Abbasids went on to abandon their Shia identity, returning instead to Sunni legal structure, which left the Ali’ds with little room to expand. Shias were then left to follow the Fatimid Imams. One of those Fatimid Imams was Jafar, under whom the concept

¹⁶ Ibid., 41.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., 45.

²⁰ Ibid., 49.

of Imamate was solidified and disseminated.²¹ The imamate also includes the importance of hereditary stewardship and attributes of divine inspiration.²² As defining features of early Shia doctrinal identity, the aforementioned theological developments forever distinguished Shias from Sunnis.

After Jafar as-Sadiq, six more Imams came up in leadership and the Imamiyya branch became known as the Twelver Shias. The remaining six Imams are Musa al-Kazim, Ali ar-Rida, Muhammad at-Taqi, Ali al-Hadi, al-Hasan al-Askari, and Muhammad al-Mahdi, the hidden Imam.²³ The majority of Shias went on to become Twelver Shias. For Twelver Shias, the world cannot exist without an Imam leading the Ummah. Shia teachings say that while the position of the Imam is that of divine inspiration, it is not divine composition. This is an area that Shia theologians have emphasized to their followers so as not to depart from monotheism.²⁴

Shi'ism under the Safavid Dynasty

In 1501, a Turkmen, Ismail of Tabriz, became founder of the Safavid Dynasty. It was in this period that Shiism became the official state religion. Tabriz began the work of installing a Shia clergy in Iraq, South Lebanon and other parts of Iran.²⁵ By the 1600's, Shi'ism had gained a host region along with a majority of followers. Although the seat of power had moved to Iran, Shiites still worked hard to preserve and protect the shrines of

²¹ Ibid., 53.

²² Ibid., 54.

²³ Halm, *The Shiites: A Short History*, 23.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

the Imams located all over Iraq, like in Baghdad and Qum. The presence of these tombs carved out the physical, tangible elements of the Shia faith.

Another challenge lay in balancing monarchical administration of the lands along with jurisprudence and application of Shia laws. At this time, the concept of *ijtihad*, or exercising effort decision-making, was brought to the forefront of Shia legal practice.²⁶ Certain requirements had to be met in order to perform *ijtihad* and reach solutions for the issues of the community. Halm lays out some of those requirements, demonstrating the tendency of humans to err- an idea essentially opposing the idea of infallibility of authority.

His ideas are conveyed as follows:

Knowledge of Arabic is still a basic prerequisite for all theology students at the college in Qom...Mujtahids must also be familiar with the Quranic revelation. They are not required to know the entire Quran by heart, as many Muslims do...they must know the principles of jurisprudence...they must have the tools of a logician, to assure that their decisions are consistent. Rationality and logic are inextricably linked.²⁷

Debates around the issues of who could perform *ijtihad* played out amongst various Shia circles. In Iran, complications remained with the Safavid Shahs claiming lineage to Prophet Muhammad via the seventh Imam Musa al-Kazim and thus infallibility, as well as the concept of the hidden Imam which meant that the leadership had no real authority.²⁸ The dissonant relationship between clergy and monarchy was a harbinger to today's struggles around *ijtihad* in Iran.

²⁶ Halm, *The Shiites: A Short History*, 104.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Halm, 111.

Shia-Sunni Relations Under Ottoman Rule

For the Sunni Ottomans, the spread of Shiism was a lingering threat, driving the dynastic rulers to come up with a program that would prevent such a storm. Selim Deringil comments on various reports that dictated the way that Sunnis carried out such a plan:

Where preventive measures were concerned, the writer stressed that because forty percent of Iraq was of the Shii persuasion it was impossible to use force as this would incur the odium of the world Islamic community. The one panacea therefore was education. The state should send specially trained teachers and ulema to Iraq and instill the virtues of Sunni Islam in primary schools.²⁹

It became necessary for the Ottomans to set up scholars and madrassas in Iraq in order to counter Shia teachings within their domain. In addition to the spread of Sunni education, administrators were told to control “the movements of various Iranian pilgrims to the holy shrines...” restrict the “time they should be allowed to spend in the holy places,” expel “Shii mujtahids and students,” and emphasize that it was Sunnis who allowed Shias to perform their pilgrimages of the holy sites in the first place.³⁰ Despite the prevention efforts of the Turks however, Shias enjoyed prosperity and financial support through waqf, or endowments, which were made possible through their networks. Deringil writes, “The report of the Ottoman Commission for the reform of Iraq dated 23 January 1907 stated that money sent from Shiis in foreign lands to the holy shrines and religious institutions had made them rich while the Sunni equivalent languished in various states of disrepair.”³¹

²⁹ Selim Deringil, “The Struggle Against Shiism in Hamidian Iraq: A Study in Ottoman Counter Propaganda,” *Die Welt des Islams* (1990): 56, accessed September 4, 2014, file:///C:/Users/Shazia%20Kamal/Downloads/Deringil%20(3).pdf.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 51.

³¹ *Ibid.*

The disparities with regard to funding had a great impact on Sunni and Shia spheres of influence. The Sunni dynastic ruler wielded dominant temporal power, leaving the religious realm to the shaykhs. The Shia, however, had a more fluid relationship between state and religion: “Thus the Ottoman ulema, even when in opposition to central authority, generally remained a 'loyal opposition' whereas Shii *miuctehids* could and did pose a serious threat to central power.”³² Eventually, these tools of funding and resources would come to fuel the sectarian wars that are going on between Sunnis and Shias today.

The Spread of Shiism to India

The spread of Shiism to India is an important period to examine due to its later reach into Pakistan. The Mongols entered Iran when the Turkic leader Chengiz Khan came to wipe out the great enemy of the Muslims, Kuchlug. George E. Lane writes that, “The Mongols were welcomed not only by the Muslims of the province but by the Turco-Mongol Khitans...who saw the Mongols as their potential saviors and as liberators of their ancestral lands.”³³ This was because the Mongols had supported the Muslims in this first encounter. Chengiz Khan’s spree of plundering began around the end of the 13th century when he retaliated against the Khwarazmshah’s Persian Empire for attacking a trade unit with Mongols, Chinese, and Uyghur Muslims.³⁴ This disruption of life in their homeland along with the expansion of trade routes towards the East led to the movement of Iranians to the Indus valley and beyond.

³² Ibid.

³³ *The Oxford Handbook of Iranian History*, “The Mongols in Iran” (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 246, accessed August 28, 2014, http://eprints.soas.ac.uk/13395/3/Mongols_in_Iran.pdf.

³⁴ Ibid., 247.

The “tug-of-war” relationship between the Sunni and Shia communities of India became yet another tool for Sunnis to keep Shias limited in movement and practice. In South India, Iranian elites brought Shia Twelver Usuli teachings and the Persian language, which sometimes blended into local cultures and religion.

In 16th century Kashmir, the Nurbakhshiyah Sufi order came into the region and converted to Twelver Shiism.³⁵ Soon, Kashmir became a haven for the Shia community under Emperor Akbar. His predecessor Aurangzeb implemented strict measures however, outlawing Muharram processions

The State of Awadh

The North Indian state of Awadh was different from Iran in its formation as an Usuli Twelver Shia area because of its great distance from Iran. Although under Sunni Mughal rule, it was the first region in North India to attempt to create formal Shia institutions like endowments and educational centers. Cole writes, “No Shii formal religious establishment had existed in North India under the Sunni Mughals.”³⁶ The Nawab of Awadh oversaw the development of formal institutions around Shia aristocracy- a contrast to the Shiism of the working classes in other parts of India.

Another significant feature of the Awad Shia community was the movement to implement Friday prayers. This idea was controversial in that it called for an Imam to lead the Friday congregational prayers (like the Sunnis), although in Shia doctrine no one had

³⁵ J.R.I. Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shi'ism in Iraq and Iran: Religion and State in Awadh, 1722-1859* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 25.

³⁶ Ibid.

the authority to lead the Friday prayers in the absence of the Hidden Imam.³⁷ Such an action was bound by more complexities due to the multi-cultural and multi-practice society there. For the Sunnis, the act of holding Friday prayers meant that there was a political counter-balance in the region; if there was a Shia Imam leading Friday prayers, then he might also possess temporal authority, which would threaten Sunni Mughal rule. Thus, Friday congregational prayers served as a microcosm of the various disagreements and conflicts amongst Sunnis, Shias, Sufis and Hindus in Awadh.

Heated debates between Sunnis and Shias continued to shape their relations even in the waning days of the Mughal Empire. Shia Deputy Chief Minister Subhan Ali Khan asserted that since Abu Bakr al-Siddiq and Umar did not directly kill Ali, they could not fall into kufr, or disbelief.³⁸ However, Sayyid Husayn Nasirabadi responded by saying “[E]ven those who did not outwardly battle Imam Ali could in an esoteric sense be unbelievers.”³⁹ Such disagreements and exclusionary ideas floated into societal structures like intermarriage, property rights, and state funds.⁴⁰ On the other end of the spectrum, there lay trouble for those Sunnis who were tolerant and even revered the martyrdom of Imam Husayn. It was also controversial for a Sunni to join a Shia congregational prayer, because, according to Sayyid Muhammad Abbas Shushtari, Sunnis “did not accept the absolute Caliphate of Ali, which the Shia call to prayer proclaims, and that a Sunni could

³⁷ Ibid., 128.

³⁸ Ibid., 231.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 232.

only pray hypocritically at a Shii mosque.”⁴¹ The same issues seemed to appear repeatedly through changing political and societal structures.

Eventually, when the British came to control India, they had to step in to prevent an increase in violence. When threatened with annexation by the British, Awadh began giving Sunnis higher government positions and patronage.⁴² Britain’s carrot-and-stick approach towards an elusive peace between Sunnis and Shias soon transformed theological differences into political ones. The environment and system created under the British to “manage” the state of Awad was eventually carried over to Pakistan upon its creation.

Conclusion

An examination of the origins of the Sunni Shia divide is critical to understanding the present day conflict in the northern areas of Pakistan. The first reason is that Shiism has a diverse theological and geographical history, especially the fact that it is not a purely Persian phenomenon but draws its roots to Arabs lands, language and scholars. Extremists and proponents of sectarianism overlook such overlaps in history to try to “other” certain groups. Secondly, theological differences have to be understood in order to see how powerful a role religion plays in the memory and actions of opposing groups. Understanding the nuances of each faith group allows for more effective solutions on the path to peacebuilding.

The spread of Shiism, while encountering intense smear campaigns, did not create the type of hostility we see today in the northern areas of Pakistan. Sunni rulers created political campaigns to marginalize the population but there were limits; bloody rampage

⁴¹ Ibid., 243.

⁴² Ibid.

(as is the situation today) was not a common weapon. Accordingly, the ability of Shiism to spread from Arab lands to Persian-speaking lands demonstrates a type of tolerance of Shia beliefs and ways in the centuries following Prophet Muhammad.

This chapter has shown how the theology of Shiism developed in Arab lands, and later evolved under various rulers and empires to its current state. Debates and discussions in various time periods have shown how Shiism survived despite centuries of pushback from Sunni majority groups from Iran to India. The narrative of Shiism in India is important to consider due to its cultural similarities with the Muslims who migrated from India to Pakistan. Ultimately, Shiism has to be studied separately as religion before we see it meet with politics and international relations. The next chapter will discuss the consolidation of Iran into a modern Shia political state.

CHAPTER TWO

REVOLUTION: THE SHAPING OF IRAN'S SHIA POLITICAL IDENTITY

The shaping of national identity, in many cases, involves boundaries and the expectation that “boundaries of identity will affect who is accepted as part of the community, and who is excluded as ‘the other.’”¹ While the Sunni-Shia conflict finds a foundation for its ‘othering’ in this theory, there is still potential for nationalism to become a tool for unity. Herbert C. Kelman asserts that identities are “negotiable” and therefore can be adjusted towards a peaceful solution to a situation.² Therefore, although Shiism has always existed as a minority faith group, it was still able to find its way to Sunni Mughal-ruled India-due to its negotiable” identity.

Shiism could not escape its fate of attaining a political identity. It met that fate in the period leading up to the Islamic Revolution in 1979. The previous chapter provided an overview of the theological origins of the Sunni-Shia divide in order to understand what factors are being emphasized about faith in today’s sectarian conflict. In this chapter, I will show how revolutionary Iran came to define Shiism as not just a religious, but an overarching national identity in the modern era. I will also provide a discussion of the contribution of Marxism to Iran’s burgeoning political identity. This will be followed by a discussion of the creation of identity as a result of the export of the Revolution.

¹ Frank Bechhofer and David McCrone, eds. “National Identity, Nationalism, and Constitutional Change,” *Palgrave MacMillan* (2009): 15, accessed October 3, 2014, http://www.law.ed.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/35939/chap1_intro.pdf.

² Herbert C. Kelman, "Negotiating National Identity and Self-Determination in Ethnic Conflicts: The Choice Between Pluralism and Ethnic Cleansing," *Negotiation Journal* 13, no. 4 (1997): 331, accessed November 1, 2014, http://scholar.harvard.edu/hckelman/files/Negotiating_Natl_Identity_1997.pdf.

The building blocks of an Iranian-Shia political identity were laid out in instances like the establishment of the Friday congregational prayer in the 18th century.³ The discussions and debates surrounding this prayer were controversial because leading a prayer would mean that someone would be attempting to take the place of the Hidden Imam. They reflected a psyche that was trying to balance a world that required temporal order with a divine mandate that could not be compromised.

According to Vali Nasr, tradition dictates that the marriage of Iran and Shiism began with the marriage of Imam Husayn and the daughter of the last Persian Sassanid King.⁴ However, Nasr notes that Iran and Shiism were mere acquaintances until the Safavid Dynasty put its official stamp on the religion in the 16th century.⁵

According to the Shia doctrine that there could not be a legitimate government in the absence of the Imam, the Shias under the Safavid Empire had few ambitions in terms of a government. While they were passive towards the governance of the Safavid Dynasty, the loose governing structure worked well for them: they enjoyed the implementation of Sharia law, Shia scholarship, and overall freedom to practice their faith. This new status for Shias meant the emergence of a new theory for reconciling the temporal and the divine:

According to this theory, Shia ulama would not recognize the Safavid monarchy as truly legitimate but would bless it as the most desirable form of government during the period of waiting. Shia Shahs would protect and propagate the faith, ensuring that it would prosper in anticipation of the coming of the Twelfth Imam.⁶

³ J.R.I. Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shi'ism in Iraq and Iran: Religion and State in Awadh 1722-1859* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 172.

⁴ Vali Nasr, *The Shia Revival* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2006), 63.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

Thus the Safavids had carved out a comfortable space for government within the Shia religion. Later dynasties also accommodated Shiism, but they never catapulted the religion to one of a dominant status.⁷ This arrangement sufficed for five hundred years, and Shiism and the Safavid Dynasty have been linked together ever since.

Colonial Encounters

The onset of colonialism in the lands of the Ottoman Empire, and the subsequent formation of nation-states, called for many minority groups to unify under the banner of national secularism. This arrangement became a potential viable safety net for Shias because it allowed for an “inclusive identity” which created a space to practice their religion without the disturbance of the state.⁸ It also meant that Shias embraced a dual identity with national secularism being at the forefront. Meanwhile, Shias within Iran, with their majority status, could leave national secularism out of their identity.

Colonialism’s production of artificial nation-states was a threat for ulama and eventually a threat for the masses who envisioned a pan-Islamic state. Salamey and Othman assert that Iran’s identity was shaped by the reaction to this threat: “... Shiism in Iran, along with the clerical leadership, has come to establish a rejectionist ideological discourse imprinted upon post-revolution Iranian state and society.”⁹ The rejectionist

⁷ Nasr, *The Shia Revival*, 79.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁹ Imad Salamey and Zanoobia Othman, “Shia Revival and Welayat Al-Faqih in the Making of Iranian Foreign Policy,” *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 12, no. 2 (2011): 201, accessed December 1, 2014, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/21567689.2011.591983>

discourse came to be a main feature of Shia-Iranian identity, as anything proposed by the West became antithetical to Iran's values as both spiritually and politically.

Yet Shia enclaves remained weak, and majority Sunni regions were especially active in marginalizing Shia voices. It remained thus that "Shias whose mother tongue is Arabic are not by that fact equal members of the Arab nation."¹⁰ This inequality would weave through most of the Shia communities around the Middle East. This attitude further aligned Shiism with Iran and Persian-speaking populations rather than Arab ones and set the tone for the divide on political lines.

Marxism in Iran

The formation of Iran's political identity began to accumulate elements of other ideologies, such as the Leftist movement. A discussion of the theory of this movement is important to understand the reasons for its adoption by some of the Iranian populace. Karl Marx (1818-1883) was a revolutionary thinker who believed that class struggle was the basis of human history.¹¹ He and his contemporary Fredrick Engalls co-wrote *The Communist Manifesto*, which laid out the principles of communism and the hopes for the equality of the working class.¹² In essence, for Marxism to prevail, "the underclasses must own the means of production--not the government nor the police force."¹³ This strand of

¹⁰ Nasr, *The Shia Revival*, 92.

¹¹ "Karl Marx," *BBC History*, accessed September 5, 2014, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/marx_karl.shtml.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Michael Delahoyde, "Marxist Criticism," *Introduction to Literature: Marxism*, accessed September 7, 2014, <http://public.wsu.edu/~delahoyd/marxist.crit.html>.

thinking appeared to be the right formula to save Iran from the Shah's regime. While volatile, Marxism would continue to remain an alternative to the masses.

Marxism spread into Iran when the monarchy of the Qajar Dynasty was nearing the end of its reign in the early 19th century.¹⁴ Some Iranians had encountered and become inspired by communist ideals in the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia.¹⁵ The masses were also dismayed with the Shah's autocracy and fidelity to Western powers and were looking to establish a parliament.¹⁶ Iran became host to one of the world's earliest unions of printers and telegraphers, contributing to the rise of the Iranian Left.¹⁷ Moghadam outlines four phases encompassing the history of the formation of the Left in Iran. The first phase (1906-1937) saw the visibility of the working class and emergence of labor unions; the second phase (1941-1953) was a time when these groups became highly influential and gained popularity in Asia; the third phase (1954-1970) consisted of Reza Shah Pahlavi's close ties with the West and the emergence of outspoken leaders like the future Ayatollah Rookhollah Khomeini; the fourth phase (1970-1978) culminated with a formation of militant-leftist groups that were finally ready to take on the imperialist regime of Reza Shah Pahlavi.¹⁸

Leftist and the Islamically-inspired parties were in agreement when it came to anti-imperialist resistance. However, the Shah's repression of the Leftist parties for about a

¹⁴ Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto* (London: Communist Manifesto, 1848).

¹⁵ Ali Mirsepassi-Ashtiani and Valentine M. Moghadam, "The Left and Political Islam in Iran: A Retrospect and Prospects," *Radical History Review* (Fall 1991): 29, accessed September 5, 2014, <http://public.wsu.edu/~delahoyd/marxist.crit.html>.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 31.

period of twenty-five years left the movement weak in terms of developing a political strategy.¹⁹ Ultimately, Nasr writes, “The Shia ulama had become Iran’s first line of defense and loudest spokesmen against colonialism.”²⁰

The spread of Marxism in the days before the Revolution revealed that secular nationalism, even with the appeal of the empowerment of the working classes, was not strong enough to compete with the call of religion. Moghadam states that along with the Leftists, “[M]any liberal, progressive, and radical groups and individuals did not recognize the anti-democratic, anti-secular, and reactionary nature of political Islam...”²¹ Furthermore, Leftist strategy did not calculate the goals of political Islam in Iran. Moghadam observes, “The theoretical paradigm that the Left had adopted did not permit it to see the realities of political Islam and the course of events in Iran.”²² Taking this into consideration, clerics were then able to articulate Shia principles, projecting an oppositional identity to Leftist ideology.

Theda Skocpol claims that the Iranian revolution “was made through a set of cultural and organizational forms thoroughly socially embedded in the urban communal enclaves that became the centers of popular resistance to the Shah.”²³ One of those organizational forms was through the clerical network, where Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini took advantage of the waning power of the 2,500 year monarchy under the Shah

¹⁹ Ibid., 33.

²⁰ Nasr, *The Shia Revival*, 22.

²¹ Mirsepassi and Moghadam, “The Left and Political Islam in Iran,” 35.

²² Ibid, 36.

²³ Theda Skocpol, “Rentier State and Shi’a Islam in the Iranian Revolution,” *Theory and Society* 11.3 (1982): 275.

and posed Islam as an alternative to the Shah and the failing economy.²⁴ With regard to the involvement of the Leftists, Andrew Clack, writes of Parviz, who “represents a leftist who understands the virtue of Islam. He admits that kingship is un-Islamic, and adds that Marxism could never function perfectly in Iran.”²⁵ It was in this environment that Khomeini and like-minded figures could plan for a new system to govern Iran. As far as Shiism serving as an oppositional identity and resource for revolution, Clack writes that Khomeini “established Shi’ism as the only alternative, and even quasi-Marxists like Parviz bought into his ideology.”²⁶ Thus, while Leftist ideals certainly provided a strong basis for the overturn of the government, there was a fundamental piece that was missing with regard to a long-lasting dedication to the cause- an Islamic ideology that would potentially complement the ownership of means of production by the people.

Sowing the Seeds of Revolution

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini’s pivotal work, *Hukumat-e-Islami*, or Islamic Government, provided a new formula for Islamic leadership that revitalized the role of the ulama.²⁷ He posited that since the ulama were experts in Islam, and God intended an Islamic government, it would follow that this could “now be properly performed only if they [the ulama] ruled.”²⁸ This concept, called *Vilayat-e-Faqih*, was opposed by many as it went against the essence of the Shia principle of no legitimate authority without an Imam.

²⁴Andrew Clack, "Ayatollah Khomeini: The Making of a Revolution." *Compass: A Journal of Leadership and Service* XV (Spring 2013): 8.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Nasr, *The Shia Revival*, 125.

²⁸ Ibid.

Yet Khomeini prevailed, not only in popularizing the concept, but also in being called Imam by his followers.²⁹ He had been speaking out against the status quo from exile in Najaf, but soon the seat of authority in Iran. He was developing a following that would dramatically change the way people thought about and practiced Shiism.

Khomeini's ideas proliferated with such impassioned religious vocabulary that the revolution began to be referred to in some circles as the return of the Twelfth Imam.³⁰ "Throughout the revolution, Khomeini's followers used messianic symbols and language to give him an aura of power."³¹ The rhetoric created a world of good and evil, and as defenders of the faith, Iranians were also deemed either good or evil depending on their dedication to the cause. This creation of identity fused together Iranian nationalism with religious passion. By redefining the revolution as a second Karbala, Khomeini's followers became even more eager to be a part of the sacrifice and have a chance to mourn and express guilt about the martyrdom of Imam Husayn.

As the exoteric Revolution rocked the streets of Iran, an esoteric revolution was taking place within Islam under Khomeini. Shias, under Khomeini's leadership were fighting for the right to practice their faith and live their lives on their own terms, which meant performing their rituals with the utmost enthusiasm and glory. For Khomeini however, these rituals fell lower in priority when compared with the implementation of Islamic law. The "Karbala II" that the Iranian people had envisioned was quickly being transformed into another form of Shiism, a form where, "There were no grand observations

²⁹ Ibid., 130.

³⁰ Ibid., 131.

³¹ Ibid.

of Ashoura presided over by Khomeini...In truth Khomeini and his coterie discouraged popular Shia piety, and even more, Shia traditions.”³² Nasr describes this phenomenon as Shia fundamentalism, where we see a purging of rituals like prohibiting visitation of the shrines of Imams and Ashura rituals. Nasr writes, “Shia fundamentalism appealed to Shia identity but did not draw on Shia spirituality.”³³ The irony can be found in the fact that while Khomeini had legitimized and popularized the position of vilayat-e-faqih as a spiritual concept, it actually created a tangible Shia political identity. In aspiring to this end, Khomeini went a step further to gain regional legitimacy by vying for the pan-Islamic cause as one that could appeal to Sunni regional actors as well.³⁴ Thus he turned to secular issues, particularly colonialism. Despite the quest for unity though, Shia political identity became an oppositional identity- anti-Shah, anti-imperialist, and anti-spiritual.

Identity Formation through Export of the Revolution

When it came time to export the Iranian Revolution to other countries, the logical strategy appeared to be an appeal to working class struggles in Arab nations and beyond, like Afghanistan and Pakistan. However, those efforts brought little benefit. Hafizullah Emadi writes, “The Iranian leadership improved the country's ties with the Third World and paid cursory attention to national liberation struggle”³⁵ Emadi’s focuses on the radicalization of the Shiites in Afghanistan, one of the first exporting experiments that came under the reign of Khomeini.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., 137.

³⁵ Ibid.

Dr. Kayhan Barzegar observes as follows:

Revolutions either expand to export their ideologies or preserve themselves from the outside world. The 1979 Islamic revolution of Iran is no exception. A careful reading of Iran's actions in the region shows how and why Iran has shifted its policies to meet the latter aim.³⁶

Nasser Saghafi-Ameri echoes Barzegar's thoughts, asserting that the radical fervor to topple the status quo of various Muslim nations was taken over by the "moderates" in the shaping of foreign policy.³⁷ Iran has often come back to practical means to carry out foreign policy objectives, rather than ideological ones. The factors of imperial resistance and Leftist politics in terms of Iran's own nation-building and the Revolution's export potential brought Shiite Islam to the forefront of resistance struggles. Under Khomeini, Shiism became a political identity in both Afghanistan and Iran, albeit remaining a minority identity. Given this strategy and Iran's choice to isolate itself, the goals of exporting the Iranian Revolution dimmed in the shadow of the realistic goals of foreign policy. The following examples of Afghanistan and Lebanon provide a look at the attempt of Iran to export the Iranian Revolution to these countries and the challenges it encountered upon this attempt to grow and expand Shia identity.

The Question of Afghanistan for Shias

From the sixteenth century, Afghanistan and Iran enjoyed cordial relations, even though Afghanistan was and remains a Sunni-majority nation. Nonetheless, Shiites in

³⁶Kayhan Barzegar, "The Geopolitical Factor in Iran's Foreign Policy," *Middle East Institute Viewpoints: The Iranian Revolution at 30*: 136, accessed September 30, 2014, <http://www.mei.edu/sites/default/files/publications/2009.01.The%20Iranian%20Revolution%20at%2030.pdf>

³⁷ Nasser Saghafi-Ameri, "Iranian Foreign Policy: Concurrence of Ideology and Pragmatism," *Middle East Institute Viewpoints: The Iranian Revolution at 30*: 134, accessed September 30, 2014, <http://www.mei.edu/sites/default/files/publications/2009.01.The%20Iranian%20Revolution%20at%2030.pdf>.

Afghanistan looked to Iran for religious guidance. In the time of the Shah, Afghan Shias did not receive support from him with regard to a dispute with Pakistan over Pashtunistan, which ultimately led them to look to the Soviet Union for support. In the second round of talks of cooperation with Iran, the Shah pledged money to improve commerce and also mediated another conflict between Afghanistan and Pakistan regarding Pashtunistan boundaries. The back and forth relationship in the time of the Shah shows that Iran was trying to look past Sunni- Shia differences in order to stabilize the region and enhance relations with its neighbors. However, the relationship turned sour when a pro-Soviet party declared a coup of Kabul and called for democracy. The pro-Soviet party did not realize, however, that the powerful clerical class was ready to continue the struggle.

In September 1979, after the assassination of influential Shiite figures in the pro-Soviet Kabul government, Shiites of the Hazara community in Afghanistan convened to “reach a consensus on how the Hazara region should be administered after government forces and state officials were forced to flee the region.”³⁸ This convening was organized by landowning clerics who gave an edict to allow for an uprising on Kabul, as well as the development of a full-scale structure to support the Shiite resistance. When Afghan President Babrak Karmal, a friend of the Soviet Union, extended a hand of friendship to Iran, Iran refused on grounds of defending an Islamic government.³⁹ However, the decision of Khomeini to extend a hand to the plight of the Hazara Shia in Afghanistan was one that came from a desire to send the Revolution outside of its borders and to expand its combined

³⁸ Hafizullah Emadi, “Exporting Iran’s Revolution: The Radicalization of the Shiite Movement in Afghanistan,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 31, no. 1 (Jan., 1995): 6, accessed September 10, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.library.georgetown.edu/stable/4283695>.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

Shiite-Iranian identity, not just Shia identity. Yet there was one more element to add to this identity: allegiance to no other authority but Khomeini himself. Since the onset of the Taliban regime, the ethnic cleansing of the Shia Hazaras has increased dramatically in Afghanistan, leading to even more tension with Iran.

The possibility of peace between Sunnis and Shias in the FATA is profoundly connected to the governance and security activities of Afghanistan. Aside from the strong tribal and familial bonds across borders, the governments of both countries have been involved in an epic dispute about how to defeat the militancy once and for all. However, the blame-game between the two countries has certainly not been absent from this dispute. In 2003, the United States defeated the Taliban government, sending many of the Taliban members across the border to take refuge in FATA.⁴⁰

Before 9/11, Al Qaeda training grounds were rampant all over Afghanistan, but were soon moved to Pakistan after U.S. forces were deployed. Delving further into history, Pakistan's policy on Afghanistan has centered on keeping an Islamic agenda on the Afghan table. Today, the Taliban in Pakistan who are hiding out continue to pursue a Taliban re-taking of the Afghan government.

Lebanese Shiism and its Impact on Iran

The modern history of Shiites in Lebanon is yet another example of variable political identities of Shiites. With regard to Shiites in Lebanon, some scholars say they arrived in the 7th century with the expulsion of a supporter of Ali, Jabal Amil, to Lebanon,

⁴⁰ Ashley J Tellis, "Reconciling With the Taliban? Toward an Alternative Grand Strategy in Afghanistan," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace* (2009): 2, accessed September 21, 2014, http://carnegieendowment.org/files/reconciling_with_taliban.pdf

while others believe they came there in the 11th century.⁴¹ Originally settled in Mount Lebanon, Shiites moved to the suburbs of Beirut by the 1960s.⁴² Despite the movement, the pattern of marginalization continued for Shiites in the Sunni majority nation, even at Lebanon's independence from France in 1943.⁴³

On the eve of Revolution, Shiites existing at the periphery of the government were mainly members of the Communist Party in Lebanon. Their revolutionary thirst was quenched by the leadership of cleric Musa al-Sadr who helped bring about a communal identity for the Lebanese Shia, as well as political mobilization.⁴⁴ At the same time, he was dismissive of involvement in Communist parties, and steered young Shiites to a confessional expression of their religion. Yusri Hazran writes, "The Shi'ites of Lebanon and Iraq, imitating other peripheral communities in the Arab world, have been the staunchest advocates of modernizing the political mechanisms of their countries."⁴⁵ For al-Sadr, the passion toward Arab nationalism had to be directed towards the Shia cause. In this way, Shiites could once again gain a stronghold and become visible socially and politically. This specific Lebanese Shiism seemed a viable example of an export of Khomeini's Revolution.

⁴¹ Yusri Hazran, "The Rise of Politicized Shi'ite Religiosity and the Territorial State in Iraq and Lebanon," *Middle East Journal* 64, no. 4 (autumn 2010): 524, accessed September 6, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40926498> .

⁴² *Ibid.*, 526.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 533.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 539.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 537.

Hezbollah (“Party of God”) was created in 1982 in response to the invasion of Lebanon by Israel. Israel’s reason for invasion was the attempted assassination of Israel’s ambassador to the United Kingdom by Hezbollah.⁴⁶ Later on, Hezbollah’s goals turned to the establishment of an Islamic State, with the plan was to be carried out by performing social services for the community and creating an armed militia. The vision however brought forth special hostility towards pan-Arabism. The leaders of the party were clerics who had studied in Najaf, and gave allegiance to Khomeini. Thus, the pursuit of an Islamic state was a natural goal for the party.

Throughout the 1980s, Hezbollah fought against Israelis with support from Iran and Syria, and developed a comprehensive program for resistance. The civil war of the 1990s dramatically changed the modus operandi of Hezbollah to one of participation in Lebanese politics, rather than opposition. “Hezbollah leaders recognized that even though they were well-armed and relatively stronger than the fledgling new government, the group still needed recognition of the organization by the existing political institutions in Lebanon.”⁴⁷ The party even conceded to giving up the cause of the Islamic state for recognition and legitimacy in the system.⁴⁸ Hezbollah’s operations appeared a successful project in the eyes of Iran, mainly for exporting the Revolution and cementing a Shia identity. The only major issues that served as a disadvantage for the group was its designation as a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the U.S. State Department in October of 1997. In 2000, Hezbollah’s return

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Krista E. Wiegand, “Reformation of a Terrorist Group: Hezbollah as a Lebanese Political Party,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 32, no. 8 (2009): 364, accessed October 1, 2014, DOI: 10.1080/10576100903039320 674.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

to the use of violence and attacks over disputed territory with Israel brought condemnation from the international community. The example of Hezbollah as a potentially successful export of the Iranian Revolution is one that shows the rapidly changing identity of Lebanese, from militant operatives to accommodating to cooperative citizens. As a group that tried to emulate the Revolution, such adaptation veered from the track, but it allowed for Shiism to be recognized and legitimized in the Sunni majority government. Despite these efforts however, Hezbollah's militancy rendered them lower in rank in the eyes of Sunnis. This example can be regarded as an export failure because Shia voices were not only marginalized but also criminalized.

The aforementioned examples of the attempted export of the Iranian Revolution to places like Afghanistan and Lebanon show the challenges and limitations faced by Iran in gaining support from other countries and building an Islamic state. When Iran extended a hand of friendship to the Hazara Shias of Afghanistan but did not accept that same hand from Afghan government, it demonstrated that the great ambition to export the Revolution would be limited by its own adherence to the ideology of political Islam. In Lebanon, Hezbollah's public service and transformation from a fringe group to a political participant showed the flexibility of a system that was inspired by the Iranian Revolution. The group's later return to violence however, renders the event a failed attempt. This attempt to export the Revolution would later impact Iran's relations with Pakistan's Shia minority, where people would grapple with following Imam Khomeini or creating their own Shia identity.

Conclusion

Shiism and politics have had a complicated relationship, but Shiism has historically accommodated a political identity. The creation of Iran's political identity required people to respond to Islam and the call for an Islamic government. Such responses ranged from acceptance of Shia participation to outright defiance, protest, and violent behavior. The development of Shia identity was accommodated by the Safavid Dynasty and was later shaped by events around the Arab World. In Iran, Shia political identity fell under the close guardianship of the ulama. With Ayatollah Khomeini, Shiism changed from a rather quietist struggle to one of mass resistance and fight for a government inspired by the teachings of the Shia interpretation of Islam.

This chapter provided a look at the events and resources that helped bring about Imam Khomeini and the Islamic Republic to power; an event that brought Shiism out in to the competitive ring with Sunni nations as well as other ideologies like secularism and Marxism. Iran's projects in exporting its Islamic Revolution included Afghanistan and Lebanon, which showed how Shiism was adaptable in other countries. However, the fervor did not last, and export was considered a failure. Nonetheless, the history and examples of export show that Shiism did take on a political identity that operated successfully in the nation-state of Iran. The impact of the nation-state on other nations with Shia populations in other nations, like Pakistan, will be explored in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

EXACERBATION OF SECTARIANISM IN PAKISTAN'S NORTHERN TRIBAL REGIONS

Over the last fifty years, sectarianism through political motivations has become a defining feature of the Arab and Muslim world. However, the years after 9/11 have led to a dramatic rise in sectarianism in the border areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan. The increase in violence has especially affected the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan (FATA). Situated on the shared porous border of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, the FATA has become the central point for Shia-Sunni violence, not just for Pakistan, but for the Central and South Asian region. This area has also seen an influx of refugees and immigrants since the days of the Cold War, but that demographic has since shifted from refugees to armed militants looking for a “safe haven.”¹ While most analysts and media sources portray Pakistan and the Arab world as the centers of extremism, they fail to discuss how Iran has contributed to the rise of sectarianism in the FATA.

This chapter will look at Iran's role in Pakistan's Sunni-Shia conflict by first providing a brief overview of the “Islamization” policies set forth by General Zia Ul-Haq that impacted the survival of minorities. This discussion will be followed by the impact of those policies to tribal society in the FATA region and their relations with the Pakistani government. The final part of the discussion will analyze Iran's connections to minority groups in the FATA and how it has contributed to sectarianism in the region by funding

¹ Barack Obama, “The Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan,” *Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation On the Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan*, December 1, 2009, Eisenhower Hall Theatre, United States Military Academy at West Point, New York, 1.

and supporting terrorist organizations. I will present the example of the Shia Hazara in Pakistan's Balochistan province as an example of Iran's interactions with Shias in Pakistan.

The Islamic Revolution and the Clash with Pakistan

The year 1979 was the year of two major world events: The Islamic Revolution in Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. With these two events, the link between Iran and Pakistan transformed from one of recognition and goodwill to a strategic relationship that now carried the burden of regional stability. In contrast with prior dealings, expressions of goodwill (especially from the time of the Shah), became questionable when Pakistan decided to back the Arab states in light of the presence of the United States alliance with Saudi Arabia.² Further complications arose with the involvement of Afghanistan, a nation that had also been part of the Persian Empire, and which shared ethnic, linguistic and religious history with both Iran and Pakistan.³

Starting in 1979, as Iran underwent the pangs of the Revolution, Pakistan had to face the challenge of a neighboring ruler who could not tolerate the secularism that Pakistan had taken on as a political project. This was an especially difficult challenge due to the sizeable proportion of Shias (20 percent) that resided in Pakistan. Harsh Pant notes that Pakistan now had to deal with the enemy of its neighbor, the United States: "Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's anti-American posture worried the Pakistani authorities, as did the prospect of any export to Pakistan of Khomeini's radical views."⁴ Planning for the worst,

² Harsh V. Pant, "Pakistan and Iran's Dysfunctional Relationship," *Middle East Quarterly* (Spring 2009).

³ "Exporting Iran's Revolution: The Radicalization of the Shiite Movement in Afghanistan," *Middle Eastern Studies* 31, no. 1 (Jan., 1995): 385, accessed September 10, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.library.georgetown.edu/stable/4283695>.

⁴ Pant, "Pakistan."

Zia-ul-Haq and his government went on to create anti-Shia sects such as the Deobandi and Ahl-e-Hadith in Pakistan to counterbalance the threat of Shiism in the nation.

In the quest to protect themselves, Shia groups then created their own terrorist groups, such as the Sipah-e-Muhammad, which led to a proliferation of similar groups and continued cycles of the violence occurring today. A more detailed look at the terrorist organizations will be provided in later sections.

History of Tribes in Pakistan and Afghanistan

The Pakhtun tribes of the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) have long been a formidable force, going back to the days of the Mughal Empire of India. In the height of the reign of the Mughal Empire in the 1500s, the city of Kabul was one of the most strategic and outermost points of the empire. Yet, whether it was the Persians or the Mughals controlling the majority, the cities of Kabul, Kandahar, and Herat remained in the hands of the Pashtun tribes. When the British entered into rule, they designated the northern tribal areas as a buffer zone, which continued control of the northwest region vis-a-vis the tribes.⁵ Pakistan officially gained the NWFP region through a referendum in July 1947. After that acquisition, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) were established. Today, the FATA consists of seven major tribes: Khyber, Kurram, Orakzai, Mohmand, Bajaur, North Waziristan, and South Waziristan- all known as the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. They have sub-tribes with their own customs and traditions, as well as Sunni and Shia divides. While a majority of the tribes follow the Sunni sect, a small group of Shias reside in the Parrot's

⁵ Bijan Omrani, "History and Peoples of the Afghan-Pakistan Border," *Asian Affairs* 40, no. 2 (June 2009): 177, accessed September 20, 2014, <http://www.tandfonline.com.proxy.library.georgetown.edu/doi/full/10.1080/03068370902871508>.

Beak area of Parachinar in the Kurram Agency.⁶ The last three decades have produced a greater population of young people who are politically, economically, and socially disenfranchised and therefore perfect potential recruits for extremist organizations. During the Soviet Occupation of Afghanistan from 1979 to 1980, Pakistan embraced millions of refugees. Today, there are approximately over 5 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan.⁷ While in some respects this refugee movement unified the Pashtuns across the borders, it also exacerbated governance and security problems in the FATA region. All of these issues have contributed to people looking for alternatives outside of government that can address basic human needs. Many of today's violent militants started off providing those basic services to disenfranchised populations.

In terms of leadership, the tribal head was historically a land-owning, elder *malik* who was followed by lower-ranking tribe members.⁸ Loyalty to the *malik* meant protection, which led to a relative peace amongst the tribes. The subsequent takeover by the Taliban empowered younger members of the tribes, and protection was no longer monopolized by the *maliks*.⁹ Such a change caused not only conflict between generations, but also took away any relative peace that had been felt by the tribes in the older arrangement. It is important to note however, that the Taliban structure did not *replace* the tribal structure;

⁶ Shuja Nawaz, "FATA-A Most Dangerous Place: Meeting the Challenge of Militancy and Terror in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan," *Center for Strategic and International Studies* (January 2009): 9, accessed September 12, 2014, http://csis.org/files/media/isis/pubs/081218_nawaz_fata_web.pdf.

⁷"Afghan Refugees in Pakistan," *United States Department of State*, accessed September 15, 2014, <http://www.state.gov/j/prm/policyissues/issues/protracted/countries/157399.htm>.

⁸ Nawaz, FATA, 14.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 21.

rather it came in as a disruptive alternative disruption, which has worsened an already broken-down lifestyle in the FATA.

As far as relations between the tribes themselves, Nasreen Ghufuran states that relations were fairly jovial before the Soviet invasion:

The tribes in FATA and the Pakistani government had generally coexisted peacefully, but the Soviet invasion fractured their traditional socioeconomic and power structures, resulting in an imbalance that was utilized by the *jihadis* for gaining influence....¹⁰

The aftermath of the Soviet “experience” shifted the gears and created hostilities between the tribes themselves at one level, and then with the Pakistani government at another level.

The administration of the semi-autonomous region rests under the archaic 1901 Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) which was set up by the British to carry out its colonial prerogatives. This law upheld “consensus-based decision-making through tribal *jirgas*, permitted collective punishment, and provided extraordinary discretionary powers to the central government— today exercised by the governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP)...”¹¹ This body was simply a way to manage inter-tribal conflict but was not a long-term solution to the problem of tribal clashes. Later on, similar regulations like the establishment of the FATA Secretariat in Peshawar in 2006 to coordinate development and political management and the extension of the Political Parties Act to the FATA in 2011 to allow candidates to contest elections on a party basis, were merely cosmetic gestures as well. The

¹⁰ Nasreen Ghufuran, “Pushtun Ethnonationalism and the Taliban Insurgency in the Northwest Frontier Province of Pakistan,” *Asian Survey* 49, no. 6 (2009): 1106, accessed September 1, 2014, <http://www.ucpressjournals.com/reprintInfo.asp>.

¹¹ Shuja Ali Malik and Joshua T. White, “Governance Reforms in Pakistan’s Tribal Areas,” *United States Institute of Peace Brief* 135 (October 15, 2012): 1, accessed August 10, 2014, <http://www.usip.org/files/resources/PB-135.pdf>.

history of failed rules and regulations governing tribes so far is demonstrative of the absence of law and order that became a source of fuel for extremist organizations.

A central issue with regard to the overall conflict involving tribes in Pakistan and Afghanistan has been the Durand Line. This boundary has been a source of great dispute since the time of the British Raj. In 1893, the British created the Durand Line to formally set the boundaries of the British Indian Empire. What they ignored was that this boundary cut right through Pashtun territory and tribal settlements, damaging tribal links and dividing the “Pashtunistan” that these tribes had hoped to achieve.¹² The issues around this border have impacted the relationship between the tribes and both the governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan, adding another element to sectarian tensions.

The FATA’s semi-autonomous status has meant that the Pakistani government has little power to govern there, and historically, some tribes have dismissed Pakistan’s attempts to bring such governance.¹³ As violence and tensions magnify in the northern Punjab area, Nawaz Sharif has tried to fight off violent perpetrators; but the task is difficult considering that militant Taliban operatives receive funding by the Pakistani military and seek refuge in Afghanistan.¹⁴ When General Pervez Musharraf staged a coup in 1999, he chose to continue relations with the Taliban as a force to balance any threat from India. That decision also meant appeasing the Arabs who supported the Arab and simultaneously upsetting their Iranian neighbors who saw the Taliban as arch enemies.

¹² Ibid., 22.

¹³ Nawaz, FATA, 12.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Pakistan: Islamization and Minority Rights

Pakistan is the site of the second largest Shia population in the world.¹⁵ Optimists have regarded it as a nation full of potential: “Under the constitution of Pakistan the country is described as an Islamic Republic and one of its directive principles requires the promotion of Muslim unity.”¹⁶ The nation is home to Sunnis, Shias, Christians, and Hindus, living in various parts of the region since before partition. Accordingly, a variety of languages exist, including Urdu, Punjabi, Siraiki, Pashtu, Sindhi and English. The nation is made up of four provinces: Sindh, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan. The region that borders Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan is the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), an area that has become the subject of international focus related to security threats as it serves as a corridor to Afghanistan.¹⁷

Pakistan has experienced a line of military rulers starting from Ayub Khan who came into power in 1958 during the existence of East and West Pakistan. He was followed by Yahya Khan.¹⁸ After the split of West Pakistan from East Pakistan (which became

¹⁵ Hassan Abbas, “Shiism and Sectarian Conflict in Pakistan: Identity Politics, Iranian Influence, and Tit-for-Tat Violence,” *Combating Terrorism Center Occasional Paper Series* (September 22, 2010): 7, accessed September 9, 2014, <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/CTC-OP-Abbas-21-September.pdf>.

¹⁶ Khalida Qureshi, “Pakistan and Iran: A Study in Neighborly Diplomacy,” *Pakistan Horizon* 21, no. 1 (First Quarter, 1968): 34, accessed September 12, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41392904>.

¹⁷ Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah, “Political Reforms in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan (FATA): Will it End the Current Militancy?” *Heidelberg Papers in South Asian and Comparative Politics* 64 (January 2012): 2, accessed September 10, 2014, http://archiv.ub.uniheidelberg.de/volltextserver/13063/1/Heidelberg_Papers_64_Ali_Shah.pdf.

¹⁸ M.A. Shah, “Sectarianism: A Threat to Human Security: A Case Study of Pakistan,” *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 94, no. 382: 615 (October 2005), accessed September 9, 2014, <http://www.tandfonline.com.proxy.library.georgetown.edu/doi/full/10.1080/00358530500303627#.VBXrufldWSo>.

Bangladesh), Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) took and was later ousted by his own appointed General, Zia-ul-Haq, who instituted some of the most dangerous and divisive laws in Pakistani history.

While most trace the institutionally-based discrimination of minorities to the administration of General Zia-ul-Haq (1977-1988), early signs of an overarching Islamic “tone” came from Jinnah himself. Bales identifies these hints of an Islamic state in a speech given by Jinnah in 1948 at the opening of a state bank. He said he would “... Watch with keenness the work of your research organization in evolving banking practices compatible with Islamic ideals of social and economic life.”¹⁹ Jinnah's stance on Islam as a source of guidance did not appear problematic at the time, because the initial vision was to remove this group from the discriminatory Hindu culture and system. Thus, it was enough to cast a concept as “Islamic,” even if the details had not been worked out.

In 1949, one year after the death of Jinnah, Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan introduced the Objectives Resolution, which clarified Pakistan's foundation and principles. This document was supposed to be a compromise between the ideals of Jinnah's liberal views and the precepts of Islam. Thus, this document conveys that Islam is the guiding principle in carrying out these goals. Objective Number 3 states, “The principles of democracy, freedom, equality, tolerance and social justice, as enunciated by Islam, shall be fully observed.”²⁰ Bales notes here the beginnings of the appeasement of the ulama in

¹⁹ John Bales, “The Vision for Pakistan: Muslim State or Islamic State?” *Occasional Papers in the Study of Islam and Other Faiths* no. 2 (2010): 66, accessed October 23, 2014.

²⁰ “Objectives Resolution of Pakistan,” accessed November 23, 2011, http://www.pakistani.org/pakistan/constitution/annex_objres.html,

terms of the affairs of the nation.²¹ While the involvement of the *ulama* is generally productive for community-building, the voices of extremist clerics seem to have amplified in contemporary Pakistan through this document.

The government put into place certain checks in order to ensure that compliance with Islamic principles. One of the bodies to oversee this task was the Advisory Council of Islamic Ideology (CII). This entity was established on August 1, 1962 under Article 199 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.²² The Advisory Council decided to add the following repugnancy clause in 1962: “No law shall be repugnant to the teachings and requirements of Islam as set out in the Qur’an and Sunnah [actions of the Holy Prophet], and all existing laws shall be brought into conformity therewith.”²³ The broad interpretations of this law set forth the pattern for abuses against those minorities like Shias.

With the Objectives Resolution as a foundational document, the *ulama* needed to personify those goals. They saw Zia-ul-Haq as a suitable leader for Pakistan because of his personal adherence to Islam. As for political groups like the Jamati Islami, who supported Islamization, Zia was also a proper channel “to take the process of Islamization to be a transfer of political power from the secular-minded corrupt elite to the Saliheen (pious Muslims) who... would create conditions conducive for the establishment of the complete *din* (religion).”²⁴ However, Mumtaz Ahmed writes that Zia’s personal piety was no match

²¹ Bales, *The Vision for Pakistan*, 67.

²² Advisory Council of Islamic Ideology, <http://www.cii.gov.pk/> (accessed December 2, 2011).

²³ Pakistan Constitution, pt. IX, art. 227.

²⁴ Mumtaz Ahmad, “Islamic Education in Bangladesh and Pakistan: Trends in Tertiary Institutions,” Executive Summary, *The National Bureau of Asian Research* (April 2009).

for the religio-military establishment that saw Islamization as simply a cosmetic solution.²⁵ Yet, this façade of Islamization by Zia had profound consequences on Sunni-Shia conflict.

Zia's Islamization scheme involved the institution of the Federal Shariat Court to ensure compliance with repugnancy laws- laws that are repugnant to the teachings of Islam.²⁶ In 1984, Martial Law Ordinance XX was passed, adding to Pakistan's Penal Code and Press Publication Ordinance Sections 298-B and 298-C. The ordinances that impact religious minorities are 1) law against blasphemy, 2) a law punishing the defiling of the Qur'an, and 3) a prohibition against insulting the wives, family, or companions of the Prophet of Islam.²⁷ All of these ordinances sought to criminalize practices of minority groups, including the third ordinance which directly affects the practices of Shias who take part in such activities.

The presence of Shia voices in the discussions about "Islamization" pointed to the essential question in the heated debates: which interpretation of Islam would serve to fulfill the goals of the project. The involvement of various Deobandi groups working to leverage Sunni practices as a "revival of Islam" under the guise of superficial religious symbolism strengthened the elite structures and helped legitimize Zia's dictatorship. Through polemical debates, Sunni-dominant policies, and violence perpetrated against Shia groups, the Sunni interpretation became the basis for Sharia and general Islamization policies.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Amjad Khan, "Persecution of the Ahmadiyya Community in Pakistan: An Analysis Under International Law and International Relations," *Harvard Human Rights Journal* 16, (Spring 2003): 226, accessed December 10, 2011, <http://www.law.harvard.edu/students/orgs/hrj/iss16/khan.shtml>.
<http://www.law.harvard.edu/students/orgs/hrj/iss16/khan.shtml>.

²⁷ Ibid., 227.

Zia's policies created a hostile climate that is taking lives by the thousands today. In the decade from 1989 to 1999, Pakistan experienced what Mehtab Ali Shah describes as a "transformation from dictatorship to a fragile and dubious democracy."²⁸ In the 1990s, Prime Ministers Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif saw the growth of the Taliban movement in the region. Taliban members were moving to establish a Wahabi-influenced government in Afghanistan and Pakistan with the goal of excluding and removing Shias from their territory. The Taliban took advantage of the largely ungoverned and fertile tribal regions to execute their vision for an Islamic caliphate by a reign of violence and terror.

In more recent decades, General Pervez Musharraf's policies presented support and protection of Pakistan's minorities. However, dissenters were quick to attack him for favoring one group over another. Behuria writes that Sunnis "would allege that during his rule since October 1999, Musharraf has sidelined most of the senior Sunni officials and appointed Naqvis, Tirmizis, Bokharis and other Shia officials in all key posts."²⁹ While these concessions certainly paved a positive light for Shia upward mobility, Musharraf was not able to shift the general attitude about Shias and other minorities to a favorable one. With Kashmir and jihadi soldiers being a defining feature of Musharraf's reign, he was constantly in a struggle to fight off extremist activity while trying to secure control over Kashmir's borders. This "cherry-picking" strategy failed in terms of the overall goal to eradicate terror in the region. Thus, what appeared to be support for Shias in the political arena was muddled by a concern for Kashmir. Ultimately, this struggle also allowed extremist elements to enter the country from outside of Pakistan.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Behuria, "Sects Within Sect: The Case of Deobandi–Barelvi Encounter in Pakistan," 165.

A major element leading up to today's heightened sectarian clashes also involved Pakistan's archaic Blasphemy laws- ironically laws put in place by the British to restore law and order. Blasphemy laws instituted by the British in the Indian Penal Code in 1860 under Chapter XV, sections 295-298. While they exhibit problems on the surface level as far as free speech and freedom of religion, they also remain a challenge in their application. Pakistan's minorities are equally suffering from the misguided application of these laws. Shias are also victims of these policies as certain customs like cursing of the Caliphs or vociferous expressions of the Shia faith can be deemed as blasphemy in the public square. The Blasphemy Laws have received worldwide attention by the international community, with a movement by the United Nations to either amend or end these laws, but militant voices have limited any movement in that regard.³⁰

These policies have carried out the most damage in the tribal areas of Pakistan, where the porous border, mainly impoverished population, and the fear of militants reigns at large. The next section provides a glance of the factors that made the tribal regions a convenient site for extremists to create the conditions for violent sectarianism.

Pakistan and Iran's Modern Day Relationship

When Pakistan was created, Iran was the first nation to extend recognition and a hand of friendship to its new neighbor. This recognition was followed by membership of both nations into the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) to defend themselves from the Soviets, and the Baghdad Pact in 1955 for joint military training and exercises.³¹ Later on,

³⁰ Robert P. George, "As UN Meets, Apply Pressure Against Blasphemy Laws," *The Christian Science Monitor*, (September 20, 2013), accessed November 4, 2014, <http://www.csmonitor.com/Commentary/Opinion/2013/0920/As-UN-meets-apply-pressure-against-blasphemy-laws>.

³¹ Qureshi, "Pakistan and Iran: A Study in Neighborly Diplomacy," 35.

Iran, Turkey and Pakistan came together for the Regional Cooperation and Development (RCD) scheme in 1964 for economic opportunities.³² Pakistan again gained triumph with Iran's support in attaining parts of Kashmir in the war with India.³³ In the hotbed region of Balochistan in Pakistan, Iranian and Pakistani armies came together to dismantle an alarming separatist movement.³⁴ The cooperation between them in these decades projected a promising future for them as partners at the social, political, and economic levels.

Throughout history, the Shia diaspora has looked to Iran and the Ayatollahs for religious leadership.³⁵ The previous chapter discussed the origins of Pakistan as one envisioned to be the bastion of religious freedom by Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Situated in the periphery, however, the Sunni clerical class was wary of the absence of its version of Islam in governmental affairs and foreign policy. This chapter will look at how that Sunni clerical class was able to mobilize the masses and influence the government to create protection for Sunni citizens while simultaneously delegitimizing Shias.

The Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), was created in 1985 amidst a hostile feudal society in Punjab made up of Shia landholders and Sunni middle classes, during the dictatorship of General Zia-ul-Haq.³⁶ The SSP is associated with several major events in

³² Mehreen Ahmed, "The Stability-Instability Paradox and the Effect of an Iranian Nuclear Weapon on Pakistan's Domestic Stability" (undergraduate thesis, University of Colorado, Boulder, April 10, 2013): 44, accessed November 19, 2014, http://scholar.colorado.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1519&context=honr_theses

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Pant, "Pakistan and Iran's Dysfunctional Relationship."

³⁵ Vali Nasr, *The Shia Revival* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2006), 5.

³⁶ "Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan," *South Asian Terrorism Portal: Institute for Conflict Management*, accessed October 4, 2013, <http://www.satp.org/satporgrp/countries/pakistan/terroristoutfits/Ssp.htm>.

the terror timeline of Pakistan, as it has fought with the Taliban and has “cooperated with the Pakistani intelligence agencies in order to be accepted domestically.”³⁷ Along with the other terrorist group Lashker-e-Jhangvi (LJ), SSP wants to have Shias and Barelvis (followers of a Sunni school that tolerates Sufi practices and veneration of saints) “declared infidels through a constitutional amendment.”³⁸ SSP’s blatant hatred against Shias has shifted the terror groups’ focus from the distant West to fellow Muslims in their own living spaces who happen to have beliefs other than their own theological perspectives.

The Human Rights Commission Report of Pakistan states that approximately “700 Shias were killed and more than 1,000 were injured in more than 200 sectarian terrorist attacks in 2013.”³⁹ As the SSP and like-minded groups have spread throughout the country, Shias have much to fear and few avenues of defense. The situation gets worse for the ethnic Hazaras, with their Turkic features and different language, who are significant targets for the Taliban. In the 1990s, the Sipah-e-Muhammad (SMP) was created in response to such attacks perpetrated by the SSP and other Sunni groups committed to killing Shias.⁴⁰ In response, the militant group Tehreek-e-Jafaria (TJ), was created to protect the rights of Shias through support from Iran; TJ has been fighting to defend Shia constituents but also

³⁷ Frederic Grare, “The Evolution of Sectarian Conflicts in Pakistan and the Ever-Changing Face of Islamic Violence *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* XXX, no. 1 (April 2007): 136, accessed September 2, 2014, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00856400701264068>

³⁸ Ashok K. Behuria, “Sects Within Sect: The Case of Deobandi–Barelvi Encounter in Pakistan,” *Strategic Analysis* 32, no. 1 (February 2008): 61, accessed September 1, 2014, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09700160801886330>.

³⁹ “State of Human Rights in 2013,” *Human Rights Commission of Pakistan* (March 2014): 85, accessed August 3, 2014, <http://www.hrcp-web.org/hrcpweb/report14/AR2013.pdf>.

⁴⁰ Ahmad Khalid Majidyar, “The Shi’ites of Pakistan: A Minority Under Siege,” *American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research* (June 2014): 5, accessed September 10, 2014, http://www.aei.org/files/2014/06/11/-the-shiites-of-pakistan-a-minority-under-siege_094955419328.pdf.

committing attacks against Sunnis.⁴¹ Similarly, the Shias in Balochistan are also targets for extremist Sunni militants, but an added complexity to their issues involves a separatist movement from Pakistan.⁴² With extremist outfits encompassing both sects, as well as external influences from both Iran and Saudi Arabia, there is little hope for the ease of sectarianism in the northern regions of Pakistan. Iran's frequent accusations against Pakistan about mishandling terrorist activity and allowing militants to cross the border has strained relations further in the present day.

The Shia Way in Pakistan

Shia infrastructure in Pakistan was inspired by two factors, the Iranian Revolution of 1979 and the presence of feudal lords in the Punjab province.⁴³ These elements were cornerstones for the spread of Shia culture. As previously discussed, the Iranian Revolution of 1979 called for an end to Western and secular influences over the Iranian people, and an installation of a religious, theocratic state.⁴⁴ For most Shias in Iran, this meant that their interpretation of Islam, Imamia Islam, became the official religion of the state. For the people of Pakistan, however the Iranian Revolution was perceived in two ways: a) the triumph of an Islamic state over secularism or b) the threat of Shiism over the Sunni-dominant region.⁴⁵ Due to Zia-ul-Haq's policies though, the threat of Shiism became a popular perception, especially when Saudi funding began to enter the nation.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Frederic Grare, "Balochistan: The State versus the Nation," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace* (April 2013): 18, accessed September 9, 2013, <http://carnegieendowment.org/files/balochistan.pdf>.

⁴³ Ahmed, thesis, 29.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 45.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 49.

While there was a general spread of Shiism in various part of Pakistan, the history of Shia mobilization specifically in the tribal areas of Pakistan begins with the Tehreek-e-Nifaz-e-Fiqh-Jafariyya (TNFJ), an organization started by Mufti Ja'far Husayn (1916-83) in 1983.⁴⁶ Husayn's background is important to the discussion of the Shia 'madrasa culture' because it shows the interconnectedness of madrasas, government and political parties as factors in mobilizing Shias. Husayn studied in both Sunni and Shia madrasas and eventually joined government committees for "Islamic provisions in Pakistan's Constitution" and the Council on Islamic Ideology.⁴⁷ Under Husayn, the TNFJ, as an organization defending the rights of Shias, was successful in ensuring that Shias would be exempt from the Sunni version of Zakat (religious tax) that was imposed by General Zia-ul-Haq.⁴⁸ While the TNFJ claimed to be a representative body for Shias, rumors spread that it was actually trying to impose Shi'i law upon the state and Sunnis; this quickly sparked fear and concern for Sunnis.⁴⁹ The example of Mufti Jafar Husayn is one of the advent of a native Pakistani leader with a willingness to combine religion and politics, and stand up for the minority voice.

In contrast, his successor Allama Arif Husayn al-Husayni did not subscribe to the school of "political quietism" which generally marks the period of Husayn.⁵⁰ A more

⁴⁶ Muhammad Qasim Zaman, "Sectarianism in Pakistan: The Radicalization of Shi'i and Sunni Identities," *Modern Asian Studies* 32, no. 3 (Jul.1998): 695, accessed September 19, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/313163>.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 694.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 693.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 695.

vociferous political activism was fueled by al-Husayni's studies in Najaf and Qum and the mentorship of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini himself.⁵¹ Al-Husayni's term brought in a greater alignment of Pakistan with Iran through his educational ties. This alliance brought in the foreign Iranian element to the quiet Shia presence in Pakistan. This passionate political participation however, came to an end with al-Husayni's assassination in 1998.

When the TNJF ultimately failed to deliver the hope for an aggressive front, there rose another organization to carry out the task- the Sipah-e-Muhammad.⁵² The group's main reason for the split from the TNJF is that they have not done more to defend Shias from Sunni militancy. Set in the rural town of Punjab, the Sipah-e-Muhammad boasts the leadership of 'Allama Sayyid Ghulam Riza, who preaches the vision of the group through madrasas in various parts of the locale.⁵³ With its militant strategy, the Sipah-e-Muhammad sets itself on a different track from the TNJF, but both groups function as products of aggressive Shia activism inspired by the Iranian Revolution.

The Hazaras: A Hidden Plight

The plight of the Shia Hazara population conveys how Iran and Pakistan moved from friendly relations to one of suspicion and caution. With the Shia Hazaras looking to Iran and Khomeini for protection and guidance during the Soviet invasion, Iran began to take advantage of that loyalty by using them to "defend Iran's political objectives in the region."⁵⁴ When Pashtun leaders such as Mohammad Asif Mohsini asked Pakistan for help

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid., 697.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 379.

for their resistance efforts, Pakistan's main reason for refusal was a confrontation with Shia leadership who appeared to have a strong hold over the Shiite population in Afghanistan.

Amidst the general population of Shiite victims, the Hazara people of Kabul were some of the first targets of the Taliban. Hazaras come from a grouping of several provinces that make up the Hazarajat in Afghanistan. The Hazara community remained an independent affiliation of tribes until the 19th century, with paramilitary powers and a structured tribal hierarchy presided over by a chief that was supported by clerics.⁵⁵ Clerics received payments from the governing tribes and were involved in legal matters.⁵⁶ The relationship between the Hazara tribes and the Afghan monarch was of cordiality and cooperation- a feature that vanished by the turn of the century. With British support in 1893, the monarch Abdul-Rahman eventually brought the Hazara region into the folds of Afghanistan and tried to forcefully convert them to Sunnism.

From Afghanistan's independence and throughout the era of modernization, the Hazaras continued to be marginalized and converted by force. From the 1960s to the 1980s, Hazaras were able to form political movements despite their oppression and restricted access to channels of representation.⁵⁷ Soon, they organized to carry out the establishment of an Islamic state, along with the empowerment and equal rights of Hazaras and other minority groups.⁵⁸ During the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, these Islamist Hazara political groups were influenced by charismatic rhetoric of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini

⁵⁵ Ibid., 367.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Emadi, "Exporting Iran's Revolution," 372.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 373.

and aligned themselves with anti-Soviet resistant groups.⁵⁹ However, such moves proved futile, as many Hazaras were forced to flee to Pakistan in the impending war. This marked the beginning of the troubling relationship between Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan.

The Hazaras that moved to Pakistan settled in the Balochistan province, which has always had a contentious relationship with Islamabad.⁶⁰ Since they look different from other Pakistanis and speak Farsi, they are seen as Iran's pawns, and thereby viewed with not just suspicion, but animosity. This perception shows a growing hostility towards Iran, with a fear it will take over as a regional power, and the Sunnis will lose their place as guardians of Islam. Yet the plight of the Hazaras is not the only battle being fought by Pakistan's Shias, as they have been thrown into Pakistan's 'war on terror.'

Pakistan's War on Terror and Sunni-Shia Conflict

While the war on terror for the international community generally appears to have a one-dimensional goal of destroying extremists who seek to eradicate "Western spheres of influence," Pakistan's 'war on terror' assumes a multi-dimensional agenda that requires not only fighting those who are against the West, but also those who are against Pakistan's internal political and societal elements. Following this logic, groups like Al Qaeda and the Taliban are perpetrators of sectarian violence under the umbrella of terrorism.

The Pakistani government and military came under deep scrutiny for its actions based on its weak handling of terrorist elements. On September 12, 2001, a day after the bombings of the World Trade Center in New York City, United States Deputy Secretary

⁵⁹ Ibid., 376.

⁶⁰ Christine C. Fair, "Who's Killing Shias and Why?" *War on the Rocks* (May 20, 2014), accessed September 10, 2014, <http://warontherocks.com/2014/05/whos-killing-pakistans-shia-and-why/#>.

of State Richard Armitage told the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence Agency (ISI) Lieutenant General Mahmood Ahmed, “You are either one hundred percent with us or one hundred percent against us – there is no grey area.”⁶¹ This statement pressured Prime Minister Pervez Musharraf to officially become a partner in the “war on terror.”⁶² Although Armitage appears to offer a simple binary of opposites with respect to fighting terror, the inclusion of fighting sectarianism involves a lot of “grey area” since sectarian and terrorist elements often overlap in their goals and strategies of militancy.

Pakistan’s fore into the war on terror was not an easy decision. Chirasree Mukherjee writes that Pakistan “began as an unenthusiastic collaborator of the US in the ‘war on terror’ and failed to evolve as a progressive ally.”⁶³ The description of “unenthusiastic” alludes to Pakistan’s security landscape at the time just before 9/11, which was mainly one of tolerance by officials of militant elements in Balochistan and Kashmir that served as “assistance,” in managing India.⁶⁴ This attitude combined with the “mismanagement” of terrorist elements led to conditions conducive for the proliferation of militant and sectarian ideologies.

Musharraf’s strategy for this war included a restructuring of army positions and ranks, adoption of advanced technology, and the establishment of a Counter-Terrorism-

⁶¹ Chirasree Mukherjee, “Pakistan’s Role in the War on Terror: A Degenerative or a Progressive One?” *International Affairs Review* XXI, no. 1 (Fall 2012): 24, accessed September 1, 2014, <http://www.iar-gwu.org/sites/default/files/articlepdfs/mukherjee.pdf>.

⁶² Michael D. Huckabee, “America’s Priorities in the War on Terror: Islamists, Iraq, Iran, and Pakistan,” *Foreign Affairs* 67, no. 1 (January-February 2008): 165, accessed August 1, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20020275>.

⁶³ Mukherjee, “Pakistan’s Role in the War on Terror,” 34.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

Cell (CTC) - all features of a state-of-the-art terror-fighting machine.⁶⁵ Musharraf's "New Pakistan" was all set to find Al-Qaeda criminals and other terror outfits in all parts of the country. Upon apprehension of the "masterminds of 9/11," Ramzi bin al-Shibh and Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, Pakistan proved itself to be an effective partner in the eyes of the international community. However, apprehensions of Pakistan's intentions and abilities regarding the war on terror became apparent again when United States Seal Team Six captured Osama Bin Laden, without knowledge or cooperation of Pakistan.

The capture of Bin Laden demonstrated Pakistan's weak intelligence apparatus and its possible complicity in protecting extremist elements that it had agreed not to do when it joined the 'war on terror.'⁶⁶ Due to such inconsistencies and the favoring of extremist elements like the Taliban and Al Qaeda, Pakistan has ceased to serve as a reliable partner in the 'war on terror.' While Musharraf's revamp of security structures certainly provided the international community a better understanding of the landscape, it also dismantled the status quo of militant hubs in the region, and sent comfortable Al Qaeda operatives into other countries like Iraq, Afghanistan and Iran.⁶⁷

As Pakistan's military structure was being reshaped, so were the infrastructure and goals of Al-Qaeda. Earlier, Al-Qaeda's mission was to bring the United States to its knees, where "Al Qaeda expected the United States to follow in the footsteps of the Soviet Union,

⁶⁵ Ibid., 26.

⁶⁶ Thomas Joscelyn, "Osama Bin Laden's Files: The Pakistani Government Wanted to Negotiate," *The Long War Journal*, March 9, 2015, accessed March 10, 2015, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/03/osama-bin-ladens-files-the-pakistani-government-wanted-to-negotiate.php>

⁶⁷ Rohan Gunaratna and Anders Nielsen. "Al Qaeda in the tribal areas of Pakistan and Beyond," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, no. 9 (2008): 778, accessed August 22, 2014, <http://www.tandfonline.com.proxy.library.georgetown.edu/doi/full/10.1080/10576100802291568#abstract>.

whose Afghan adventure presented the world with the spectacle of a superpower going down slowly in defeat....”⁶⁸ Michael Doran observes that Bin Laden’s strategic moves to bring down the West meant playing around with the regional alliance between the United States and Pakistan.⁶⁹ With knowledge that Pakistan could not break its relationship with the Taliban, Bin Laden calculated the certain failure of the United States to maintain dominance in the Muslim world. Moreover, relying on a theory that Pakistan would only support a Sunni hegemony, Bin Laden assumed that Pakistan would deter the United States from making a pact with the Northern Alliance, which consisted of non-Sunni Uzbek, Tajik and Shia Hazara people.⁷⁰ While these assumptions did not play out the way Bin Laden intended, they did create ethnic and religious strife that ultimately led to the exacerbation of Shia-Sunni conflict in Pakistan.

Iran’s Secret Strategy

Iran’s funding of militant outfits like Sipah-e-Muhammad (SMP) in Pakistan appears valiant as it seeks to defend the mass murder of Shias. Perhaps the bravery appears even nobler in the eyes of the international community that hopes for a victory in the ‘war on terror’ through Iran’s contribution. Sipah-e-Muhammad appears a useful militant force in the face of the mass murders by Sipah-e-Sahaba and a deadlocked Pakistan military. However, recent reports find that Iran, a country whose own citizens have been victims of Sunni militant groups like Al Qaeda, has been involved in aiding and harboring these

⁶⁸ Michael Doran, “Pragmatic Fanaticism of Al Qaeda: An Anatomy of Extremism in Middle East Politics,” *Political Science Quarterly* 117, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 189, accessed August 21 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/798179>.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 188.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

perpetrators for decades.⁷¹ A 2010 U.S. Department of State Country Report on Terrorism reads as follows:

Iran remained the most active state sponsor of terrorism... Iran's financial, material and logistic support for terrorist and militant groups throughout the Middle East and Central Asia had a direct impact on international efforts to promote peace, threatened economic stability in the Gulf, and undermined the growth and democracy.⁷²

Through these support systems based in Iran, terrorist networks can funnel resources to Pakistan. Ayman Al Zawahiri, second in command to Osama Bin Laden, was one of the beneficiaries of support from Iran.⁷³ He moved to Waziristan in the early 2000s, where he expanded the Al-Qaeda network to Iran. From Iran, Al Qaeda members worked on strategies to deal with Saudi security forces and set up channels for transportation.⁷⁴ A *Foreign Affairs* article reports, "By 2002, al Qaeda had established in Iran its 'management council,' a body that bin Laden reportedly tasked with providing strategic support to the organization's leaders in Pakistan."⁷⁵ When Iran did finally proceed to free Al Qaeda members from detention, it demanded that Al Qaeda could not launch attacks from Iran or target the Iranian government.⁷⁶ If Al Qaeda agreed to such restrictions, "the Iranian

⁷¹ Maseh Zarif, "Al Qaeda's Safe Haven in Iran," *American Institute Enterprise Iran Tracker*, July 29, 2011, accessed September 15, 2014, http://www.irantracker.org/analysis/al-qaeda%E2%80%99s-safe-haven-iran#_edn3.

⁷² "South and Central Asia Overview," *United States Department of State Country Report on Terrorism* (August 8, 2011), accessed September 4, 2014, <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2010/170260.htm>.

⁷³ Gunaratna, "Al Qaeda in the tribal areas of Pakistan and Beyond," 778.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Seth G. Jones, "Al Qaeda in Iran: Why Tehran is Accommodating the Terrorist Group," *Foreign Affairs*, January 29, 2012, accessed September 1, 2014, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/137061/seth-g-jones/al-qaeda-in-iran>.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

government would permit al Qaeda operatives some freedom to fundraise, communicate with al Qaeda central in Pakistan and other affiliates, and funnel foreign fighters through Iran.”⁷⁷ Iran’s dubious behavior with regard to harboring criminals who are violently targeting members of their own faith demonstrates how sectarianism can be used as a tool to assert a country’s power, even at the cost of its own citizens. In this case, Iran’s role as defender of Shias has lost all legitimacy.

For those extremists with different ethnic origins than Pakistani or Arab Shias, Iran was (and remains) a critical entry point into Pakistan. Gunaratna and Nielsen provide a description of how non-Pakistani terrorists have entered Pakistan for training:

To avoid the scrutiny of Pakistani authorities, when entering Pakistan, many militants, who are not of Pakistani origin, choose to enter via Iran. Many Saudi Arabian militants travel to Teheran on legal documents and visas, then subsequently cross the border into Pakistan via Iranian Baluchistan, which has a vibrant smuggling community.⁷⁸

The discovery of Iran as a portal and “safe haven” for extremist elements adds a disturbing layer to the problem of sectarianism in Pakistan, and overall security of the region. Yet the origins of these connections are not surprising, as Osama Bin Laden had imagined a revolution similar to that of the Iranian Revolution of 1979.⁷⁹ With the glorious memory of the Iranian Revolution that brought down the perceived puppet of the West, the Shah, Al Qaeda and the SSP are trying with intense might to bring about another revolution that would transform Pakistan into their version of an Islamic state.

⁷⁷ Seth G. Jones, “Al Qaeda in Iran: Why Tehran is Accommodating the Terrorist Group,” *Foreign Affairs*, January 29, 2012.

⁷⁸ Gunaratna, “Al Qaeda in the tribal areas of Pakistan and beyond,” 789.

⁷⁹ Doran, “Pragmatic Fanaticism of Al Qaeda: An Anatomy of Extremism in Middle East Politics,” 184.

Conclusion

Shia-Sunni violence in the FATA region of Pakistan prevails due to a combination of factors: Pakistan's ill-equipped army, accommodation by the Pakistan army and government of extremist outfits, and the accommodation of proxy wars between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Al Qaeda and other terror groups have in some ways found success in realizing the Manichean philosophy of the battle of good versus evil through violence between Sunnis (perceived good elements) and Shias (perceived bad elements).⁸⁰ Based on the fact that Iran is hosting the structures responsible for the murder of their own co-religionists- that paradigm of good and evil diminishes; instead we are left with a puzzle of dangerous proportions.

The exacerbation of sectarian violence in the northern tribal areas of Pakistan from 2010 to the present appears to be a result of decades of proxy wars between Saudi Arabia and Iran, where Iran and its allies have supported Shia extremist outfits, and Saudi and its allies have supported Sunni militants. The FATA region's distinct location and culture has provided terrorist groups with ample resources to create vast terror networks. In addition, a perplexing decade-long "war on terror" has been inaccurately compared to the Cold War, thereby allowing past actions and decisions to guide the current 'war on terror.' Iran's role in the war as a protector of Shias in Pakistan has been anything but defensive; rather, the evidence that Iran has been hosting Al-Qaeda activities and "personnel" on its own territory for the purpose of serving Al Qaeda in Pakistan shows a darker dimension of the fight for regional power. Pakistan can only reach a reasonable sense of security when countries stop

⁸⁰ *New World Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Manichaeism," accessed July 4, 2014, <http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Manichaeism>.

fighting proxy wars within its boundaries, and especially when Iran stops providing support to an international terrorist organization that is killing its own people. Pakistan will then be able to authentically fight terrorism.

CHAPTER FOUR

SECTARIANISM: A PERPETUAL STATE?

A large part of the problem of Pakistan's sectarianism lies in mythology. Throughout history, countless campaigns have adorned the garb of religious rhetoric to mobilize the masses. Pakistan is no exception. In fact, the country has embraced a classic case of what Karen Armstrong calls, "The Myth of Religious Violence," where religiously-motivated violence of centuries past appeared to be separate from secular causes and motivations. According to Armstrong, the reality is as follows:

There was as yet no coherent way to divide religious causes from social causes. People were fighting for different visions of society, but they would not, and could not, have distinguished between religious and temporal factors in these conflicts.¹

The problem arises when we juxtapose a terrorist group relying on mythology to create its definition of an ideal society through the destruction of the "Other," with a non-violent group relying on the mythology of nationalism or secularism to construct its own version of an ideal society. In the case of Pakistan, Sunni-Shia conflict involves a fierce battle of mythologies of identity complicated by the mythologies of external actors like Iran. The mythology projected by Iran is one of a theocratic Islamic state, with a Shia foundation.

While the last chapter looked at events leading up to Iran's detrimental contributions to sectarianism, this chapter will examine how madrasas have contributed to that polarization and sectarianism that affects the nation today. The first section will look at theories of national identity and whether they are applicable theories to peacebuilding in

¹ Karen Armstrong, "The Myth of Religious Violence," *The Guardian* (September 25, 2014), accessed October 1, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/25/-sp-karen-armstrong-religious-violence-myth-secular>.

Pakistan. This will be followed by an analysis of madrasas in Pakistan, and how they encompass theories of national identity. In particular, it will look at how Iranian influence and support has contributed to a hostile madrasa culture in Pakistan. This will be followed by a set of recommendations of solutions for a way forward.

Finding a Suitable National Identity Theory for Pakistan

While the discussion about carving out national identities appears to be reserved for the study of post-colonial history and the formation of nation-states, the issues of national identity and sectarianism in Pakistan today may find a modern-day parallel with discussions about identity construction in the European Union.² Ann-Marie Thiesse, in her article, “Inventing National Identity,” sets the historical background of Europe with respect to nation-building:

No nation in the modern, that is, political, sense of the word existed before the ideological revolution that began in the 18th century and conferred political power on “the people.” From that time on, the nation was conceived as a broad community united by a link different in nature both from allegiance to the same monarch and from membership of the same religion or social estate. The nation no longer derived from the ruler. It was henceforth independent of the contingencies of dynastic or military history.³

In the case of the northern areas of Pakistan, religion is used to create an imagined community of “the people.” In other words, militant organizations, some madrasa networks, and external sources of funding have joined together to create a superficial grassroots form of “the people,” to be used as an imaginary support base. The projection

² Ann-Marie Thiesse, “Inventing National Identity,” *Le Monde Diplomatique* (English Edition), (June 1999), accessed September 20, 2014, <http://mondediplo.com/1999/06/05thiesse>.

³ *Ibid.*

of an imagined status (in some cases, a Caliphate) upon Pakistan has resulted in the decimation of anyone who cannot fit that imagined community.

Sindic's assertion that national identities are being broken down by globalization is particularly useful to examine the transnational nature of militant activity and role of external factors like Iran.⁴ By funding madrasas and militant outfits in the region, Iran's boundaries as a nation-state are removed due to its trans-national activities in Pakistan. The porous borders of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran provide ample physical space for cross-border activity to occur. The situation thus demonstrates an oxymoron: a quest for an exclusive identity based on religious allegiance that is being carried out in an open, unbound, transnational landscape.

Sindic's views that psychological citizenship can fall under the umbrella of national identity is a theory that has worked successfully for terrorist organizations in their efforts to popularize militancy. He writes, "Like national identity, the idea of a global identity has the advantage of being potentially consonant with the notion of citizenship, insofar as it also constitutes (at least in theory) an essentially equalizing form of identification."⁵ Yet madrasas and organizations like Al Qaeda, Taliban, Sipah-e-Sahaba and Sipah-e-Muhammad, while pursuing a type of psychological citizenship across the Muslim world, are hardly doing so for the purpose of "equalizing" forces; rather, citizenship is based here on oppositional identities.

⁴ Denis Sindic, "Psychological Citizenship and National Identity," *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* 21 (2011): 206, accessed October 1, 2014, DOI: 10.1002/casp.1093.

⁵ Ibid.

While seeking to destroy the other, sectarianism in Pakistan is carrying out its goals through a gradient of identities. Johnson and Coleman assert that, “Although there might be multiple oppositional identities, in practice it is often the ‘significant other’ or the identity conceptualized as the most opposed, most pressing, or most timely that is brought to the forefront of identity questions.”⁶ In applying this concept to the case of militancy in the tribal areas, history has shown that the idea of separation- whether separation from the British, the Hindus, or from within the Muslim society, has followed a timeline of “pressing” oppositional identities. In Pakistan today, the “multiple oppositional identities” include Muslims, Christians, and Hindus, but the “most pressing significant other” happens to be Sunni versus Shia militant groups.

The assumption of a social identity, whether Sunni or Shia, may be based on economic concerns. Isaac Kfir asserts that social groups are responsible for taking sources from the State- where in exchange for assuming a conscious identity, people receive “club goods” like protection and security.⁷ This viewpoint demonstrates that it is not simply militant theology that is attracting recruits, but a tangible value. The exacerbation of sectarianism in the region shows that people will abandon their arguably moderate approaches to religion to receive these incentives.

The construction of national identity and the concept of the “other” are crucial factors for the development of language, vocabulary and intellectual thought that provides

⁶ Corey Johnson and Amanda Coleman, “The Internal Other: Exploring the Dialectical Relationship Between Regional Exclusion and the Construction of National Identity,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 102, 4 (2012): 6, accessed October 1, 2014, DOI: 10.1080/00045608.2011.602934.

⁷ Isaac Kfir, “Sectarian Violence and Social Group Identity in Pakistan,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 37 (November 3, 2014): 457, accessed October 4, 2014, DOI: 10.1080/1057610X.2014.903374.

justification for fighting for any one cause. In drawing in the events of the Cold War, the Zia regime, and the ‘war on terror,’ othering has been a fruitful tool for recruitment, and has consistently provided opportunities to not just create, but magnify oppositional identities. One of the main venues for this development have been the madrasas, or religious schools, which have been fashioning mythologies of religious violence that appeal to youth. For external actors like Iran, madrassas have provided an easy path into the consciousness of Pakistan.

A Brief History of Madrasas

Saleem H. Ali in his book, *Islam and Education*, says that madrasas are “often described by proponents as the Muslim world’s largest network of NGOs.” The role of the non-governmental organization (NGO) goes back to 1005 AD, when one of the first madrassas was established by the Fatimid caliphs in Egypt, disseminating the Shi’ite version of Islam.⁸ The tradition of learning at public squares began with Prophet Muhammad, where he began the long tradition of Islamic knowledge- seeking, right within the mosque. U. Anzar describes the role of mosques as follows:

Mosques were the places where Koran was compiled. It was here where early Muslims seeking to solve their problems in the light of the newly revealed knowledge would come to obtain answers. The mosque was the first school in Islam.⁹

The madrasa continued to change as Islam spread across the Arabian Peninsula, then to South Asia. Islamic thought was complemented by subjects like math and science for many centuries. Later, it became more of a matter of pride towards knowing the tradition of these

⁸ Saleem Ali, *Islam and Education* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 18.

⁹ U. Anzar, “Islamic Education: A Brief History of Madrassas with Comments on Curricula and Current Pedagogical Practices” (PhD diss., The University of Vermont, 2003), 2.

subjects rather than their actual study. That came to be part of madrasa legacy. Efficiency in education, that is, learning, reading the Quran and religious scriptures, served on the side of the cultivation of future Islamic scholars.

Madrasas and National Identity

One of the most significant features of General Zia-ul-Haq's regime in Pakistan was the organization of madrassas, or schools, for the purpose of religious instruction. At times, these schools also served as training camps for militant operations such as in the Cold War. Although these centers of religious instruction have become notorious for serving as a breeding grounds for terrorists, there is little evidence connecting militancy to terror.¹⁰ The International Crisis Group reports that "[O]nly 10 to 15 percent of madrassas are actually involved in terrorist activities. The vast majority of them neither conduct military training nor provide arms to students— they are simply traditional religious schools."¹¹ While this low percentage indicates the weak link between militancy and terror, Grare observes that the overall *influential* power of the madrasa infrastructure is unparalleled with regard to spreading ideology. He writes, "[T]he madrassas have contributed enormously to the sectarian phenomenon, using their influence over vulnerable minds to create an atmosphere of hatred conducive to the polarization and radicalization of some of the most fragile segments of the society."¹² In the case of Sunni-Shia conflict in Pakistan, madrasas have affected those living in the FATA region.

¹⁰ Ibid., 14.

¹¹ P.W. Singer, "Pakistan's Madrassahs: Ensuring a System of Education not Jihad," The Brookings Institute (November 2001), Analysis Paper #14, accessed October 5, 2014, <http://www.brookings.edu/views/papers/singer/20020103.pdf>.

¹² Frederic Grare, "Rethinking Western Strategies Towards Pakistan: An Action Agenda for the United States and Europe," *Carnegie Endowment* (2007): 14, accessed September 15, 2014, http://carnegieendowment.org/files/grare_pakistan_final.pdf.

Madrasas in Pakistan

The combination of Zia-ul-Haq's regime and the beginning of Saudi financial sources eventually led to a change in the madrasa instruction style. M.G. Weinbaum writes that, "Prior to the 1980s, Pakistani madrasas were not known for advocating extremist ideologies."¹³ After that, four phases of prolific intellectual scholarship on both spiritual and modern sciences, the madrasa in South Asia became static and more inclined towards teaching spiritual subjects only.¹⁴ Saleem Ali's observation of the current situation is that, "The curriculum of contemporary madrassas is also thought to often provide a constrained worldview which bears little resemblance to traditional Islamic education in historical context."¹⁵ Colonialism played a large role in this abandonment, as scholars and religious actors rushed to preserve Islamic teachings. A study of the development of some madrassas in Pakistan reflects that decline.

The Deoband organization, from the outset, was a unique mark on Indian Muslim religious society. Barbara Metcalf describes it as a "distinct institution," detached from a mosque or home. Structurally, it was modeled after British schools, with professional staff as well as classrooms and libraries.¹⁶ The sophisticated administration was fundamentally committed to tolerance, starting with its staff, as evident in the rules of the organization:

¹³ Marvin G. Weinbaum and Abdullah B. Khurram, "Pakistan and Saudi Arabia: Deference, Dependence, and Deterrence," *The Middle East Journal* 68, no. 2 (Spring, 2014): 218, accessed October 1, 2014, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1546008618?accountid=11091>.

¹⁴ Ali, *Islam and Education*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 20.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁶ Barbara Metcalf, "The Madrasa at Deoband: A Model For Religious Education in Modern India," *Modern Asian Studies* 12, no. 1 (1978): 112, accessed September 14, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/311825?uid=3739560&uid=2&uid=4&uid=3739256&sid=21104301858371>

There should be no rigidity of views, and for this reason it is important that they never hesitate to express an opinion and that listeners hear it with an open mind. So ... if we understand another's idea [to be better], even if it is against us, we will accept it wholly. For this same reason it is necessary that the mohtamima always seek advice of councilors....”¹⁷

The Deoband brand came to “represent a distinct style, a maslak, of Indian Islam that emphasized the diffusion of scripturalist practices and the cultivation of an inner spiritual life.”¹⁸ It became a popular name in Pakistan as well, rising to one of the most well-known of madrasas.

Pakistan also went on to inherit the standardized Dars-e-Nizami curriculum, which was founded in India in the 18th century by Mullah Nizam Uddin.¹⁹ Where at first the curriculum included material sciences and critical thinking exercises, it later became “ossified” as described by Tariq Rahman, where knowledge was disseminated through canonical texts via commentaries.²⁰ Additionally, texts in Arabic and Persian were reduced to memorization among the predominantly Urdu-speaking student populations. The Dars-e-Nizami curriculum currently stands as a guide rather than a standard, as different madrasas, from Deobandi to Barelvi, and Sunni to Shia, incorporate other texts as prescribed by their sectarian administrators.²¹

¹⁷ Ibid., 114.

¹⁸ Ibid., 134.

¹⁹ Ali, *Islam and Education*, 36.

²⁰ Tariq Rahman, “The Madrassah and the State of Pakistan: Religion, Poverty and the Potential for Violence in Pakistan,” *Himal South Asian* (February 2004): 4, accessed October 3, 2014, <http://www.himalmag.com/2004/february/essay.htm>.

²¹ Farida Rokadia, *Madrassas as Terror Schools: The Myth and the Reality* (master’s thesis, American University, 2009), 42.

In the 1980s, Shia madaris (plural for madrasa) were not far behind Sunni madaris in terms of rapid development of their centers. Jamal Malik, in “Teaching Terror,” provides a statistic that Shi’a madaris (plural for madrasa) in Pakistan increased from approximately “70 in 1979 to 116 in 1983-84.”²² This growth demonstrates the dedication to exporting the Iranian Revolution along with the boom in visibility of Shias in Pakistan.

Despite funding from Iran, the Shia madrasa network was far from unified. Some Pakistani Shias offered allegiances to the Iraqi Ayatollah Al Khoi, with a more quietist attitude towards politics, while others followed the passionate revolutionary spirit of Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran.²³ This division contributes to the diversity of Shia madrasas in Pakistan and accordingly, diversity in the propensity towards violence.

Weak Links between Madrassas and Militancy

There have been some madrasa schools that have been found to teach violent and extremist ideologies, thereby producing militant fighters. The 9/11 Commission report conveys this concern: “Many of these schools are the only opportunity available for an education, but some have been used as incubators for violent extremism.”²⁴

²² Jamal Malik, ed., “Madrasas in South Asia: Teaching Terror?” (London: Routledge, 2007): 198 in Sarah Ashraf, “Religious Education and Training Provided by Madrassas in the Afghanistan-Pakistan Boundary Area,” *Arts and Humanities Council* (December 2012), accessed September 24, 2014, http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/What-We-Do/Strengthen-research-impact/Inform-public-policy/Documents/Religious_Education.pdf.

²³ Hasan Abbas, “Shiism and Sectarian Conflict in Pakistan Identity Politics, Iranian Influence, and Tit-for-Tat Violence,” *Combating Terrorism Center Occasional Paper Series* (September 22, 2010): 29, accessed September 3, 2014, <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/CTC-OP-Abbas-21-September.pdf>.

²⁴ National Commission on Terrorist Acts upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004), 367.

However, a Council on Foreign Relations report, *Pakistan's Education System and Links to Extremism* states as follows:

For one thousand years, madrassas have been centers of Islamic learning that produce the next generation of Islamic scholars and clerics... but it was Pakistan's leading role in the anti-Soviet campaign in neighboring Afghanistan during this time that radicalized some of these madrassas.²⁵

Remembering this history of madrasas is an important factor in evaluating the purpose of madrasas, and although there may be deficiencies in instruction about civics, tolerance, and relations with the "Other," there are still only a few madrasas that have directly created violent agents. Mumtaz Ahmad writes, "With the same curriculum, madrasa students were never shown to be anti-American until the 1990s."²⁶ Such discrepancies show a weak causal link between madrasas and militancy, but it cannot be denied that after 9/11 some madrasas are and have been involved in terrorist activity, where 115 madrassas were denied access to government funds to due to links to militancy.²⁷ The conversation on madrasa and militancy links continues, but regardless, madrasa reform is necessary, not only in Pakistan but also in Iran since it is spreading its message over to Pakistan.

Ideas of the "Other" in Madrasa Syllabi and Textbooks

In November 2011, A United States Commission on International Religious Freedom report presented various perspectives of non-Muslims that seemed to point to a

²⁵ Jayshreee Bajoria, "Pakistan's Education System and Links to Extremism," *Council on Foreign Relations*, (October 2009), accessed August 31, 2014, <http://www.cfr.org/pakistan/pakistans-education-system-links-extremism/p20364>.

²⁶ Mumtaz Ahmed, "Islamic Education in Bangladesh and Pakistan: Trends in Tertiary Institutions," Executive Summary, *The National Bureau of Asian Research* (April 2009).

²⁷ K. Alan Ronstadt, U.S. Congressional Research Service, "Education Reform in Pakistan" (RS22009 December 23, 2004): 3, Text in Defense Technical Information Center, accessed October 10, 2014, <http://fas.org/man/crs/RS22009.pdf>.

generally divisive attitude. “[M]adrasah textbooks generally portray non-Muslims in one of three ways (1) kafirs (infidels), (2) dhimmis (non-Muslims living under Islamic rule) or murtids (apostates, i.e. people who have turned away from Islam).”²⁸ The wide variety of negative portrayals points to the multiple layers of learned attitudes toward the “Other.”

The variety of traditions across the madrasas may also impact the view of the “Other.” There are currently five boards that subscribe to this curriculum. As mentioned above, the four Sunni schools are Deobandi, Ahl-e-hadith, Barelvi and Jamaati-Islami. The fifth is a Shia board.²⁹ According to Christine Fair, author of *The Madrassa Challenge*, while all five of these boards follow the Dars-e-Nizami curriculum, they may use different texts to teach the lessons. The existence of distinct Shia and Sunni boards also sets up a sectarian divide which has lent itself to othering within their own neighborhoods.

As far as philosophy, the Deobandi reform movement aimed to purify itself of syncretic elements like mysticism. The Barelvi movement on the other hand is not opposed to saint veneration and Sufi practices. The Ahl-e-Hadith belief is similar to the Deobandi movement, in that it seeks to purify the practice of Islam from mysticism. The Jamaati-Islami, although following the Dars-e-Nizami curriculum, “emphasizes politics, economics, and history, in keeping up with their goal of producing Ulama who can confront

²⁸ Azhar Hussain, Ahmad Salim, and Arif Naveed, “Connecting the Dots: Education and Religious Discrimination in Pakistan- A Study of Public Schools and Madrasas,” *United States Commission on International Religious Freedom*, (November 2011): 10, accessed October 12, 2014, <http://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/resources/Pakistan-ConnectingTheDots-Email%283%29.pdf>.

²⁹ Christine C. Fair, *The Madrassa Challenge: Militancy and Religious Education in Pakistan* (United States: United States Institute of Peace), 56.

Western ideas.”³⁰ The difference in approach shows that dissimilar madrasas define the “Other” in different ways, too.

In his study of Deobandi syllabi dating up to 2002, Tariq Rahman finds markers of intolerance in the texts that are provided to students. He observes that “...Other religions are refuted in ‘comparative religions’ and...in Pakistan the ulema unite in refuting the beliefs of the Ahmadis or (Qadianis).”³¹ Texts that refute certain philosophies or ideologies are not part of the standard curriculum but could be used as supplements. In other words, these texts may not be assigned, but are accessible to students physically as well as cognitively, in that they are in stores and available in print in the Urdu language.

Madrasa Reform and “The Other”

In 2001, President Pervez Musharraf instituted the Madrasa Education Board “to establish a network of “model madrassas” and regulate others.”³² Unfortunately, few madrasas registered for these, and political agendas once again took their place in shaping the future or “non-future” of madrasa education. In 2009, Musharraf put forth another reform initiative, the National Education Policy, which seeks to re-dedicate its efforts to improve educational opportunities and quality. It examines allocation resources, the role of private funding, and review of the curriculum.

One of the goals of this policy states as follows:

Deeni [religious] Madaris shall be mainstreamed by introducing contemporary studies alongside the curricula of Deeni Madaris (religious schools) to enhance

³⁰ Ibid., 58.

³¹ Rahman, *The Madrassah and the State of Pakistan*, 6.

³² Ibid.

prospects of their students to pursue higher studies, research and excellence and to ensure employment, recognition and equivalence.³³

While this appears to be the most comprehensive design for reform, there are still ample obstacles. Pervez Hoodbhoy, professor and chairman of Qaid-e-Azam University in Pakistan, told the Council on Foreign Relations that there is little action being taken to fulfill the goals of the new policy, where "... [N]ew textbooks written as a result of curriculum reform in 2002 have not yet been printed. Since then, there have been two more education policies (in 2006 and 2009).³⁴ Internal attempts at reform continue to show weaknesses as observed by M. Abu-Nimer and A. Kadayifci, who believe that sectarian ideologies and a lack of resources have prevented a "balanced and nuanced picture of the non-Muslim world and the West."³⁵ The concept of the "Other" is discussed only in terms of perpetuating the distance from other sects and religions, not identifying common ground for tolerance or dialogue. Abu-Nimer discusses the concept of tolerance as follows:

These topics rarely emphasise the Islamic principles of religious tolerance, coexistence and human rights. On the contrary, the madrasa education takes place in an environment that often breeds suspicion, fear and intolerance towards other sects and religious traditions, which makes it easier for these students to be persuaded by extremists.³⁶

Internal reforms appear to move slowly, especially in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). A 2007 State Department report showed that madrasas supported

³³ *National Education Policy*, Ministry of Education, Government of Pakistan, 2009, 33.

³⁴ Jayshree Bajoria, "Pakistan's Education System and Links to Extremism."

³⁵ Mohammed Abu-Nimer et al., "Human rights and building peace: the case of Pakistani madrasas," *The International Journal of Human Rights* 15, no. 7 (2011): 1144, accessed September 14, 2014, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13642987.2010.535492>.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

terrorism.³⁷ When Iran and Saudi Arabia decide to fund texts with their own agendas inscribed in them, Pakistan's National Education Policy must take a different turn.

Towards a Peaceful Way Forward

In a list of recommendations to improve Pakistan's dangerous state of affairs, Brigadier General Muhammad Arif Malik of the Pakistan Army points to the military's tendency to divide "good and bad Taliban or militants" and how such selection must end in order to eradicate terror in the region.³⁸ He explains that such a strategy will "help prevent the groups from playing off one another for support of the government and lead them all to the negotiating table with the government to lay down their arms and engage in the political process peacefully."³⁹

Ayesha Siddiqa echoes Brigadier Malik's concern about the conundrum created by separating "friends and enemies." She writes, "As long as the Pakistani army continues to differentiate among the various groups on the basis of their tactical position vis-a-vis the Pakistani state, terrorism will continue."⁴⁰ The challenge lies in the chameleon-like structure of militant groups, including those supported by outside countries. With regard

³⁷U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, *International Religious Freedom Report 2007-Pakistan*, September 14, 2007.

³⁸ Brigadier General Muhammad Arif Malik, "Militancy in Pakistan: Rebooting the Genie," (master's thesis, United States Army College, 2013):16, accessed September 14, 2014, <file:///C:/Users/Shazia%20Kamal/Downloads/ADA589417.pdf>.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ayesha Siddiqa, "Pakistan's Counterterrorism Strategy: Separating Friends from Enemies," *The Washington Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (February 2011): 156, accessed October 1, 2014, <http://web.b.ebscohost.com.proxy.library.georgetown.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=8f9a2c94-4fed-4b0a-9be0-c0bc1903fb68%40sessionmgr112&vid=1&hid=125>.

to negotiation, Pakistan will have to formulate a method for negotiations with militant organizations that are being sponsored by outside groups like Iran.

On a conceptual level, mythology has to be transformed into a narrative to promote pluralism. In her discussion of countering terror, Siddiqa states that Pakistan “needs to create a new religious narrative.”⁴¹ For the Sunni-Shia conflict, this is especially significant because that would mean forcing both of these groups to abandon or change their religious preferences, and not directly seek peace through accepting one another’s views. The narrative would have to focus on the actual groups in confrontation, without the complication of a third worldview like Sufism.

Koushik’s analysis of public theologies adds another dimension to possible channels of conflict resolution in Pakistan through theology. Koushik highlights the need for actors to consider a spectrum of beliefs within the same religious tradition.⁴² This consideration is especially important for studying Shia and Sunni conflict – traditions that both profess Islam as their religion. Koushik asserts, “[V]ariance in discourse within a particular religious tradition therefore helps to break down the problematic monolith sometimes assumed in the academy of relegating a discourse to the supposed beliefs of an entire religious tradition.”⁴³ This concept as a tool for breaking down the tendency to make religious traditions a monolith creates a theoretical breakthrough for peacebuilding. As far as practical applications though, militant ideologies cannot realize this concept until the

⁴¹ Siddiqa, “Pakistan’s Counterterrorism Strategy,” 159.

⁴² Meghan Koushik, "Reimagining ‘Good Muslim, Bad Muslim’: Public Theologies of Citizenship and Belonging in the Republic of India" (PhD diss., Brown University, 2013), 15, accessed November 1, 2014, <http://www.middleeastbrown.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Thesis-Final.pdf>.

⁴³ Ibid.

state and outside sources of funding and proxy wars come to an end. The application of variance in discourse will ideally dismiss the notion of Brigadier Malik's theory of "good and bad Muslims." Variance and nuance are essential tools in the path to peacebuilding.

An important part of the change in a religious or cultural narrative is the idea of "good governance." If the government can aptly take on the responsibility of ensuring safety and protection for the people of Pakistan, then it must practice good governance. This issue became apparent for the run up to the 2013 elections, where politician Imran Khan set forth in his campaign to instill a new anti-corruption narrative for the people of Pakistan.⁴⁴ Pakistan's 'state-militant industrial complex' goes against all principles of good governance as it removes security from citizens and leaves agency in the hands of militants.

One of Pakistan's priorities should be the exclusion of extra-territorial actors like Iran from its national identity apparatus. For the Shias of Pakistan, there must be a break or re-framing of a shared religious identity with Iran so that these ties can prevent funding of potential violent activity and channeling of resources.

Conclusion

The intersections of group identity, national identity and structures that support such identity formations, such as madrasas, are critical areas to examine in order to understand the exacerbation of sectarianism in Pakistan. Various theories of identity seek to explain the tendency of people to join a certain group, and maintain an aura exclusivity in favor of that group. For militant groups like the Taliban, Al-Qaeda, Sipah-e-Muhammad and Sipah-e-Sahaba, there is a constant fear of the "Other," which ultimately removes

⁴⁴ Associated Press, "Thousands Attend Imran Khan's Rally Against Corruption in Pakistan," *NDTV*, March 23, 2013, accessed September 2, 2014, <http://www.ndtv.com/article/world/thousands-attend-imran-khan-s-rally-against-corruption-in-pakistan-346097>.

power and agency from the other. This attitude and subsequent violent behavior executed by militants is one that is shaped by some madrasas who have been coopted by militant groups like the Tehreek-e-Nifaaz-e-Jafaria and the Sipah-e-Sahaba. In the last few years, some madrasas therefore have become hotbeds for extremism, sectarianism and radical activity. In the language of the militants themselves, these madrasas have become seats of instruction on how to “other” their co-religionists.

Due to the turbulent and tragic events happening all over Pakistan, analysts and peace practitioners have unfortunately come to label Pakistan a “failed state.” As a mainstay of terrorist and extremist activity, sectarian tensions come second on the list of priorities.⁴⁵ While the two situations are not mutually exclusive, the fact that the target of sectarianism is fellow countrymen should add a level of urgency for leaders. The additional involvement of external voices like Saudi Arabia and Iran creates deeper tensions that are imploding within Pakistan. The ‘war on terror’ in Pakistan has acquired a different meaning- it is a war on terror in the context of sectarianism.

The examination of the role of Iran with regard to sectarian tensions is important to understand the operation of militant groups that are defending themselves from majority militant organizations that are intent upon maintaining regional political power. From the Cold War to the “war on terror,” Iran’s oftentimes insidious visible activities in the northern tribal areas of Pakistan demonstrate that the recent exacerbation of violence between the two traditions of Islam is due to political and social constraints, not theological differences.

For over three decades, Iran has been sanctioned for its human rights abuses and ambiguous position on its nuclear power plans. However, recent remarks by President

⁴⁵ Kfir, “Sectarian Violence and Social Group Identity in Pakistan,” 464.

Hasan Rouhani convey a tone of cooperation and goals to work towards better human relations. In 2014, he declared that “A nuclear deal with the West is certain.”⁴⁶ Yet relations with Pakistan remain strained as reports indicate cross-border fights between extremist militants in Pakistan and Iranian soldiers.

When the international community can understand the political and social nuances of sectarian tensions in Pakistan, then leaders, decision-makers and law enforcement can save lives and work towards more effective nation-building and a peaceful future.

⁴⁶ David Stout, “Iran’s President Says a Nuclear Deal With the West Is ‘Certain,’” *Time.com*, October 14, 2014, accessed December 1, 2014, <http://time.com/3504462/iran-rouhani-nuclear-deal-sanctions>.

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