Islam had reached Punjab along with the invasion of Muhammad Bin Qasim in the 8th Century. It spread in the province through the efforts of an array of Sufi saints who arrived in the province in the centuries that followed. Naturally, that meant that Islam in Punjab was deeply influenced by Sufi traditions.

Today, both sides of the divided province are dotted with Sufi shrines or dargahs. The Sufi saints of Punjab have been venerated through the centuries by Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs of the province. Some of the well-known shrines of Sufi saints are Data Ganj Bakhsh, Mian Mir, Shah Hussain, Bahauddin Zakaria of Multan, Baba Ganj Shakar of Pakpatan, and other saints who had contributed to the composite culture of Punjab. However, at the other extreme there were some other Sufi saints like Sheikh Ahmad Sarhindi Mujaddid Alif Sani (1562-1624) who had opposed this trend and supported the reaction towards orthodoxy which culminated in the policies pursued by Aurangzeb.

**DEOBANDI INFLUENCE**

Almost 60 per cent of the population of Pakistan lives in Punjab out of which 99 per cent are Muslims. Among the Muslims in the province, the majority of them are Sunnis and belong to the Barelvi school. However, the Deobandi following in the province has been increasing. This is reflected by the fact that in Punjab a total of 4,50,000 pupils are studying in Deobandi madrassas whereas only 2,00,000 pupils are in the Barelvi madrassas. In Punjab, the largest number of madrassas is in Bahawalpur and Lahore comes next. The bieradari (kinship) relationship has been the dominant form determining politics. Feudal families have dominated the social life of the province. The Unionist Party of Punjab came into existence in the early Twenties and comprised the leading political landlord families comprising Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs. The Muslim League in Punjab in the Thirties, though led by Sir Mohammad Iqbal, was weak. In the 1937 election to the Punjab Provincial Assembly, the Muslim League won only one seat out of 86 Muslim seats. The Sikander-Jinnah Pact (1937) allowed the Muslim members of the Unionist Party to function as members of the Muslim League. The dominance of the landlords in the politics of Punjab led to the depoliticisation of the bulk of the peasantry. The peasantry, therefore, fell prey to local pirs and Mashaikhs. The influence of the feudal gentry in the structure of power prevented any land reforms from being carried out even after Pakistan came into being. In the 1945 election to the Punjab Provincial Assembly, it was the Unionist Party and not the Muslim League which formed the government. The Muslim League launched a movement to unseat the Khizar Hayat government in early 1947.

**RADICAL BASE**

Today, the radical Islamic parties do not have a large electoral base in Punjab as reflected by the fact that the MMA...
The Jama’at-i-Islami and Majlise Ahrar had been virulently condemning the Muslim League and its leader Jinnah. They were the only two parties which used Islam to oppose the creation of Pakistan.

AFTER PARTITION

The Partition of India witnessed widespread communal bloodshed and killings and Mawdudi, in line with his opposition to it, called it “the bloody birth pangs of Pakistan, as predicting the birth of a monster and not a human being.”

The main base of the Ahrar in Punjab comprised the urban lower middle class which had been ignored by the feudal Unionist Party government and which was an ally of the Muslim League. Pakistan came into being in 1947 and created an ideological confusion for the religious parties. Most of them, particularly the three named above, had opposed Pakistan on political and religious grounds. The Jamaat-ul-Ulama had argued that nationhood is determined by geographical boundaries rather than by religion. The Jamaat-ul-Islami argued that nationalism was against Islam, and the Ahrar had opposed Pakistan because the leadership of the Muslim League comprised of westernised leaders and, hence, they could not be expected to build Pakistan as an Islamic state.

The Muslim League leaders had never spelt out the details of the political system of Pakistan and had done no home work about it. Jinnah had been throughout ambivalent and vague on the political system of Pakistan. However, he delivered a bombshell when he held out the contours of almost a secular Pakistan in his inaugural address at the first session of the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan on August 11,
1947. The new leaders of Pakistan used religion to silence the regional demands and as a tool for nation building and national integration. Initially, the religious parties which had opposed Pakistan were out of favour with the public. However, the Jama’at-i-Islami started a public campaign for the creation of an Islamic State. It participated in the first election held in early 1951 to the Punjab Legislative Assembly. It had fielded 53 candidates of which only one was elected and the Jama’at in total had polled 200,000 votes. Their main election argument, apart from some social and economic issues, was that Pakistan had been demanded and won in the name of Islam and now that it was there it should be made an Islamic state. The plan was that since most Muslims would not be able to oppose the demand, it would be put on the national agenda.

SECTARIAN STRIFE
By 1951-1952, the religious parties got hold of a popular cause to fight in the name of Islam in Punjab. It was the demand that the followers of Mirza Ghulam Ahmed, who had claimed to be a prophet, and his followers (called Ahmadies) be declared non-Muslims. This issue had been the cause of much bitter controversy ever since the last quarter of the 19th Century. The Ahrars and the Jama’at-i-Islami and other Ulama parties took up this highly explosive issue which snowballed into large-scale violence against the Ahmadies in various parts of Punjab. About 2,000 people, mainly belonging to the Ahmadi community, were killed in the attacks. The disturbances did not spread to other parts of the country as the Ahmadi population was mainly concentrated in Punjab. Before Partition, the Ahmadi religious centre was in Qadian, a town in East Punjab. In Pakistan, they had been allowed to set up their religious centre in a town near Sargodha called Rabwa in Punjab where the Ahmadi population is in a majority. Apart from the fundamental belief of the mainstream Muslims that the prophethood had come to an end with Prophet Muhammad, the landlords in Punjab were also keen to see that the Ahmadies were declared non-Muslims as then any Muslim who would convert to the Ahmadi religion would not inherit the parental property. This would discourage others from conversion and block the spread of the Ahmadi religion. The outbreak of violence against the Ahmadies forced the government to declare Martial Law in Punjab. Lal Masjid in 2007 was not the first time when the radicals took refuge in a mosque; this had happened earlier when the military had to force the anti-Ahmadi militants from their sanctuary in the Wazir Khan Mosque in Lahore. This episode marked the origin of radical Islam in Pakistan.

The Government appointed a commission, headed by Justice Muhammad Munir and Justice Kayani, to go into the causes of the Punjab disturbances and identify the persons and parties responsible. The Munir Commission, apart from going into the reasons for the outbreak of violence and fixing responsibility, went into the basic questions of Pakistan’s polity and role of Islam in the new country. It invited the leaders and Ulama of all the sects and schools of Islam and asked them two pertinent questions. First: to define who is a Muslim? Second: what rights a non-Muslim would have in an Islamic state. The Commission was clear that it was not its function to decide who is a Muslim and who is not but since Ulama were demanding that the Ahmadies be declared non-Muslims, they should identify who is a Muslim and who is not. Not surprisingly, almost all the Ulama gave a different definition of a Muslim. According to the Commission, keeping in view the several definitions given by the Ulama and that no two Ulama agreed on this fundamental question, to attempt their own definition, and if that definition were to differ from that given by all others, then they would “go out of Islam.” Similarly all the Ulama were almost unanimous that non-Muslims would not have equal rights with Muslims in an Islamic state. The anti-Ahmadi movement did not succeed in 1953 but the Ulama parties were able to wash away the stigma of their opposition to Pakistan in the pre-Partition days.

ZIA’S JIHAD
When General Ziaul Haq usurped power in 1977 he had no legitimacy whatsoever, and he made Islam the plank for his legitimacy. To his good fortune, his assumption of power was followed by the revolution in Iran the following year and, later, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. General Zia made Pakistan the frontline state in the western effort to defeat the Soviet misadventure. At home he declared Islamisation as the main objective of his regime. Several Islamic measures were introduced including the Hudood Ordinance, Zakat and Ushr, and Shariat benches were set up. These
measures provoked sectarian controversies, the Shias particularly objected to the compulsory deduction of the Zakat. Faced with strong Shia protests, General Zia withdrew the Zakat payment from the community. This created the strange situation where one sect alone was forced to pay the Zakat to the government. These controversies added fuel to fire, particularly in some districts of Punjab where Shia-Sunni relations were rather sensitive. There was a barely concealed attempt by the government to promote one sect and one particular school.

Religious parties were promoted, madrassas proliferated, all kinds of radical groups were allowed to carry on their Jihad propaganda and recruit young men for Jihad. Militant groups in Afghanistan were trained, armed with US weapons and Saudi funds to fight the Soviet army. For Zia, the state connections with Jaishe Mohammad. It was said that Azim Tariq, the slain SSP leader, was a close friend of Maulana Masood Azhar. The Sipah Sahaba could not spread among the rural people of Punjab where the Sufi influence was strong. However, the newly emerging Sunni merchants, shopkeepers and traders in the other districts of Punjab have made SSP the strongest organization in the province. After Jhang, the SSP concentrated on Multan which also has a large Shia population (40%) and has been known as the city which has the largest number of shrines, maus (mausoleums) and mosques in the world. The Deobandi madrassas have also proliferated in Punjab. The Waqf Madaris, the Deobandi madrassa Union is located in Multan. The Jamiatul Mujahideen Alami, which was suspected to have made an attempt on the life of General Musharraf in 2004, has links with a Deobandi madrassa. Madrassas of the other religious parties have also made their appearance in the southern part of Punjab.

The most prominent Shia organization, the Tehrik-i-Nifaz-i-Fiqh-i-Jafariya (TNFJ), was founded in Bhakkar in Punjab in 1979, in the background of the Iranian revolution and the increasing Sunni aggressive posture during General Zia’s rule. The founder was Allama Syed Jafar Hussain Mujtahid. The TNFJ aimed at asserting the separate identity of the Shias and protecting their religious rights in the face of the imposition of Sunni interpretation of Shariah that did not conform to their fiqh Jafariya. The militant wing of the TNFJ soon appeared thereafter, called the Sipah-i-Mujahid. Another offshoot of the TNFJ was the Imamiya Student Organisation. The TNFJ had launched the movement against the Zakat Ordinance that the hardline militant Sunni group Sipah Sahaba was formed in 1985, led by one Sunni leader of the Jamiatul Ulama-i-Islam (JUI), Haq Nawaz Jhangvi. Around the same time, the Shia militant organization, Tehrike Nifaze Fiqh Jafariya (TNFJ), was founded in Multan. This development reflected the fact that members of most of the religious parties who were Sunnis were promoting sectarian conflict. Haq Nawaz Jhangvi wanted to refute the Iranian claim that the Iranian revolution was an Islamic revolution and that it had no relevance to Pakistan and Islam. Jhangvi’s anti-Shia campaign assumed the form of persecution of the Shia population, preventing them from performing their religious rituals in Jhang. In 1990, some of the militant elements within the SSP formed another organisation called the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LJ) name after Haq Nawaz Jhangvi who had been assassinated in 1990. However, it is believed that the LJ is not a separate group but only the armed wing of the SSP. The SSP cadres received military training from the Harkatul Mujahideen (HuM) and at some Taliban camps in Afghanistan. The SSP also has close connections with Jaishe Mohammad. It was said that Azim Tariq, the slain SSP leader, was a close friend of Maulana Masood Azhar. The Sipah Sahaba could not spread among the rural people of Punjab where the Sufi influence was strong. However, the newly emerging Sunni merchants, shopkeepers and traders in the other districts of Punjab have made SSP the strongest organization in the province. After Jhang, the SSP concentrated on Multan which also has a large Shia population (40%) and has been known as the city which has the largest number of shrines, maus (mausoleums) and mosques in the world. The Deobandi madrassas have also proliferated in Punjab. The Waqf Madaris, the Deobandi madrassa Union is located in Multan. The Jamiatul Mujahideen Alami, which was suspected to have made an attempt on the life of General Musharraf in 2004, has links with a Deobandi madrassa. Madrassas of the other religious parties have also made their appearance in the southern part of Punjab.

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kat and the Usr Ordinance issued by the Zia regime in July 1980. The Shia fiqh did not accept the Sunni interpretation that Zakat had to be paid compulsorily to the state. The military regime gave in and the Shias were exempted from paying the Zakat. The TNFJ became a political party in 1987. It changed its name to Tehrike Jafriya Pakistan (TJP) in 1989. It was alleged that the TNFJ was receiving financial, moral and political help from Iran. The Sipah Muhammad (SMP) was alleged to be involved in criminal activities, such as gun running. It had an ambiguous relationship with the TJP. The SMP also accused the TJP of failure to protect the Shias from the SSP. The TNFJ, like its Sunni counterparts, has also been raked by dissensions. Some of its activists had been dissatisfied with the leadership of Allama Sajid Naqvi during the Ninetees. They formed another organization called the Shurai Whadat. The leaders of the new group denied that they had formed a parallel party and claimed that it was rather a federation of all the Shia groups and that even the TNFJ was a part of it. The TNFJ, now called the Islami Tehrik Pakistan (ITP) under the leadership of Allama Sajid Naqvi had joined the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) in 2002, the united front of the six religious parties, now the ruling party in the NWFP and a coalition partner in the provincial government in Balochistan. Apart from the Jamiatul Ulama-i-Pakistan, the Barelvi party, in the MMA, all the other four parties are Deobandi and hostile to the Shias. It was not surprising therefore, when Allama Sajid Naqvi, a Shia leader of one of the components of the MMA, was barred from entering NWFP in 2004. If that was not enough, the MMA did not nominate Allama Sajid Naqvi from NWFP for the seat to the Senate and was, instead, given the nomination from Punjab where the MMA did not have the required number of votes to ensure his election.

ORIGINS OF LASHKAR-E-TAIBA

The Ahle Hadith is not a centralized organization like the Jama’at-i-Islami. It is a kind of loose confederation of 17 organisations of Ahle Hadith. Every organization is built around a seminary. Out of the 17 organisations, six actually take part in politics. Three are in fact militant groups active in Afghanistan and in the Kashmir jihad. Their ideology is puritan Wahabi and they oppose Sufi practices and saints’ intercessions. Ahle Hadith Islam is closer to that of Saudis and they also receive funds from Saudi citizens. There are differences of rituals and also of political strategy which lead to mutual bickering and conflict among the different Ahle Hadith organizations though there is a central executive committee which is supposed to lead the various groups of the Ahle Hadith. Two of the well known organisations of Ahle Hadith are the Markazi Ahle Hadith led by Allama Sajid Mir and Jama’at wal Dawa led by Hafiz Saeed. The Markazi Ahle Hadith was formed in Bihar, India in 1906 and after Partition two centres were set up in Lahore and Faisalabad. It was transformed into a political party which aligned itself with the Muslim League. One of the important assets of the Jamiat Ahle Hadith is the central Waqf al-Madaris which looks after the Wahabi seminaries all over in Pakistan. It has a network of offices across Punjab. It has a youth branch called the Youth Force which is used in confrontations with the Shias. This is also linked to Sipah Sahaba. Another less known Ahle Hadith organization is Tehrik al Mujahideen. It is led by one Sheik Jamalur Rahman. He is also the head of Pakistan’s Muttahida Jihad Council, the apex organization of all militias fighting in Kashmir.

The most important of the Ahle Hadith factions is the one which had set up a major centre for their propaganda and Jihadi activities in the outskirts of Lahore in Punjab. It is called the Markaz Dawa wal Irshad. The Markaz came up in 1987 in Muridke outside Lahore and was set up by three university professors, Zafar Iqbal, Hafiz Mohmmad Saeed and Abdullah Azam. Abdullah Azam was assassinated in 1989. The stated objective of the institution was the preaching of Islam and Jihad. Its military wing, known as the Lashkar-e-Taiba, is much more known as one of the largest terrorist groups active in Jammu and Kashmir. The Markaz owes its huge setup to the munificence of Saudi and Gulf donors. It runs 30 schools which, apart from imparting education in secular subjects, are also geared to produce Mujahideen ready to wage Jihad. Most LeT recruits come from Punjab and Kashmir. Three districts of Punjab, Lahore, Gujranwala and Multan are known to be the strongholds of the LeT. The LeT does not disclose the number of militants it has sent into Kashmir. The entire institution of Dawa wal Irshad, including the LeT, is deeply involved with Pakistan’s agencies. Nobody attempts to probe deeply in its affairs for fear of the state. The Dawa wal Irshad holds its annual gathering at

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muridke which is comparable to that of the Tablighi Jama’at. The objective of the congregation is to spread the need for Jihad. Top leaders of the religious parties like the Jama’at-i-Islami, including Qazi Hussain Ahmed, Sardar Abdul Qayyum from PoK and others attend the gatherings. Lashkar leaders categorically reject any possibility of a negotiated solution of the Kashmir dispute and reject the system of constitutional democracy. It was members ascribing to the LCF ideology who set up a state within the state of Pakistan, inside the Lal Masjid, two months ago in Islamabad and began the Jihad within the country itself.28

**TABLIGHI JAMA’AT**

Punjab is the province where Tablighi Jama’at has set up its centre in Raiwind where it holds its mammoth annual gatherings which sometimes draw two million people. The Tabligh Jama’at is reputed to be the mother of all radical Islamic groups in the sense that people trained in the Jama’at are found in various groups across Pakistan. It is a known fact that the last civilian President of Pakistan, Mohammad Rafiq Tarar, father of the last elected Prime Minister Mian Nawaz Sharif, Mian Muhammad Sharif, one of the most notorious heads of the ISI, General Javed Nasir, were all associated with the Tablighi Jama’at. It is no less surprising that very little is known about its ideology or interpretation of Islam, mainly because it published very little about itself and very little has been written about it by others.29 During the last few years, however, considerable published material by the Tablighi Jama’at has become available. In comparison, the Jama’at-i-Islami has since its inception had a very well organized machinery of propaganda and publicity in almost all the languages of the Indian subcontinent.

The Tablighi Jama’at subscribes to the Deoband school of thought. The founders of the Deoband madrassa aimed at reviving the life and the days of the Prophet and his companions through their preaching and issuing of fatwas. They are strict adherents of the Hanafi Islamic law.30 The objective of the founder of the Tablighi Jama’at, Maulana Ilyas, was not the conversion of non-Muslims to Islam but to make Muslims better Muslims. The movement originated in the Mewat area of the present day Haryana state in India. This should be seen in the context of the Twenties of the 20th century when in the aftermath of failure of the Khilafat Movement, Muslims had started the Tanzim movement to counter the Shuddhi movement of the Arya Samaj. The methodology adopted for spreading the message of the Jama’at was through roving groups of preachers who were to abide by strict rules and regulations, which included paying one’s own expenses and staying normally in mosques while on preaching missions.31 The subject of the talks given by the preachers was built around six principles which were considered key principles of Islamic faith. The ideology and programme of the Tablighi Jama’at has been attacked by most other religious parties like the Jama’at-i-Islami, the Jamiatul Ulama-i-Islam and Ahle Hadith. The organisational structure of the Tablighi Jama’at is rather simple. Its international headquarters are located in India with regional offices in states, normally located in the mosques.32 The Tablighi Jama’at, as compared to other religious parties, strictly keeps itself out of politics despite the fact its annual mammoth gatherings in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh are attended by politicians of most Muslim parties. There have been numerous allegations of Tablighi Jama’at’s involvement in politics. For example it was reported that Hizbul Mujahideen (HuM) and Harkatul Jihadul Islami (HUJI) were allowed by the Tablighi Jama’at to use its infra structure in Raiwind in Punjab for training their militants.33 Al Qaeda evaded law enforcement agencies by sheltering its operatives behind Tablighi Jama’at’s generally benign religious activities.

In Pakistan, the Tablighi Jama’at set up its headquarters in Raiwind, Punjab. Since the Tablighi Jama’at has successfully spread the belief that it is not in politics it was able to mobilise many in the armed forces, government service and other professions in its activities.34 The Tablighi Jama’at’s involvement in the failed military coup in 1995 in Pakistan seriously compromised its claims to be apolitical. In September-October 1995, 36 military officers and 20 civilians led by Maj. Gen. Zaheerul Islam Abbasi35 were arrested for plotting to overthrow the government and they planned to declare the establishment of an Islamic state in Pakistan. They were part of the 10 Corps which was commanded by Lt Gen Ghulam Mohammad Malik who was a sympathiser of the Tablighi Jama’at. Gen Ghulam Mohammad Malik. Maj. Gen. Abbasi and Brig Mustansar Billah were the members of the Tablighi Jama’at in Taxila which was headed by Sufi Iqbal. Most of the military personnel involved were the followers of Sufi Iqbal. Gen Malik often invited Sufi Iqbal for lectures to his units. Almost all the members of the group were Punjabis and were...
in contact with the Tablighi Jama’at and other radical Ulama. While most of the military personnel were charged in the case, one Maulana Akram Awan, the leader of the Tanzimul Ikhwan, was released without being charged.36

JAISHE MOHAMMAD

One of the most militant radical groups based in Punjab and whose reach extends all over Pakistan, and large parts of India, is the Jaish-e-Mohammad led by Maulana Masood Azhar. Born in Bahawalpur in Punjab, he was educated at the famous madrassa Binori in Karachi. His baptism in jihad was in Afghanistan; he later shifted to Kashmir as an operative of the Hizbul Mujahideen. He was arrested in Kashmir and spent four years in prison and was released after the ISI sponsored hijacking of the Indian Airline Flight 814 in 1999. The entire climax of the hijacking at Kandahar highlighted the importance of Maulana Masood Azhar in the terrorist war launched by the ISI against India. On his return from Kandahar, Masood Azhar jettisoned the Hizbul Mujahideen and literally hijacked HuMs offices and properties to set up his own group called the Jaish-e-Mohammad.37 It soon became the most active group fighting in Kashmir. The Jaish was linked to Al Qaida and was funded by Osama bin Laden. Azhar was also in contact with Mullah Umar, the Taliban leader. Jaish-e-Mohammad’s close connection with the Pakistani establishment is attested by the fact that even when it was banned, its offices continued to function normally and its bank account was also active.38 Its office is located in Islamabad but its operational office is in Bahawalpur.

Jaish-e-Mohammad could show off its formidable organisation by terrorist attacks on the Indian Parliament on December 13, 2001 and earlier in October the same year on the Kashmir Legislative Assembly. The attack on the Indian Parliament led to an almost eyeball to eyeball confrontation between India and Pakistan. It was only after one year that the relations between the two countries could be brought back to “normal”. It is also to be noted that the Jaish-e-Mohammad was also responsible for the two attacks on General Musharraf. Even before Musharraf banned the Jaish in January 2002, it had changed its name to Jama’at-e-Furqan and later to Khudamul Islam. Later, the Jaish intensified its activities within Pakistan, attacking Churches and Shia mosques. It has close links with the Sipah Sahaba. It is said that their memberships overlap.39 The Jaish-e-Mohammad had wide contacts among the lower ranks of the military. It had a good popular base in Punjab. This was the result of the involvement of several military agencies with the terrorist groups.

TALIBANISATION

Recent events have shown that Talibanisation is known on the door of Punjab. The foregoing account of the spread of radical Islam in Punjab shows the progress that Jihadi elements have made in capturing religious institutions in the province. The next step is the proliferation of the Lal Masjids in Punjab. It is clear that some of the settled districts of the NWFP which are adjacent to Punjab are already Talibanised. In some of the districts of Punjab, like Gujranwala, Jhang, Multan Sargodha, the Taliban already call the shots. The Lal Masjid episode shows that a section of the Pakistani state actively supports the Taliban and radical Islam. The spread of the Talibanisation in Punjab will pose a serious threat to the stability of the state which is already facing a critical systemic crisis.

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