Al-Qai'da and the Globalization of the Indus Frontier: Religion, Sanctuary and Asymmetrical Warfare in the Pakistan-Afghanistan Borderland

Philip E. Jones, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/philip-jones/4/
AL-QA’IDA AND THE GLOBALIZATION OF THE INDUS FRONTIER: RELIGION, SANCTUARY AND ASYMMETRICAL WARFARE IN THE PAKISTAN-AFGHANISTAN BORDERLAND

Prepared for the WCAAS Conference
Arizona State University
October 9-11, 2003

By
Philip E. Jones, Ph.D.
Associate Professor and Director
Global Security and Intelligence Studies Program
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University
Prescott, AZ 86301

Telephone: 928-777-6992
E-Mail: jonphil@erau.edu
AL-QA'IDA AND THE GLOBALIZATION OF THE INDUS FRONTIER: RELIGION, SANCTUARY AND ASYMMETRICAL WARFARE IN THE PAKISTAN-AFGHANISTAN BORDERLAND

Summary

Usama bin-Laden’s use of the Pakistan-Afghanistan borderland as a protected sanctuary and staging area for political-military operations reproduces at a global level the historic use of the northwest frontier by Muslim religious-political groups to wage war against non-Muslim powers, whether regional or imperial. This paper posits that, beginning with the jihad of Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed (d. 1831), mounted between 1826 and 1831 in the Vales of Peshawar and Hazara against Sikh rule, there is a relatively unbroken tradition within Indic Sunni Islam of radical, and often violent, opposition to rule by non-Muslims in what were regarded as Muslim lands. Even when the orthodox Sunni establishment had drawn inward, as after the Great Rebellion of 1857, there were elements with of intractable opposition to British rule who consistently showed an ambition to restore Muslim rule by engaging in intrigues with Afghans, Persians, Turks, Germans, Russians, and, indeed, Soviet Communists. By establishing his protected base area in this region, bin-Laden is the most recent beneficiary of a long tradition.

The rugged physical structure of the region, the delight in war of its Pakhtun peoples, and its strategic role in the ‘Great Game’ have made the borderland historically attractive to numerous raiders, military adventurers, empire builders, and religious revolutionaries. Bin-Laden, the latest of the latter, has made his mark by adapting a regional sanctuary to support a ‘global jihad’ against the growing imperial pretensions of the United States. Al-Qa’ida has made effective, even brilliant, use of its opportunities in this volatile region, including the military lessons learned in the anti-Soviet Jihad of the 1980s, a capacity to use globally networked technologies and adherents, an acute understanding of the predilection of the Pakhtuns to religious appeals, and the unprecedented rise to rulership of the Sunni clergy in Afghanistan and now in Pakistan’s western border provinces. In essence, the Pakistan-Afghanistan borderland has become—and at least partially remains—the main base area for an evolving ‘Sunni Revolution’ in the world’s most unstable region, an arc of crisis extending from Kashmir in the east to Chechnya in the west.

The Retraction of Muslim Power in India

The eighteenth century marked the beginning of the worldwide decline of Muslim power, almost entirely at the hands of ascendant European states. At almost the same time, the three great Muslim empires of the day gave evidence they were past their prime, although, as Bernard Lewis puts it, “the change in the political and military balance of power between the Muslim and Christian worlds was slow and gradual, and it was some time before its lessons were seen, understood, and applied.” For the Ottoman Empire, the final failure of its armies to take Vienna in 1683, marked a defeat that was “clear and
unequivocal.”

For the Turks, the loss of this war, and the Peace of Carlowitz (1699) that ended it, “inaugurated a long period of almost unrelieved Muslim retreat before Christian power.” In Persia, the Safavid Empire sank out of sight in 1722, leaving the state at the mercy of Ottoman inroads and Afghan raiders. Nadir Quli Beg Shah revived the monarchy for a decade (1736-1747), before his assassination plunged Persia into civil war. The winners, the Qajars, ruled Iran until 1925 but were, as one historian puts it, a “generally deplorable” dynasty. By the end of the eighteenth century, the declined Persian state was coming under pressures from both Russia and Britain and in 1813 fought its first disastrous war with Russia. In India, in 1707, Aurangzeb, the last of the ‘great’ Mughal Emperors, died, leaving empire exhausted by his campaigns in the Deccan and thereafter hamstrung by Aurangzeb’s reversal of Akbar the Great’s policy of communal partnership.

The Mughal Empire’s decline after Aurangzeb was precipitous. After Aurangzeb, no emperor was able to stem the slow erosion of territory to rising regional powers—Marathas, Jats, Gurkhas, Sikhs, autonomous Muslim Nawabs and Sultans, Durrani Afghans in the northwest and the European merchant companies, particularly the British East India Company, moving inland from the coasts. The invasion and sack of Delhi by Nadir (Quli Beg) Shah of Persia in 1739 effectively broke the military paramountcy of the Mughals in North India and opened the way to the debilitating civil war of mid-century in and around Delhi. The arrival of Ahmad Shah Abdali in Delhi, ten years after he founded Afghanistan in 1747, did little to revive Muslim imperial fortunes. Invited in by Muslim notables and thinkers, including the great religious scholar, Shah Wali-u’llah, who was alarmed by the decline of Muslim power, Abdali simply lacked the means to rebuild a Muslim empire in India anew. Ruler of a turbulent and barely unified state, his army thoroughly pillaged Delhi and Mathura in 1757. At the same time, perhaps not surprisingly, Abdali failed to persuade most of the key Muslim potentates in and around Delhi and the Doab to permanently combine under his banner. His major contribution, of course, was to win the Third Battle of Panipat (1761) and thereby shatter the imperial ambitions of the Marathas. But the door he opened was not one that benefited Muslim power. It was the British who, in time, made the best use of the political and military fragmentation of India after Panipat.

Although it was not yet clear who would next dominate India, Shah Wali-u’llah was the first major Indian Muslim thinker to confront the retraction of Muslim power from lands Islam once had ruled. Already, much of western and central India was under Hindu Maratha princes, effectively cutting off the Muslim heartland of Delhi and the Doab from the powerful satrapy of Hyderabad. Shah Wali-u’llah’s response was to appeal to Muslim rulers in the region to rescue the Mughal Empire through military and political action. His first appeal was to Nizam-u’l-mulk Asaf Jah I (d. 1748), who refused to come north from Hyderabad; his second was to Najib-u’d-dawlah, a Ysufzai Pakhtun who had consolidated his position as the dominant chief of the Rohillas and who, Shah Wali-u’llah believed, would be an ideal ally of Ahmad Shah Abdali. Najib-u’d-dawlah elected to cooperate with Abdali, providing cavalry, protecting the invader’s flanks as he moved from Punjab to Rohilkhand to Delhi, and participating in the Battle of Panipat. “I am also an Afghan and you ought to protect the honour of the Afghans,” he wrote to Abdali.
Abdali’s final withdrawal from India in 1761 left Najib the dominant figure in Delhi, where he ruled as Mukhtar (Regent) for nine successful, if not unchallenged, years.

Shah Wali-u’llah believed the underlying cause of the Muslim political and military decline was the breakdown of Muslim society, particularly the collapse of public and private morality among Muslims. This had led to personal and political opportunism, maladministration, a growing sectarian divide between Sunnis and Shi’as, doctrinal quarrels among Sunnis over the proper role of sufism, and the economic exploitation of the common man and the poor—those he regarded as the real producers of wealth. Secure healthy societies, he believed, were those that maintained an equilibrium (tawaazun) between the variety of social, economic, and individual interests. To maintain such an equilibrium required “a continuous adjustment between the rights of individuals among themselves and the rights of individuals vis a vis the health of the society.” Such a “continuous readjustment” could only be accomplished through justice (adl), which is essentially a moral concept. For Shah Wali-u’llah, at least implicitly, the notion of equilibrium required a recognition of the “rights and interests” of individuals and groups and a social order that preserved at least the right to an adequate living for all. Much of Shah Wali-u’llah’s work was an attempt to ameliorate conflict and moderate sectarian tensions. He believed Muslims needed moral reformation in order to recreate the unity of thought and action that alone could preserve—or rescue—their political and military power, and—presumably—use it to restore the governmental and territorial sovereignty of Muslim rulership.

Shah Wali-u’llah’s ideas have retained a resonance and relevance throughout the two and a half centuries since his death. His work remains today an essential part of the ‘canon’ in orthodox Indic Islam and for Muslim thinkers outside the orthodox Sunni tradition. Shah Wali-u’llah particularly interests us because he planted the seeds of two ‘innovations’ that have come in part to define the resurgence of Sunni orthodoxy today. First, his link between morality, social stability and economic security was quite an original interpretation and endeared Shah Wali-u’llah to a generation of twentieth century Muslim thinkers who sought to find elements of ‘socialism’ in Islam. At the same time, this seed of ‘populism,’ planted in subcontinental Islam by Shah Wali-u’llah, was not unattractive to more orthodox reformists. As we shall note below, radical populism is a strong—though largely unrecognized—theme in the radical sectarian and jihadi groups currently active in the subcontinent. The contemporary emergence of populist aspirations in the jihadi networks in Pakistan is a key factor in the pressure of the religious groups against the old landed and administrative elites in Punjab and the North-West Frontier Province.

A second important aspect, as Barbara Metcalf has emphasized, is in his defining “a new pattern for the ‘ulama.” A “fundamental orientation” of Wali-u’llah’s work had been the hope that Muslim political leadership would be restored, with the ‘ulama carrying on their collaborative role of teaching and advising the ruler of the state. His successors found that hope to be in vain, and rather acted as the “internal caliphs” to the extent that it was possible in a situation of alien rule. In
doing so, they were indebted to Shah Waliyu’llah for a manifold legacy: a sense of their importance as leaders; a commitment to the study of hadis and Law; a model in personality and attainments; and a desire for unity based on religious obedience.13

Implicit in the “new pattern” for the ulama was the question of who should undertake the political leadership of the Muslim community in the absence of a legitimate Muslim sovereign. The notion that the ulama would function as “internal caliphs”—khalifas—was an important innovation in their institutional role and one that was, at a minimum, essentially political and potentially military. It is still a long way in time and evolution from this ‘seed’ of Shah Wali-u’llah—and one he may not have been conscious of planting—to the mullah-warriors of the great anti-Soviet Jihad in Afghanistan (1979-1988), who, as a class, became the rulers of Taliban Afghanistan in our own time. Nonetheless, the evolution of the political roles of the Sunni ulama and their rise to rulership, unprecedented in Sunni Islam, is fundamental element in the modern jihadi movement and an important theme in this paper.14

The Fatwah of 1803

By 1803, the trends perhaps dimly visible after Panipat were far more apparent. The Mughal Empire was an effete and powerless edifice, a legal fiction, its capital at Delhi effectively ruled by a British Resident.15 The intervening years had seen a bewildering interplay of alliances, betrayals, campaigns and assassinations between the darbāri (court) notables, the Rohilla Afghan chieftaincies, the Marathas, the Jats, the Sikhs—all against the background of the steadily encroaching British. The British took Delhi in September, 1803 at the outset of the Second Anglo-Maratha War. The French-trained army of Daulat Ram Sindhia, the Maratha Chief of Gwalior, was severely routed. With the arrival of British forces in Delhi, Lord Lake, Commander-in-Chief, had his first audience with the Emperor, who now became what Spear calls a “crowned stipendiary” of the Company Bahadur.16

Although the institutional shell of the imperial Mughal household was kept in being, the reality that political power had forever slipped from Mughal hands and into those of a foreign power was clear to all. The underlying base upon which all Muslim life was organized—political, military, legal, social, educational—was fundamentally altered with the passing of Muslim sovereignty. The most important response of the ulama came from Shah Abd-u’l-‘Aziz (1746-1824), eldest son and heir of Shah Wali-u’llah, who issued a series of fatwah (ruling in Islamic Law) that “the subcontinent was no longer dar-u’l-Islam, a land where the Faith enjoyed sovereign authority and political power,…[but] had been converted into a dar-u’l-harb, a land where Islam was not free.”17 According to one of these:

In this city (of Delhi) the Imam al-Muslimin (emperor) wields no authority, while the decrees of the Christian leaders are obeyed without fear (of the consequences). Promulgation of the commands of kufr means that in the matter of administration and the control of the people,…in the punishment
of thieves and robbers, in the settlement of disputes, in the punishment of offenses, the *kafirs* act at their own discretion…18

Shah ‘Abd-u’l-‘Aziz agreed the British—unlike the Sikhs—did not interfere in Islamic rituals, but only because these things did not matter to the new rulers. Moreover, the British had allowed certain regional Muslim states—Hyderabad, Rampur, Lucknow (Awadh)—to remain in existence, but only because the rulers of these territories had become subject to them. In other rulings, ‘Aziz allowed Muslims a limited degree of cooperation with the British. They could learn their language if its use was for beneficent purposes, they could enter their service if they were employed to suppress crimes, clarify points of Islamic Law, and perform any lawful service in the interests of the people. On the other hand, Muslims were forbidden to aid in the propagation of false beliefs and un-Islamic practices, help the British destroy Muslim lives or further subvert Muslim authority, or perform any service that resulted in injustice, iniquity, or the performance of unlawful acts.19

The *fatwah* of 1803 clearly put the Muslims of India on notice that they were living in bondage. According to I.H. Qureshi, “a legal implication of the ruling was that it was the duty of every Muslim to make all effort to restore such an area to its former status of a *dar-u’l-Islam*. 20 For Qureshi, the “ruling was of great importance, because it prepared the way for an armed struggle or *jihad.*” Shah ‘Abd-u’l-‘Aziz and the orthodox ‘ulama around him—his sons, his brothers and their sons—believed an armed struggle would ultimately have to be organized. Disaffection against the *kafirs* would have to be promoted and wider support organized. A military leader would have to be found. He must not only be a good fighter who could command the loyalty of his troops, but also a man of impeccable character.21

Such a future leader presented himself at the *Madrassah-i-Rahimiyah* in Delhi about the year 1804 and was kindly received by Shah ‘Abd-u’l-‘Aziz. Sayyid Ahmad had been born in 1786 at Rae Bareilly, in Awadh (Oudh) into a family that claimed descent from Hasan, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad.22 Even Sayyid Ahmad’s partisans do not acclaim his scholarly attainments at Delhi, although he appears to have developed into a sufi mystic of “great eminence” under training by Shah ‘Abd-u’l-‘Aziz.23 In other ways, Sayyid Ahmad appears to have been more a man of action, interested from his youth in manly sports, physical exercise and war games. In about 1811, Sayyid Ahmad left Delhi and joined the army of Amir Khan in Central India. Whether this was done with the blessing of the Delhi ‘ulama is unclear. I.H. Qureshi argues the evidence shows Sayyid Ahmad maintained a close and unbroken relationship with Shah ‘Abd-u’l-‘Aziz and his circle and speculates that Sayyid Ahmad was sent to Amir Khan for the purpose of acquiring military knowledge and skills.24

At the time Sayyid Ahmad went south from Delhi, Central India was in turmoil. The breakup of the Maratha Confederacy and the Maratha defeat in the Second Anglo-Maratha War spread political fragmentation and lawlessness in a broad band across Central India. The Thugs flourished during these years, as did the Pindari Chiefs, leaders of freebooting columns that raided annually over hundreds of miles. Only after the Third
Anglo-Maratha War (1818-1820) was this region gradually brought under control by British officials. According to R.C. Majumdar, Amir Khan was not a Pindari, but leader of the Central Indian Pathans. He operated as a mercenary, usually in the pay of the Holkars, one of the Maratha chieftaincies. During the Third Anglo-Maratha War, he ended up making his own peace with the British in return for their recognition of him in 1818 as the Nawab of Tonk, a principality in southeastern Rajasthan. It is unclear if Amir Khan’s submission to British paramountcy disillusioned Sayyid Ahmad, for the latter shortly left Amir Khan’s service and returned to Shah ‘Abd-u’l-‘Aziz in Delhi. For his part, the Nawab of Tonk reportedly provided assistance to Sayyid Ahmad in the coming years and aided his followers even after the Sayyid’s death.

The ‘Indian Wahhabis’ and the Jihad Movement

Sayyid Ahmad’s return to Delhi in 1818 marked his emergence as the leader of the next generation of the Delhi ‘ulama. A man of considerable stature and military bearing, with a powerful personality and an unimpeachable reputation as an eminent sufi shaikh (preceptor), Sayyid Ahmad moved to assert his own more activist leadership and reformist ideas. Many of the ‘ulama of Sayyid Ahmad’s generation in the Delhi Territories were drawn to Sayyid Ahmad, including Shah Isma’il (1781-1831), who would be martyred (shaheed) with him at Balakot, and Maulana Abd-u’l-Hayy (d. 1828), the son-in-law of Shah ‘Abd-u’l-‘Aziz. Both took bai’ah (oath of allegiance to a sufi preceptor) from Sayyid Ahmad. Shah Isma’il Shaheed, who was a nephew of ‘Aziz, was a particularly important member of the Sayyid’s inner circle. Isma’il was the Sayyid’s thinker, writer, and intellectual adviser—and a brilliant speaker in his own right. He was the author—compiler—of Sayyid Ahmad’s major works, the Siratu’l-Mustaqim (The Straight Path) and Taqwiyatu’l-Imam (Strengthening of the Faith) and author of several of his own.

Much of what Sayyid Ahmad proposed in reforming Islam reproduced or paralleled the demands of the Wahhabi Movement in Arabia, just then losing its political and military hold on the Hejaz. Undoubtedly, Wahhabi influences had reached India with returning Haj pilgrims. Like the Wahhabis, Sayyid Ahmad stressed above all the centrality of tauhid, the transcendent unity of God, and denounced all those practices and beliefs that were held in any way to compromise that most fundamental of Islamic tenets. God alone was held to be omniscient and omnipotent; He alone, entitled to worship and homage. As Metcalf notes, Sayyid Ahmad pressed his reforms in three areas: false sufism, Shi’i doctrine and practice, and popular custom. As a sufi, he opposed practices such as tasawwur-i-shaikh, that is mystical contemplation on the name and life of one’s shaikh, and replaced the classical internal forms of sufi contemplation with devotion to the Prophet, his life, and the Law. This he called the tariqat-i-muhammadiyyah, or the way of the Prophet. This approach—to model oneself on the Prophet and his life—through disciplined study and exercises, and to emulate his struggle, was adopted in the twentieth
century by the Islamist movements in Egypt (Ikhwan or Muslim Brotherhood) and the subcontinent (Jama’at-i-Islami), and more recently by the jihadi movements in the ongoing Sunni Revolution. These include the Egyptian Islamic Jihad of Ayman al-Zawahiri and Al-Qa’ida. Unlike the Arabian Wahhabis, or Haji Shariat’ullah and the Fara’idi Movement in Bengal, Sayyid Ahmad never denounced sufism—after all, his status as a great sufi shaikh was the basis of his religious authority. But more important than that was the fact that sufism was deeply interpenetrated with Sunni orthodoxy in the subcontinent.

His approach to the Shi’as was far less stringent than that of the Arabian Wahhabis, who conquered Karbala in 1802 with the war cry, “Kill and strangle all infidels which give companions to God,” and then proceeded to grind into the dust all the Shi’a shrines, including the golden domed tomb of al-Hussain. Starting with Shah Wali-u’Illah, the Delhi ‘ulama had eschewed violent conflict with the Shi’as, believing that Muslim unity was a greater priority. The Shi’as were not a negligible factor in Muslim politics: Awadh was a Shi’a kingdom and Lucknow a Shi’a capital and a significant portion of the Muslim nobility around the Mughal court were Shi’a. The Sunni ‘ulama preferred persuasion and debate to sectarian conflict and, while Sayyid Ahmad was no more prepared to compromise on doctrine than his predecessors, he kept his criticisms within bounds. Otherwise, Ahmad inveighed against all the ritual and liturgy that had grown up around popular forms of Islam: the veneration of saints, the belief in intercessory powers of holy men, the worship at shrines, and various Hindu influences that had crept into Muslim social life, such as the ban on widow remarriage.

Like the Arabian Wahhabis, Sayyid Ahmad practiced and promoted an austere, ascetic form of Islam, shorn of all heterodox forms and ritualistic complexity, and devoted to the simple worship of God through prayer, the creed (kalima), the fast, the pilgrimage, and the giving of alms (zakat). To this he added the performance of jihad, the duty to struggle in the way of God and, when called by the Imam, to fight against the enemies of Islam. This regeneration of the basic duties of Islam was seen by Ahmad in the context of a new life, formed within the discipline of the tariqat-i-Muhammadiyyah, with new political, military, social and economic aims and obligations.

Once the decision to pursue jihad had been taken, considerable debate appears to have gone on within Sayyid Ahmad’s circle about how and where this should occur. The problem for the Delhi ‘ulama was that, legally at least, the Mughal Emperor was still the Imam-i-Muslimeen. This was so, despite the designation of India as dar al-harb and under the de facto control of the Company Bahadur. For the Delhi ‘ulama, who had close ties with the imperial darbar, the legal fiction of the supremacy of Muslim rule was more important than contemporary political reality. Any move to engage in war against the putative rulers of North India would mean rebellion (fitna), not jihad. The Prophet Muhammad had been uncompromising in his opposition to virtually all forms of rebellion. In the Qur’an, Muslims are called to “Obey Allah, and obey the Apostle, and those charged with authority among you.” Sayyid Ahmad reportedly said he wanted the jihad to originate in a territory that could be called dar al-amn (land of peace), hence, the selection of the realm of the independent Pakhtun tribes on the northwestern border of the
subcontinent. Whether it was a land of peace would have been debatable, but at the time it was chosen it was under the rule of Muslims.

The Delhi ‘ulema did think about the question of when rebellion was justified against a Muslim ruler. In his Mansab-i-Imamat,33 Shah Isma’il Shaheed analyzed the religious requirement of Muslims to be loyal toward four types of despotic or dissipated Muslim rulers. First, toward the ruler “who does what he wants without any regard for the shari’ah and custom,…but whose heart sometimes is filled with regard for the …Dignified Faith and the Explicit Shari’ah…” there is no right of rebellion. Second, toward the despot “who does not have enough fear of God in his heart to perform the commandments of the shari’ah with sincerity…,” who permits the laws “gradually to take a form opposed to the…shari’ah,” and who issues decrees that flagrantly contravene the ordinances of God, Isma’il advises caution because “we cannot definitely state that these sultans have become kafirs.” In this case, attacking a misguided Iman is forbidden, but the Muslim should not consider anyone else who takes such action to be culpable. Third, where the sultan realizes he has inherited an unlawful system of government and adheres to it because he lacks the courage or power to alter it, the Muslim can rebel if it is certain that a “pious Khilafat or a Just State” will be established. Fourth, toward a sultan who is Muslim in name, but who has in fact become a kafir, bent on disgracing Islam, it is the duty of Muslims to undertake jihad against the ruler.34

Clearly, there is a good deal of subjective judgment required of a Muslim in considering the status of despotic rulers. To some degree, Shah Isma’il follows the prominent medieval thinker, Ibn Taymiyya (1268-1328), though his approach seems more academic, complex, and less easy to apply. Ibn Taymiyya asserted that a

   professed Sunni Muslim ceases to be one when he fails to keep (or in the case of a Muslim ruler, apply) the Shari’a, when he breaks major injunctions concerning life and limb, property, jihad and the status of non-Muslims, the sexual code of behavior, alcoholic prohibition, gambling.35

Taymiyya’s disciple, Ibn Kathir (1300-1372/73), was clearer about the point at which the ruler becomes an apostate and therefore subject to legitimate rebellion. For him, those rulers who give man made laws priority over the laws of Allah, as laid down in the Qur’an and Sunna, “are infidels and should be combated until they comply with the laws of God.”36 It is this latter formulation that inspired the Arabian Wahhabis, and later Sayyid Qutb (d. 1964), founder of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, and the followers of Usama bin-Laden today.

Otherwise, of course, the Sayyid’s decision to pursue jihad on the North-West Frontier obviated the need to fight against the British—at least initially. Given his experience with Amir Khan in Central India, Sayyid Ahmad would not have been naive about British military power. In his own words, he rejected pleas from “many who advised me to carry on jihad in India, promising me… whatever was necessary by way of material treasure and weapons.”37 Were the British the ultimate focus of a successful jihad? Some later Muslim commentators say ‘no.’38 Professor I.H. Qureshi, however, believes the British
were the ultimate enemy, starting from the 1803 fatwah of Shah ‘Abd-u’l-‘Aziz. M. Mujeeb agrees the jihad against the Sikhs was “intended, ultimately, to be converted into a war against the British.” According to Qureshi, the early versions of the fatwah explicitly mention the British. He claims these versions were mutilated by later authors, writing after the failure of the Great Rebellion, or Sepoy Mutiny, of 1856-1857. One of these was Maulana Muhammad Ja’far Thanesari, who fought alongside Sayyid Ahmad. As Qureshi notes, Thanesari’s claim the British were not the object of the jihad is belied by the fact that Thanesari fought on, after the death of Sayyid Ahmad, against the Sikhs and then against the British, who replaced the Sikhs as rulers of the Punjab.

Organizing the Jihad

In 1819 and 1820, after the outlines of the jihad had been decided upon, Sayyid Ahmad and his inner circle made tours of Rohilkhand, and the Doab, and Awadh, arousing widespread support and devotion. The connection with the Delhi circle of Shah ‘Abd-u’l-‘Aziz was important in establishing the Sayyid’s appeal, but his own persona and organizational skills appear to have galvanized growing support. As Metcalf observes Sayyid Ahmad and his followers believed that he was at least the “renewer,” the mujaddid of the faith for his century; at most, the promised Mahdi who would come at the end of time to destroy evil and initiate a new society. In the life of Sayyid Ahmad they saw parallels to the life of the Prophet, of whose family he was. Both were uneducated; both were subject to trances and dreams; both awoke people from their forgetfulness of God’s law. Sayyid Ahmad’s two faithful lieutenants were likened to the Prophet’s own Companions: ‘Abdu’l Hayy to the quiet and dignified Abu Bakr and Muhammad Isma’il to the brave ‘Umar.

In July 1821, Sayyid Ahmad and a substantial entourage left Rae Bareilly on a journey to perform the haj at Mecca. The party went largely by river boat to Calcutta, then onward by sailing vessel. The trip downriver yielded evidence of the Sayyid’s large following. Donations sufficient to fund his travels were collected and Sayyid Ahmad took the oath (ba’it) from great numbers—the holding of unwound turbans gathered in the Sayyid’s hands being deemed a sufficient replacement for the touching of hands. At Patna, four khalifas (deputies) and a spiritual leader were appointed to maintain an organization that had roots throughout North India, Bengal, and the Deccan. The Patna Jama’at (community) appears to have been both quite substantial and largely covert. It long outlived its founder, supplied recruits and war material to the successors of the Sayyid on the Frontier, and its leaders were hauled into court by British authorities several times in subsequent decades. After its formation, as one historian notes

This jama’at built up its ‘program of invitation’ (nizam-i-da’wat)…through a network of centers for the propagation and purification of Islam, villages being the basic units. Propaganda was carried out by word of mouth among the masses, and by popular pamphlets among the literate; imams were ap-
pointed in mosques to teach essentials of faith; subscriptions were raised in units to finance the movement and controlled in a public treasury; and Muslim courts were established to administer justice among Muslims according to Muslim law, parallel to government courts.45

The Sayyid returned to Rae Bareilly in April 1824. On January 17th, 1826, he started his lieutenants and followers on an eleven-month journey to the frontier. They took the long way around, avoiding Sikh-held Punjab: Gwalior, Tonk, Rajputana, Sindh, Baluchistan, Qandahar, Ghazni, Kabul, Jalalabad, and Peshawar. In December 1826, Sayyid Ahmad crossed the Kabul River near Nowshera and established his headquarters at Panjtar in the Khudu Khel hills north of Swabi. Panjtar was the base of Fateh Khan, a leading Yusufzai Malik, the ally and early protector of the jihad leader. The Sayyid was followed to the region by thousands of his devotees.

In the name of God, Sayyid Ahmad issued a religious manifesto and call to jihad:

The Sikh nation have long held sway in Lahore and other places. Their oppressions have exceeded all bounds. Thousands of Muhammadans have they unjustly killed, and on thousands they have heaped disgrace. No longer do they allow the Call to Prayer from the mosques, and the killing of cows they have entirely prohibited. When at last their insulting tyranny could not more be endured, Hazrat Sayyid Ahmad (may his fortunes and blessings ever abide!), having for his single object the protection of the Faith, took with him a few Musalmans, and, going in the direction of Cabul and Peshawar, succeeded in rousing Muhammadans from their slumber of indifference, and nerving their courage for action. Praise be to God, some thousands of believers became ready at his call to tread the path of God’s service; and on the 20th Jumadi-ul-sani, 1242 Hijra (21st December 1826), the Jihad against the Infidel Sikhs begins.46

As Sir Charles Metcalfe, later acting Governor-General of India (1835), wrote to the then Governor-General (Amherst):

Syed Ahmed, Maulvi Ismail and their colleagues have established a very extensive, if not universal influence over the minds of our Mohammedan subjects. During the period of their recent attacks on Ranjit Singh’s territories, the most fervent anxiety for their success pervaded the Mohammedan population at Delhi. A number quitted their houses and marched to join them, including some who resigned their employment in the Company’s service, both the military and civil branches, for that purpose. It is said that the King of Delhi encouraged this spirit.47

Peshawar and Lahore

This jihad movement of the nineteenth century, that perhaps most parallels Al-Qa’ida, now burned its brightest between 1826 and 1831 in a triangular region bounded by
Peshawar, Saidu Sharif, and Mansehra in what today is the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) of Pakistan. This region, or at least the Plains of Mardan south of the mountains of Buner and Swat, and the Haripur plain of Hazara, which borders on Kashmir, had recently undergone a major political and strategic shift, having been lost—along with Kashmir—by the Durrani Kingdom of Afghanistan to the Sikh Kingdom of Lahore. In November, 1818, for the first time in eight centuries, at least since the final overthrow of the Hindu Shahis in 1021, a non-Muslim ruler, the inimitable Maharajah Ranjit Singh of Lahore, had led a victorious army through the streets of Peshawar.

The loss of the Vales of Peshawar, Hazara and Kashmir were only one indication of the long decline of Muslim power in the subcontinent. By 1752, Mughal sovereignty had evaporated in the Punjab and Kashmir, to be followed by half a century of intermittent Durrani rule from Kabul. Established by Ahmad Shah Abdali, Durrani rule was never wholly successful in the Punjab. Abdali and his Saddozai successors—Taimur Shah and Shah Zaman—made many expeditions to Lahore, putting down recalcitrant governors, collecting revenue, and attempting to contain the Sikhs. But, it was the latter who were the real rising power in the region. After more than a century of conflict with the Mughals, including long years of guerrilla war, the Sikhs were emerging as a warrior people and the true inheritors of the Punjab, their war bands (misls) having gained control over most of the region. In 1799, Shah Zaman appointed Ranjit Singh, the rising leader of the Sukerchakia misl, to the governorship of Lahore.

Ranjit Singh shortly jettisoned Afghan patronage, consolidated his territories and began the steady expansion of his kingdom. When he died in 1839, his governors held all of Punjab, except the cis-Sutlej territory of the Company, plus Kashmir, the trans-Indus plain (dhaman) from Dera Ismail Khan to Rojhan, the Potwar, Hazara, and the Vale of Peshawar up to the Khyber Pass. Quite probably, he would have gone farther, had not the British stopped his diplomatic probes across the Sutlej, and his thrusts toward Bahawalpur, Sindh, and even Jalalabad in Afghanistan. By July, 1813 the Sikhs were in possession of the great fort at Attock on the Indus and had, for the first time, beaten the Afghans in open battle, this in the Chachh upriver from Attock. They still had to finally subjugate the powerful Rajput Ghakkar tribe around Rawalpindi and the Kharrals of the Upper Haro and were just entering on a long struggle to pacify Hazara. West of the Indus and increasingly diverted by internecine conflicts in Kabul between the Saddozais and the upstart Barakzai brothers—the many sons of Payandeh Khan,—the Durrans found it difficult to hold on to their more distant provinces. In 1818, taking advantage of civil war in Kabul, the Lahore Maharajah led his army across the Indus at Attock, brushed aside the Khattak allies of the Afghans at Khairabad, defeated the Durrani troops at Nowshera, and marched into Peshawar on November 19th.

The Afghans recovered Peshawar shortly after Ranjit Singh’s return to Lahore, but envoys of Dost Muhammad—rising star of the Barakzais—shortly arrived at the Maharajah’s court (Durbar) and promised to pay revenue to the Sikh state and recognize the Durbar’s title over Peshawar. Ranjit Singh agreed to this and to the appointment of Yar Muhammad Khan, a brother of Dost Muhammad, as Governor of Peshawar. In 1822, infuriated at the payment of revenue to the Durbar, the people of the Peshawar area
revolted against Yar Muhammad. Led by Azim Khan, elder brother of Yar Muhammad, some 25,000 Ghazis (holy warriors), mostly Khattaks and Yusufzais, took over the city. Yar Muhammad prudently took refuge in the nearby mountains. Again, Ranjit Singh, Lion of the Punjab, led an army north, commanded by his best generals (Misr Diwan Chand, Hari Singh Nalwa, and Akali Phula Singh) and incorporating newly trained divisions led by European officers (General Jean Francois Allard, Jean Baptise Ventura) and General Balbahadra of the Gurkhas. On the banks of the Landai, the Sikhs administered a crushing defeat on the Durrani army. The battle featured the inevitable clash between the shock troops of each side—the Muslim Ghazis and the Sikh Nihangs—but the superb Sikh artillery and disciplined infantry and cavalry of Ranjit Singh’s own ‘New Model Army’ shattered the Afghan units. Once again the Lahore Maharajah entered Peshawar, once again he pardoned Yar Muhammad and Dost Muhammad, and once again re-instated Yar Muhammad as Governor.

The Jihad: Fighting in the Path of God

The situation into which Sayyid Ahmad arrived was highly fluid. While the Sikhs had the most powerful army, they had only partial control of the region—the major towns, the roads and the lowlands when they wanted to, but not the mountain rim to the north (Bajaur, Malakand, Swat), west (Khyber), or south (Kohat). The Durbar eventually placed garrison forts at Jamrud and Shabqadar, in addition to Peshawar and its forces ranged widely, up to the mountain skirts to the north but not beyond. Like the Durrans, the Sikhs dealt with the mountain tribes through middlemen or agents resident in the villages around Peshawar. Like the Durrans, too, the Sikhs paid stipends to influential chiefs to keep their tribes in check, a policy that, for the Sikhs, clearly had minimal results. But they never really settled the country. Even in Peshawar, the Sikhs had to be constantly on guard against ambush and brigandage. In Peshawar, the Barakzais were constrained to rule an unhappy dependency of Lahore, caught between the Durbar and the heightening fury of their own people, the Afghans and the Pakhtun tribes of the Vale of Peshawar. They constantly schemed to free themselves from Sikh suzerainty and, indeed, later—in 1834—Dost Muhammad, now Amir of Afghanistan, would mount a major expedition to regain his Peshawar dominions. For them, the arrival of Sayyid Ahmad, who had avoided Kabul on his trip to the region, cannot have been a welcome development. The Sayyid quickly denounced the Barakzai Governor of Peshawar for ruling under the imprimatur of a non-Muslim state and began to fan the flames of revolt still burning among the Pakhtuns, particularly the Khyberis (Afridis and Shinwaris), the extensive Yusufzai clans of the old heartland of Gandhara, and the Khattaks along the Indus. Barakzai elements apparently did join the army of the jihadis, perhaps as part of the complicated game the Barakzai brothers had to play. Later, the Barakzais were accused of deserting the Sayyid’s army on the eve of battle, leading to the latter’s defeat, but this was after the Pakhtun enthusiasm for the jihad had begun to cool.

In any event, in 1826 the position of Yar Muhammad at Peshawar had become delicate. The tribes had risen under Sayyid Ahmad and were beginning to encroach on the city. Hari Singh Nalwa, followed by Ranjit Singh, arrived to stiffen the governor’s resistance to the Sayyid. The latter stayed in the hinterlands, engaged in the endless bargaining with
Pakhtun clan chiefs needed to build up his forces. The total size of his army at its height is estimated at 25,000. Perhaps a fifth of these were his followers from India, the *mujahideen*, or, as British officials called them, the ‘Hindustani Fanatics.’ They were joined by a group of Qandaharis—Durranis—who accepted the religious authority of Sayyid Ahmad as *Imam*. The larger portion of the whole were tribal contingents—a *lashkar*—who freely associated themselves with the Sayyid, and just as freely decided if, when, where, and how they would fight. The *jihadi* army lacked significant artillery, although it attempted to develop a disciplined infantry. The main force was, of course, mounted tribal cavalry. What it lacked in discipline and maneuver, was partly made up by its capacity for stealth and rush in the night, its passion, and its love of booty.

This was not an army that could confront a determined Sikh force, so that much of what the Sayyid could accomplish depended on guerrilla strategies, on timing, and on finding small, isolated Sikh units. One such ‘success’ occurred in 1827 at Shaidu, an entrenched position between Akora Khattak and Jahangira, where the Sayyid’s assault was beaten off, despite the loss of the Sikh Commander, Budh Singh Sindhanwalia. This small battle and other skirmishes were advertised as great victories over the Sikhs by the Sayyid’s followers in North India, further producing recruits, money and resources for the *jihadis*. In 1829, Sayyid Ahmad accused Yar Muhammad of having attempted to poison him and attacked Peshawar. Yar Muhammad went out to meet the assault and was killed in battle. Only the fortuitous presence of a Sikh force under Ventura prevented the city from falling to the *jihadis*—Ventura was in Peshawar to secure a famous horse for the Maharajah. The Governorship of the Peshawar dependency was now conferred on Sultan Muhammad Khan, brother of Yar Muhammad.

Denied before Peshawar, Sayyid Ahmad turned eastward, reportedly in an attempt to spread the *jihad* through Hazara and into Kashmir. His main patron at this time was Sayyid Akbar Shah of Sithana. Sayyid Akbar was both a proven leader of tribal warfare and a descendant of the Pir Baba of Buner, the most revered saint of the Eastern Yusufzai, the Bunerwals, and the Utmanzai along the Indus right bank. By all accounts, Sayyid Akbar and his younger brother, Sayyid Umar Shah, became deeply devoted to Sayyid Ahmad, sticking with him until the end—and beyond. Sithana, a village on the right bank of the Indus near Tarbela, now became a base for the *jihad*. The two Sayyids first occupied Amb, a small principality west of the Indus that was traditionally hostile to Sayyid Akbar. Sayyid Ahmad then crossed the Indus to invest the Sikh fort at Tarbela. At the same time, he sent a nephew, Ahmad Ali Shah, deeper into Hazara, possibly to follow up contacts with the Tanaolis and the Sayyids of the Kaghan (Kunhar) Valley, the latter lying on the border of Kashmir. Unfortunately for the *mujahideen* forces, Hari Singh Nalwa and Allard were in the region and marched to lift the siege of Tarbela. They also wiped out to a man the force led by Ahmad Ali Shah, coming upon them at Phulra on the right bank of the Siran.

With reports of the Sayyid in Hazara, Ventura apparently felt it safe to depart from Peshawar. Sayyid Ahmad now made quick use of his opportunity. Appearing before the city, he swept aside the Barakzai forces and drove out the Governor, Sultan Muhammad Khan. The Sikhs temporarily withdrew east of the Indus while, in Peshawar, Sayyid
Ahmad declared himself *Khalifa* and had coins struck in his name bearing the inscription: “Ahmad the Just; the glitter of whose scimitar scatters destruction among the infidels.” This move was premature and impolitic, since the Sayyid had not consolidated his hold on the Pakhtun tribes, who would be the ones to keep him in power. Caroe calls it a *folie de grandeur*, but it was perhaps understandable. Surely, the establishment of a Muslim state, presumably one run according to the *Shari'ah* as interpreted by the Indian Wahabbis, was seen as the proper objective of a *jihad* to replace the non-Muslim Sikhs and their compromised Barakzai dependents. As much as his own apotheosis, Sayyid Ahmad may have seen the declaration of a Muslim state as necessary to hold his fraying confederation together. He might have been more successful had he raised a native Pakhtun—such as Sayyid Akbar—to the *gaddi* (throne, seat of authority) in Peshawar.

By this time, the Sayyid’s coalition indeed was fraying, even beginning to fragment as relations between the Pakhtun tribes and the *mujahideen* from India deteriorated. Sayyid Ahmad is blamed by most historians for pushing his agenda too strongly among the independent tribesmen and pressing for implementation of the *Shari'ah*, even when this conflicted with the code of the tribesmen, the *Pakhtunwali*. In the beginning, the tribes had paid *ushr* to the Sayyid’s ‘government,’ which seemed a legitimate tax to pay a leader of *jihad*, but resisted other attempts to tax. The immediate cause of conflict was the Sayyid’s call for brides to be presented to his Indian followers from among the Pakhtuns, chiefly the Yusufzais, and for the khans to give up their custom of marrying their daughters only to the wealthy within the tribe or clan and then only in return for a handsome bride price—or dowry—from the husband’s family. This is the reverse of how it is done in Punjab and farther south—the bride’s family produces the dowry—and has always opened the Pakhtun to the charge of avarice and of selling their daughters. Be that as it may, the whole question of marrying their women profoundly touched the family honor of the Yusufzais—to marry outside the tribe “is seen as exposing a family’s sense of shame and honor.” This, then, prompted a revolt and disengagement from the Sayyid’s cause. The Pakhtun allies may also have been upset at the rise of an outlander—even a Muslim outlander—to claim the rulership of Peshawar. For all their shortcomings, the Barakzais were Pakhtuns, while the Sayyid, for all his Pakhtun (Pathan) connections, was not even a down country Pathan, a *Hindki*. A further factor may have been Sikh rupee diplomacy. Through their agents in Peshawar, the Sikhs had been offering key khans and clans sums of money to disengage from their alliance with the Sayyid.

After only two months, his allies evaporating, Sayyid Ahmad was compelled to give up Peshawar to Sultan Muhammad and the Sikhs under Prince Sher Singh. Sultan Muhammad preserved the honor of the Sayyid by agreeing—formally, at least—to pay the latter a fixed tribute. Increasingly abandoned by most of their Pakhtun allies, the Indian *mujahideen* headed east to the Indus. Perhaps hoping for a comeback, Sayyid Ahmad left deputies in most of the Yusufzai villages. According to Sir Olaf Caroe, all the Sayyid’s deputies were killed on a winter night, when a signal beacon blazed from the mountain of Karamar, an isolated ridge visible from Mardan to Swabi in the midst of the Yusufzai Samah. During the winter of 1830-1831, Sayyid Ahmad gave more attention to Hazara, occupying the Black Mountain glens of Konsh and Bhogarmang, to Tikri and
Nindihar, infiltrating the plain of Manshera, and strengthening his anti-Sikh alliance with the Sayyids of Kaghan. But, he was not left alone by the Sikhs, who feared the spread of the *jihad* into Kashmir. As important a figure as Prince Sher Singh led the Sikh forces that shadowed the remnant *mujahideen* army.

In early May, 1831, apparently alerted by local enemies of the Sayyid, Sher Singh caught Sayyid Ahmad and some 600 followers by surprise at Balakot, just above the debouchment of the Kaghan Valley. The battle was described by Alexander Gardner, later a Colonel in the Lahore army, who was with the *mujahideen* at the time:

Syed Ahmed and the Maulvi (Abdul Haye), surrounded by his surviving Indian followers, were fighting desperately hand to hand with the equally fanatical Akalis of the Sikh army. They had been taken by surprise and isolated from the main body of the Syed’s forces, which fought very badly without their leader. Even as I caught sight of the Syed and Maulvi they fell pierced by a hundred weapons. Those around them were slain to a man, and the main body dispersed in every direction….I was literally within a few hundred yards of the Syed when he fell, but I did not see the angel descend and carry him off to paradise, although many of his followers remembered afterwards that they had seen it distinctly enough.

Among those killed along with Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed, was Shah Isma’il Muhammad Shaheed. According to Sikh traditions, Sher Singh treated the body of the Sayyid with respect, draping it in an expensive shawl before burial. There is no known grave of the Sayyid. The Sikhs were wise in this, for a grave would have become a major shrine and focus for *jihadi* discontent. According to some traditions, the remains of Sayyid Ahmad had been decapitated, and his body buried at Balakot with those of his dead, and the head elsewhere at some unknown place. The ‘disappearance’ of the body led to some claims among his followers that he had not died and would come again. In other circumstances this might have been the beginning of a larger myth of occultation and return, but not for these Sunni Wahhabis, for whom the worship of graves and shrines, and their occupants sleeping in the odor of holiness, were beyond the pale of Islam.

**Establishing the Jihadi Base**

The martyrdom of Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed did not end *jihadi* activity on the Frontier, but it did change the movement from a sweeping campaign against the enemies of Islam to an intermittent insurgency, one where a remnant colony, established in tribal territory and still covertly aided by like-minded elements in India, participated in various tribal outbreaks against the Sikhs and later the British. The will to *jihad* among the Hindustani adherents of the Sayyid remained unbroken, even if the instrument had been shattered against the anvil of Sikh power. Nonetheless, although greatly weakened, the movement survived and remained a coherent force on the Frontier at least until the Battle of Ambela in 1863, with occasional glimpses thereafter of covert activity against the British by a very small remnant.
Immediately after the Battle of Balakot, the *jihadi* forces regrouped at Agora and Kaghan in the middle reaches of the Valley and then filtered through the remote vales of northern Hazara to Sithana. How large this force was we do not know, although some reports suggest the Sayyid had been surprised at Balakot with only part of his army and that the larger portion had been unable to join the battle before the issue was decided. Some *mujahideen* took temporary shelter in Nandihar under local protection, but soon overstayed their welcome and withdrew to Panjtar and Sithana. Formal leadership fell to Shaikh Wali Muhammad (of Phulat), who was elected *Amir*, then to Mir Awdal Ali, neither of whom was particularly effective. Mawlna Nasir-u’d-din (of Manglor in Bijnore), another in the tradition of fighting mullahs, provided military leadership, but was killed in a clash with locals. The Hindustani *mujahideen* thus continued to elect their own leaders, but, increasingly dependent on their Sithana host, the group really looked to Sayyid Akbar Shah and his successors for protection. Sayyid Akbar Shah would die in 1857, but his place was taken by his brother, Sayyid Umar Shah, then by his own son, Sayyid Mubarik Shah, and finally by Umar’s son, Sayyid Mahmud Shah.

We come now to a period of war, revolt and territorial change in the region, which finally fixed the northern frontiers of British India and of its modern successor states, Pakistan and India. This period, which really begins with the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1839) and the start of the First Anglo-Afghan War (1839-1842), encompasses the First and Second Anglo-Sikh Wars, 1845-1846 and 1848-1849 respectively, and ends with the failure of the Great Rebellion (aka Sepoy Mutiny, or First War of Independence) in 1858. We have no space here to cover these events in detail. Suffice it to say, this period saw British territorial control pushed across the Punjab, the Indus and Vale of Peshawar to the Khyber and consolidated there, despite temporary reverses in Afghanistan (1842), during the Second Anglo-Sikh War, and smaller outbreaks during the Mutiny. After the death of Ranjit Singh, the Sikh Kingdom of Lahore fell into intrigue and internal dissension, eventually passing into history after two hard fought wars with the British. In the Treaty of Amritsar (1846), the British ‘sold’ Kashmir to Maharaja Gulab Singh, head of the Dogra principality of Jammu.

For his part, Amir Dost Muhammad Khan of Afghanistan made a last effort to recover Peshawar by allying with the Sikh rebels during the Second Anglo-Sikh War. Afghan cavalry aided the Sikhs in the final Battle of Gujrat (1848), which ended the dreams of the Khalsa, before being chased back up the Khyber by pursuing British forces. The Afghans would not again hold Peshawar, but the Vale and all the territory of the Pakhtuns under British control and influence—and later that of Pakistan—would remain Afghan irredenta. During the Mutiny, although there were intrigues aplenty and several regimental mutinies (Nowshera/Mardan and Sialkot), the Punjab and its trans-Indus frontier remained largely secure in British hands and, indeed, provided the leadership (Nicholson) and men (Punjabi Muslims and Sikhs) who recovered Delhi for the British.

During this period of rapid British territorial aggrandizement and Sikh decline, the *mujahideen* were active in both Afghanistan and Hazara. In Afghanistan, according to I.H. Qureshi, approximately a thousand Hindustani *mujahids* fought against the British in the opening year of the First Anglo-Afghan War. These were led by Mawlna Sayyid...
Nasir-u’az-d-din of Delhi, who was connected to the Madrasah-i-Rahimiyah in Delhi. He conceived it his duty to revive the jihad and left for Sindh after touring Rohilkand, the Gangetic Plain, and Tonk—where he gained adherents, money, and equipment. In Sindh, he stayed at Pir-jo-Goth, seat of the Pir of Pagaro, Sibghat-u’llah Shah I, where the family of Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed were sheltering, and joined forces with the Mazari Baluch who were fighting off Sikh ‘revenue expeditions.’ After the Mazaris made peace with the Sikhs, Mawlana Sayyid Nasir-u’az-d-din went to Kalat in Baluchistan and then on Kabul, where he offered his support to Dost Muhammad. The Mawlana and about a thousand followers fought against the British Army of the Indus as it pushed up from Kandahar. Most of these were killed, three hundred alone at the Battle of Ghazni. The Mawlana and a few followers escaped to Sithana, where the Mawlana, until his death in 1841, temporarily replaced Mir Awlad ‘Ali as leader of the mujahideen.

The mujahideen were not inactive in Hazara during this period. With the decline of Sikh fortunes in Punjab, the successors of Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed believed the time was ripe to advance jihad in Hazara. Mawlana Wilayat Ali, a companion of the Sayyid in the earlier war, returned to Hazara from organizing and fund-raising efforts in Bihar and Central India along with his younger brother, Mawlana ‘Inayat ‘Ali. They brought with them about two thousand men, who reached the area in batches of five or six. Prior to their arrival, however, the tribes of the Kaghan Valley and their mujahideen allies were already in revolt. In 1845, the Raja Gulab Singh sent a force of 300-400 sowars (cavalry) under Diwan Ibrahim to attack Chilas via the Babusar Pass. This force was ambushed and destroyed at Diwan Bela near Kaghan by the Kaghan Sayyids, Swathis of Balakot, and remnant Hindustani mujahideen. Together with the mujahideen, these tribes raised the standard of revolt in Northern Hazara and captured the forts at Shinkari, Bhairkund, Garhi Habibullah, and Agror. In December, Mawlana ‘Inayat ‘Ali captured Balakot and defeated a Sikh force near Muzaffarabad.

In March 1846, Haripur town was invested and overrun, forcing the Sikhs back to Hasan Abdal. The Hazara chiefs assembled at Haripur and appointed Sayyid Akbar of Sithana their Amir. Nawab Khan Tanaoli of Shingri and Ghulam Khan Turin were appointed ministers. The Sikhs under Diwan Hari Chand shortly recovered parts of southern Hazara, sending Sayyid Akbar back to Sithana, but the Jaduns, aided by the mujahideen, successfully resisted Sikh tax collecting patrols. In November, with the end of the First Anglo-Sikh War, Raja Gulab Singh sent a force into northern Hazara, led by Sheikh Imamuddin, former Governor of Kashmir, and Diwan Karam Chand, and assisted by Vans Agnew and Lieutenant Harry Lumsden. In a battle at the Dub Pass above Garhi Habibullah (1/1847), this force defeated the Swathi and mujahideen army of Mawlana ‘Inayat ‘Ali and put down the Hazarawal revolt.

After these defeats in Hazara, the ‘Ali brothers repaired to Sithana, whence they watched the consolidation of British power in the region after the Second Anglo-Sikh War (1849). The camp at Sithana was protected by the Sayyids, who never turned on the Hindustani mujahideen, and supported by funds, weapons, and recruits sent up by the Patna organization from Rohilkand, Bihar, Tonk, and even Hyderabad (Deccan). Before he died in 1852, there seems to have been a split between Mawlana Wilayat ‘Ali and his
brother ‘Inayat ‘Ali. The latter preferred a more active policy of resistance to the British and left Sithana to reside in the Mangal Thana, west of Sithana. After his brother’s death, ‘Inayat ‘Ali had a freer hand and organized propaganda activities along the Yusufzai border in Buner, Swat and the Peshawar Valley. In 1852-1853, the Guides made an expedition to punish the Hasanzais in the Black Mountain region of Hazara—they had killed two government tax collectors—and in 1853, Colonel Frederick Mackeson led a force of 2,000 irregulars and levies against the ‘Hindustani Fanatics’ but failed to reach Sithana on the Indus and break up the group.

In the eight years between the collapse of the Sikhs and the outbreak of the Great Rebellion (Mutiny) in May, 1857, the British were constantly on the move all along the Punjab frontier, mounting some 23 expeditions against various tribal outbreaks and insurrections. The Sithana mujahideen attempted to align with those outbreaks along the Yusufzai border and probably played a role in raising the tribes and skirmishing with the Guides and elements of the Punjab Frontier Force. With the outbreak of the Mutiny, Mawlana ‘Inayat ‘Ali attempted a broader raising of the tribes, but here he had only limited success, despite the augmentation of their numbers and resources as Muslim mutineers and ex-soldiers from Awadh arrived from Delhi and farther south. Indeed, once the Peshawar Brigade had crushed the mutiny of the 55th BNI at Mardan and Nowshera and disarmed the other regiments of the Bengal Army, Pakhtun tribesmen flocked to enlist in the coming campaign to retake Delhi.

Nonetheless, as Caroe notes, in “the aftermath of the Mutiny there was a great deal of trouble in the area along the Yusufzai border from Sudhnum to the Indus.”74 Backed by some local tribesmen, Mawlana ‘Inayat ‘Ali and the mujahideen established a hilltop stronghold at Narinji in mid-1858, only to be defeated and dislodged by the Guides in August. Later that year, General Sir Sidney Cotton led a 5,000-man expedition to Panjtar, Changlai, Mangal Thana and Sithana. In the fight at Sithana, Sayyid Umar Shah was killed and Sayyid Mubarik Shah was wounded after a gallant defense. Cotton destroyed the fort at Sithana and gained a promise from the local tribesmen that the mujahideen would longer be allowed to settle there. Shahzada Sayyid Mubarak Shah and his remnant Hindustani allies retired to Malka, a village on a northern spur of the Mahaban Mountain, where they organized a new center. These were difficult times for the Hindustani mujahideen. By 1858, the disturbed conditions south and east of Delhi had cut off contacts with the Patna Jama’at and the Mawlana was unable to pay the group’s local creditors. Mawlana ‘Inayat ‘Ali died in March 1859, it is said, of disease and starvation.75 Mawlana Nur-u’llah (d. 1860?) was next elected leader of the Hindustani mujahideen, followed very shortly by Mawlana ‘Abd-u’llah (d. 1902).

From Malka on its spur above the Chamla Valley, the jihad regained some momentum after 1860. As Caroe notes,

From this refuge the Sayyids, using the Mujahidin as their sword-arm, recommenced the harassment of the Mardan and Swabi border. In their eyes at this time the British power seems to have been regarded as little better than the Sikhs; all were unbelievers and should be attacked on any
The *mujahideen* were significantly reduced in numbers. Their force comprised some 1,155 men, divided into ten unequal companies, each consisting of forty to one hundred and fifty troops. In all, they had 301 firearms, mostly matchlocks. However, as Qureshi notes, “They were trained as guerrillas and their sincerity and zeal knew no limits, hence they enjoyed a high reputation as fighters.”

Using these men, Sayyid Mubarik Shah reoccupied Sithana in 1862 and refortified the village, while retaining the center at Malka, some 35 miles away on the other side of the Mahaban Mountain. This was a deliberate flouting of the British, but it also was part of Mubarik’s effort to restore the power of his family as successors of Pir Baba, the dominant saintly lineage in Buner, and to lay claim to leadership of the Yusufzai. In 1857, upon the death of his father, Sayyid Akbar Shah, Mubarik had been barred from assuming the *gaddi* (throne) at Pir Baba largely due to the influence of Mullah ‘Abd-u’l Ghafur Akhund, a rising spiritual leader in Swat. This development was part of a growing religious-political rivalry between the Akhund of Swat and the lineage of Pir Baba, including the Sayyids of Panjtar and Sithana. According to both Caroe and the historian I.H. Qureshi, the Akhund had little use for the Hindustani *mujahideen* and their Sayyid allies. According to Caroe, opposition by the Akhund in 1857 was chiefly responsible for keeping the Yusufzai from a general rising against the British during the Mutiny. Qureshi probably is correct when he says the Akhund had no desire to see the British penetrate into Buner, Swat and the inner reaches of the Yusufzai country, but believed the one sure way to draw in the British would be to foment disturbances and attacks along the Yusufzai border.

All this came to a head in 1863, when the British, tired of attacks along the Yusufzai border, decided to invade the Chamla Valley and attack the *mujahideen* center at Malka. This expedition almost turned into a disaster, when the columns became trapped in the wooded snaky, six-mile long Ambela Pass for six weeks, fighting night and day against a growing host of hostile tribesmen. The way for the expedition had not been adequately prepared by the ‘politicals,’ hence the force under Brigadier Neville Chamberlain faced thousands of Pakhtun tribesmen coming in from places as far away as Bajaur, Dir, and Malakand. Despite, the underlying fissure between the Akhund of Swat and the Sayyids of Buner, the campaign prompted a united front by the Pakhtuns—Swatis and Yusufzais—who believed they were fighting for their freedom. The Akhund initially backed the resistance, but agreed to negotiations when it became evident the Government of India was mounting a large reinforcement of the embattled force. At the same time, the attacking Pakhtun tribesmen suffered very substantial casualties against troops—Europeans, Gurkhas, Sikhs, Pakhtuns, Punjabis—far better trained and disciplined than those of Ranjit Singh’s army.

Unwilling to see the British take and hold the Chamla, and hopeful that British casualties and the fierceness of the resistance would induce caution in the future, the Akhund agreed to a ceasefire, the destruction of Malka, an agreement to separate the Sayyids and the *mujahideen*, and a British withdrawal. This, of course, left the Sayyids of Sithana and
the Hindustani *mujahideen* in the lurch, but meant the British withdrawal to the plains. In the end, a small British column was escorted to Malka by the khans and graybeards, where they reportedly set the roofs of the village alight. How much destruction they actually accomplished is disputed. According to Qureshi, who quotes *mujahideen* sources, the British were not even allowed a symbolic destruction—the “chiefs who had accompanied the British officers stopped them from damaging any property.” British sources describe this sortie to Malka, under the guns of still aroused tribesmen, as extremely harrowing—and one suspects the khans would not have been able to control their men on the way back had the small British party actually destroyed Malka.

The *jihad* movement was not finally finished after Ambela. It would resurface from time to time in support of the tribal outbreaks on the frontier, particularly in the tribal revolt of 1897. Nonetheless, the British never again feared or targeted the movement itself, preferring to deal with it through the political department and the secret police. The thread of organization is visible into the twentieth century. Mawlana ‘Abd u’l-Karim succeeded Mawlana ‘Abd-u’llah, when the latter died in 1902. He moved the *mujahideen* headquarters from the Malka area to Ismast. Upon his death in 1915, he was succeeded by Mawlana Ni’mat-u’llah, who, accused of having reached some sort of understanding with the British, was assassinated by a Yusufzai recruit from Mardan (1920?). In the meantime, Mawlana ‘Abdur Rahim broke with the Ismast group and established a new center at Chamarkand in Bajaur, which was responsible for several incidents during the Khilafat Movement in the early 1920s. By this time, the anti-British movement in India and on the Frontier had become much more complex, encompassing the Indian National Congress, the Khilafat Movement, the emergence of Pakhtun nationalism, and many lesser movements. The *jihad* movement among the *ulama* was a very small element among all of these, subsisting precariously, perhaps, on the covert margins of the reformist Deobandi Movement.

**Breaking the Support Network**

The *Jihad* Movement would not have had the impact it did without the sustained contributions in men and funds it received from the Patna Jama’at, its effective support group in North India. As I.H. Qureshi notes, the movement needed a big organization to collect funds and persuade able-bodied men to leave their families, their belongings and their past associations to undertake a hazardous venture which promised only austerity, privation and fighting for a cause that seemed destined to fail after the early hopes of success that had begun to dwindle after the unhappy rebellion in Samah territory and seemed dashed at Balakot.

Under the *Khalifas* (Deputies) at Patna, the Sadiqpur section of old Patna City became the center for underground opposition to British rule for a half century from 1830 to 1880. The Jama’at expanded its activities in the early decades, claiming by mid-century to have trained and trusted deputies in every district in the subcontinent. The organization depended on traveling missionaries, who maintained contact with the local
deputies and *imams* of the mosques, passing along literature produced by the Patna
Jama’at, and sending funds and recruits back to Sadiqpur. Local Muslim communities,
particularly the artisan guilds, provided the organization with recruits and its missionaries
with sanctuary. Back in Patna, as Qureshi notes, the organization could not have
functioned without a large secretariat. Nor could it have supplied the *Jihad* Movement
without an efficient, covert network of couriers and informants. Much of what we know
of the Patna Jama’at comes from W.W. Hunter, a British scholar, sympathetic to the
Muslims, who saw the movement as exemplary in its discipline, admirable in its system
of morality, and faultless in its teaching, and yet a great danger to both British and Indian
Muslim interests. Hunter was grudging in his admiration for the Jama’at:

> They converted the Patna Propaganda into a Caravanserai for rebels and
> traitors. They surrounded it with a labyrinth of walls and outhouses, with
> one enclosure leading to another by side-doors, and little secret courts in
> out-of-the-way corners. The early Khalifs had threatened to resist the
> Magistrate’s warrant by force of arms, but their successors found a less
> Dangerous (method) in a network of passages, chambers and outlets.
> When the Government at length took proceedings against this nest of
> conspirators, it found it necessary to procure a plan of the buildings, just
> as if it were dealing with a fortified town.

The British were not unaware of the Patna Jama’at and, in fact, restricted the movements
of Mawlana Wilayat ‘Ali for a period during the time when Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed had
sent the Mawlana back to Bihar to improve the flow of funds. After the Great Rebellion
(or Mutiny) of 1857-1858, the colonial authorities were far less tolerant of any organized
expressions of Muslim radicalism in North India and made several attempts, evidently
unsuccessful, to penetrate and suppress the Patna Jama’at. The authorities moved more
forcefully after the publication in 1871 of Hunter’s *The Indian Mussalmans: Are They
Bound in Conscience to Rebel Against the Queen?* Hunter, who wanted India’s Muslims
to embrace modern education and the other “blessings of the British Raj,” painted an
alarming picture of the Patna Jama’at, its covert tentacular organization, and its camp on
the permanently disturbed Frontier. In a series of trials in the 1870s and 1880s, the
authorities crushed the organization, transported its most recalcitrant leaders to the penal
colony in the Andaman Islands, and courted those most amenable to moderation.
Sadiqpur was razed by the Patna Municipality and, in 1887, the Government accepted
the petition of the remnant community to replace the characterization ‘Wahhabi’ with Jamiat-
i-Ahl-i-Hadith, the name by which the movement is known today in India and Pakistan.

The Century of the Raj

It is not possible to detail here all the relevant developments in Indic Islam during the
century between the British conquest of the Punjab and the trans-Indus frontier and the
emergence of independent Pakistan in 1947. The most important questions for this paper
are: the rise of the Deobandi school of Sunni orthodoxy and its impact on the Frontier,
the response of the independent tribes of the [then] Indo-Afghan borderland to British
rule, and the evolution of religious parties in Pakistan’s politics. These necessarily we must treat generally.

First, on the Great Rebellion, or Mutiny: It is not surprising this event occurred in the former state of Awadh, in Rohilkand, Delhi, and the rest of what became the United Provinces—the heartland of Muslim culture and power in North India. Here more than anywhere else, Muslims saw their laws, their institutions, and their political power being replaced by those of the British. Although their Hindu allies had their own agenda, for the Muslims the Great Rebellion was, more than anything else, an attempt to restore Muslim power in India. Led by fighting ‘alims, such as Mawlana Ahmad-u’llah and Mawlana Faid Ahmad, and supported by landlords and former officials, the ulama were the most salient leadership element on the Muslim side. The Muslim artisan groups, spread in cities, towns, and villages, were particularly avid supporters of the anti-British forces. Covert networks, like that of the Patna Jama’at, supported the rebel forces, partly made up of the unemployed Muslim soldiery of displaced Muslim states like Awadh, and partly of mutineers from the Company’s army.

The failure of the Great Rebellion ended for India’s Muslims any realistic hope of restoring their rule by military means. The shock of defeat, and a growing perception that Muslims were falling behind Hindus in access to the new imperial bureaucracy, the new professions, and the modern sectors of the economy, prompted two larger trends within Indian Islam. The first of these was the ‘modernist’ movement. Led by Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898), a loyalist during the Great Rebellion, the modernists attempted to catch up with the Hindus in embracing western education and the skills in science, engineering, medicine, the law, and administration that it brought. Sir Sayyid sought an intellectual foundation upon which to ameliorate science and religion, succeeding in this endeavor as well as any thinker in the West. More practically, he founded the great university at Aligarh. This institution trained a generation of Muslim leaders—princes, chiefs and khans, landowners (zamindars and talukdars), lawyers, and urban gentry—who increasingly allied with the interests and opportunities of the Raj. Later, the ‘Aligarhites’ became the cradle of Muslim nationalism and finally of the Pakistan Movement, stamping Muslim society with the outer attributes of western education, professional careers, and a belief in parliamentary political models.

Deoband. The second larger trend was the turning inward of the Sunni ulama. Their objective was to refine and preserve orthodox Islam in India, to guard it from western materialist and secularizing influences, to keep apart from British power and administrative institutions, from its education and culture, to preserve the integrity of orthodox belief and practice, and to project a tradition of underground opposition to alien rule. This opposition was largely passive after the Mutiny, largely out of respect for the efficiency of the secret police, though no less implacable for that matter. The major vehicle of the ulama came to be the network of religious schools (madrasahs) and educational centers, often built around a generational succession of respected ‘alims. Although it was not the only one, given the complexity of Indic Islam, the most important of these educational networks came to be that extended outward from the Dar-ul-Uloom Madrasah in Deoband.
Founded in 1867 at Deoband, a small town near Saharanpur, in the upper Rohilkand, the Dar-ul-Uloom soon became the most influential center of Sunni orthodox (Hanafi) scholarship in the subcontinent. Deoband replaced the Madrasah-i-Rahimiyah of the Shah Wali-u’llah line, destroyed by the British when they retook Delhi in 1858. The removal to Deoband was more than a symbolic migration (hijra) away from a center of alien power in North India, but rather was a conscious attempt to create an island of Muslim purity and tradition untrammeled by non-Islamic influences. Officially, the seminary adopted an apolitical line and worked hard to avoid attracting the prying eyes of British officialdom. Faculty who became too political were asked to leave or sent off to one of the many madrasahs founded by graduates of Deoband. The school had great success and became an institution in the Sunni world second only to Al-Azhar in Cairo. It graduated thousands of students and informally accredited a spreading network of seminaries throughout India founded by its ulama.

Deoband had particular success in establishing satellite madrasahs among the Pakhtuns in the North-West Frontier Province. Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu, Nowshera, Akora Khattak, Thal, and Gadar in the NWFP, and Quetta in Baluchistan, became centers of orthodox religious education for students from Central Asia, Afghanistan, and the tribal areas, as well as the settled districts of the Frontier and northeastern Baluchistan. Pakhtun culture necessarily influenced the overlay of Deobandi teaching, making it perhaps less learned and more scholastic, certainly more militant, and more prone to anti-British activities. The incipient politicization that Deoband eschewed, took firm root in the NWFP. In his first years of political activity, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan associated with Deobandi ulama, spent time at Deoband in political discussions with Mawlana Mahmud Hasan (d. 1921) and Hasan’s student, Mawlana ‘Ubaidullah Sindhi (d. 1944), and traveled to Bajaur in search of an appropriate “center” or base in the tribal areas for Mawlana ‘Ubaidullah Sindhi. In the end, the Bajaur base was not established, although Sindhi visited the “Hindustani Fanatics”—probably Chamkani in Bajaur—on his way to Kabul in 1915, according to British intelligence reports. Both Mawlana Mahmud Hasan and Mawlana Ubaidullah Sindhi were dismissed from Deoband and left India, Hasan for Makkah, Sindhi for Kabul in 1915. The onset of World War I, and the willingness of Afghanistan to harbor German and Turkish intelligence officials, once again raised the hope of a “great Muslim attack on India which would synchronise with a Muslim rebellion.” In Afghanistan, Sindhi helped to form a “Government of India-in-Exile,” that established underground cells in India and operated openly in Kabul and the Hejaz until the allied victory in World War I and the British victory in the Third Anglo-Afghan War (1919-1920) cooled the Afghan Amir’s irredentist ambitions. During the war, however, Mawlana Mahmud Hasan obtained a letter from the Turkish Governor in the Hejaz calling on India’s Muslims to rise against the British. This letter, called the “Ghalibnama” was circulated widely in India and among the frontier tribes. Mawlana Ubaidullah Sindhi’s activities in Kabul, and those of his compatriot, Mawlana Muhammad Mian Ansari, were disclosed to the Government of India when the latter intercepted letters from Sindhi and Ansari in Kabul to Hasan in Makkah. These communications—the “Silk Letter Conspiracy”—revealed the activities
of the “Provisional Government” and the projected formation of an “Army of God.” None of this seems to have much impressed the Turco-German Mission, which left Kabul in late 1916. Mawlana Mahmud Hasan and four compatriots were picked up by the British in the Hejaz in December, 1916 and imprisoned on Malta, while Mawlana Ubaidullah Sindhi, disappointed in Kabul, eventually moved on to Moscow in 1921.92

The Frontier ulama were involved in the plans of the “Provisional Government” and later of Amanullah, the Afghan Amir, who declared a jihad and sent his army into Chitral, the Khyber, Kurram, Waziristan, and Zhob, thus setting off the Third Anglo-Afghan War. During all these events, the Deobandi networks in the Sarhad harbored fugitives, collected funds, recruited volunteers, and passed messages. They organized the NWFP segment of the larger Khilafat Movement of 1920-1922. Some of them later organized the Hashtnagar peasant movement (Mawlana Abdul Rahim Popalzai). During the Khilafat Movement, the Home Department picked up indications of a “Border Conspiracy” between Khilafat Committees in Bannu, Kohat and Thal and “hostile elements in Khost.” Evidently, this was related to activities of the “Provisional Government.”93

The Khilafat Movement represented the general political reawakening of the Indian ulama, breaking through even the integument of quiescence in Deoband. As much as any other parochial group in Indian Islam, Deoband had protected within its carapace the reformist orthodoxy of Shah Wali-u’l-lah and, if not a hard political model, at least the principle that a Muslim resurgence in India could be achieved and maintained only by the restoration of Muslim political power. While Deoband would never stand out for its political activism, its graduates, who manned the network’s madrasahs throughout India, would be far less squeamish about politics, none less so than the Pakhtun ulama in the schools along the Indo-Afghan borderland. Inevitably, perhaps, these latter schools harbored a tradition of jihad—frankly understood here as holy war against the infidel British—covertly among their own settled populations and, more overtly through the tribal mullahs, the restless tribesmen along the Frontier. Although the hard political model—which would put the ulama into command of the state (amir’at)—would take time to evolve, it is not surprising this would come out of the Pakhtun/Deobandi tradition, and at the hands of those they mentored, the Taliban.

The Raj and the Tribes. Although they developed the military and institutional requisites necessary to dominate the Indo-Aghan border, the British never finally solved “the problem” of the tribal areas.94 Until the very end of the Raj, the Indian Army and the Frontier Scouts were involved in operations across the Settled Border—it divided the settled or directly ruled districts from the autonomous tribal areas.95 The settled districts in the trans-Indus—Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan, Mardan—were reasonably secure, although there were periodic alarms and penetrations by tribal lashkars. The Settled Border normally was policed by the Frontier Constabulary. At the time the Raj ended in 1947, the Indian Army had regular army detachments inside tribal agencies at Landi Kotal, Razmak and Fort Lockart, in addition to brigades at Thal, Kohat, Peshawar, and Nowshera. These provided the British with a graduated military response to outbreaks on the Frontier—first the Scouts, then the Guides, then the Frontier
Brigades, then larger units moving up from Rawalpindi and farther south. The Indian Government, for example, mobilized 750,000 men during the Third Anglo-Afghan War (1919-1920). The Tribal Agencies were “held” by a thin structure of Political Agents and paramilitary forces, operating under a mix of settlements, peace agreements with tribal councils (jirgas) and the Frontier Crimes Regulations. The settled districts were administered under the more normal pattern of the Punjab, even after the North-West Frontier Province came into separate existence in 1901.

In their century on the Frontier, the British dealt frequently with outbreaks and tribal risings. According to a count by this writer, some 98 punitive expeditions and campaigns were undertaken against Pakhtun tribesmen across the settled border between 1847 and 1947. This does not include the normal law and order actions of the Constabulary and Scouts against small time raiders, thieves, and other criminals. During this period, the British fought two wars with Afghanistan (1878-1880 and 1919-1920), and faced serious tribal revolts in Waziristan (1894-1895), all along the Frontier in the “Great Pathan Revolt”(1895-1897), the Red Shirt Rising (1929-1931), the Mohmand War (1934-1935), and the two Waziristan Campaigns (1935-1938). With the exception of the Red Shirt Disturbances, which were inspired by Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and affected most of the Province, all the major outbreaks on the Frontier were led by mullahs, or by men the tribesmen took to be figures with religious authority. Starting with the Mullah Powindah, who led the Mahsud rebellion in Waziristan (1894-1895), the British confronted tribal armies (lashkars) led by mullahs all across the arc from Waziristan in the west, up to the Khyber, over to Bajaur, Malakand, Swat in the north and Buner in the east.

Of these, the Hadda Mullah (Najb-u’l-din) was the most learned and best organizer. Evidently, he had been at the court in Kabul, before leaving due to a breach with the Amir. He produced a number of writing and pamphlets and reportedly was in contact with the Mullah Powindah in Waziristan, Said Akbar in Tirah, and the Mastan Mullah of Swat. In 1895, the Hadda Mullah attempted to block the British relief of Chitral. Two years later, he proclaimed a jihad against the British and raised the Mohmands, Utman Khels, and Mahmunds, and attacked Shabqadr only fifteen miles north of Peshawar with 5,000 men. He was influential in spreading the Pathan revolt both west to Tirah and the Khyber, where the Mullah Said Akbar was active, and east to Malakand, Swat and Buner, where the Mastan Mullah (aka the Sufi Mullah, the “Mad Mullah”) had raised 12,000 tribesmen and sent them against the British-held fort at Chakdarra and their base in the Malakand Pass. All the threads of the Pathan Rising came together in August, 1897, with fierce fighting in Bajaur, Malakand, and the Khyber. In the Khyber, a reputed force of 10,000 Afridis led by 1,500 mullahs debouched from Tirah, took Landi Kotal and temporarily pushed the British Army out of the Khyber Pass.

Three decades later, the British again faced lashkars led by religious figures. In the Khyber in 1929 the tribal army led by Sayyid Kabir and Sayyid Almar was stopped just east of Bara Fort in the environs of Peshawar by the Risalpur Flying Column and RAF attacks, leading to bitter recriminations against the mullahs for telling the tribesmen the British Raj was finished. In mid-August, martial law was declared in Peshawar to enable
the military to clear the environs of Peshawar of some 4,500 Afridi raiders. In 1935, the Mohmands were again up in arms, this time at the behest of the Faqir of Alingar, who preached *jihad* and moved into the area west of the Malakand Pass. Some of the subsequent battles are regarded as the most ferocious in the long history of Indian frontier warfare. Brigadier Auchinleck used tanks at the Battle of the Nahakki Pass. In 1935, also, the Faqir of Ipi (Mirza Ali Khan) emerged among the Tori Khel Waziris in Waziristan. This advent heralded the start of the Waziristan campaigns (1935-1938), the most prolonged, bloody and bitter of all the frontier campaigns. In May, 1937, a combined force of Scouts and the Army destroyed the Faqir’s headquarters at Arsalkot, but the Fakir escaped and in subsequent years made trouble for the government among the Bhittanis, the Mahsuds, and Madda Khel Wazirs. The Fakir survived all British attempts to arrest him and died in 1960, after a short-lived resurgence against the new Pakistani administration of North and South Waziristan.

In all the expeditions and campaigns on the frontier, the Anglo-Afghan Wars excepted, the largest, most dangerous, most costly, and longest were those led by religious leaders. The appeal to Islam, and to holy war, combined with the warrior spirit of the Pakhtun made the *jihad* irresistible to the tribesmen. The mullahs and faqirs displayed organizational abilities that—temporarily—submerged the traditional enmities of clans and tribes and developed networks of supporters beyond the tribal agencies. They had a relatively simple understanding of the corporative nature of Islam—Islam as a whole way of life—and provided a religio-political rational to the conflict, identifying the rulers as non-Muslim and calling for the return of Muslim rule in their own lands and indeed in India. Although most had lower social origins within the Pakhtun cultural world, as migrants or members of junior lineages within the clan, they were able to transform themselves from supervising local religious rites to political leadership once their followings grew. As Akbar Ahmed notes, precisely because they were not constrained by local lineage structures, the mullahs were able to expand their influence across a wider sweep of Pakhtun society. Once the campaign was over—the losses usually brought the traditional leaders in to negotiate—the mullahs usually faded away. None were ever arrested.

As Ahmed notes:

> The mullah may rise to power in extraordinary times, rallying Muslims Against invading non-Muslims….In the tribal areas, mullahs have led widespread revolts with singular courage and conviction against the British as in 1897. Their bold stand provided a contrast to those quiescent elements in society who preferred to sit on the fence in the British (traditional leaders and native bureaucrats, in terms of the district paradigm). Men such as Adda Mullah, Manki Mullah, Palam Mullah, and Mastan Mullah, and in Waziristan, Mullah Powindah and the Fakir of Ipi, seemed to appear from nowhere to mobilize society and lead the struggle. Some, like Mastan Mullah of Buner in Swat, known as *sartor baba*, claimed or were believed to possess magical powers in their fight for Islam. The struggle, to the mullahs, was interpreted as jihad, a
By the time they left in 1947, the British had significantly militarized the tribal areas, building their main base at Razmak in the center of Waziristan. Independent Pakistan saw no need to keep the army in the tribal areas and withdrew to the cantonments in the settled districts. It kept the agency system in being, however, including the Frontier Corps, Frontier Constabulary, and the various Levies and normally dealt with the tribes through the Political Agents. The ulama had played a major role in beating back the Pakhtunistan Movement and in popularizing the idea of Pakistan. The emergence of a national government in Karachi, operated by and for Muslims, fundamentally changed the terms of rule in the country. No longer were they ruled by non-Muslim outlanders, but by their own co-religionists and, no matter what the ulama may have thought of the framework of government—largely the Government of India Act of 1936—, or of the country’s muddled efforts to write a constitution, the fact remained that the injunctions of the Qur’an (Surah iv. 59) and the urgings of the Prophet required Muslims to refrain from fighting with each other and to “obey those charged with authority among you.”

Although the tribes were stirred up from time to time by religious—the Wazir Mullah in the 1970s—and tribal leaders, or by the big “narco-khans,” relations with the Pakistan Government on the whole have remained far more peaceful than under the British. Islamabad pursues a policy of slow, peaceful penetration through roads, transmission lines, schools, and dispensaries. Many have traveled abroad, to the Gulf, the United Kingdom, the United States, but within their own lands the Pakhtun tribesman remains a free man, untrammeled by legislator, tax collector, gun control law, or international border—and shows every indication of keeping things just the same. Living in low production zones along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, the Pakhtun tribes remain acephalous, segmented, and egalitarian, steeped in a warrior culture, resistant to hierarchical authority, prepared to accept consensual decisions only by the council of free men (jirga) or by the code of Pakhtunwali, or, in unusual times, by the mullah, and ever ready to rise at the slightest perceived insult to Islam.

**Sunni Orthodoxy and Politics in Pakistan**

The Khilafat Movement marked the re-emergence of the Indian ulama into overt political activity. The ulama unified around their demand for the preservation of the Khilafat, the caliphal state of the Ottoman Sultans, fearful that the defeat of Turkey in the First World War would lead the British and their allies to dismantle the one universal Muslim institution that claimed an unbroken succession from Abu Bakr, the first Khalifa of Islam (632-634 A.D.). Their unity, however, did not survive the liquidation of the Khilafat in 1922 by Kemal Ataturk—not the British—and the 1920s and 1930s were decades of doctrinal, personal and organizational divisions among the major groups. In Punjab, the ulama of the Khilafat Movement were diverted into volatile sectarian movements against Sikhs, Ahmadiyyas, and Shi’as. Insofar as the latter is concerned, there is an unbroken doctrinal, organizational and political link between the anti-Shi’a ulama of Jhang District—the center of both the Anti-Ahmadiyya and Anti-Shi’a movements—in these
decades and contemporary groups like the sectarian Sipah-i-Sahaba-i-Pakistan (SSP) and its underground, extremist arm, the Lashkar-i-Jhangvi (LJV).

For their part, neither the ulama nor their Islamist cousins and competitors were early supporters of the Pakistan Movement. In the end, the ulama divided over the issue, a significant element—largely Deobandi—led by Mawlna Abd’ul Kalam Azad staying with India, while perhaps a majority under the brothers, Mawlna Shabbir Ahmad Osmani and Mawlna Zafar Ahmad Osmani, and Mawlna Abd’ul Sattar Khan Niazi, backed the Pakistan Movement. The support of the ulama and the mullahs was crucial in the NWFP in overcoming the pro-India and implicitly pro-secession Pakhtunistan Movement. The Islamist group, the Jama’at-i-Islami, opposed the formation of Pakistan, although its founder, Mawlna Sayyid Abd’ul ‘ala Mawdudi, moved to Pakistan in 1947 and spent the next quarter century trying to explain away his opposition to Pakistan while building perhaps the best organized religious-political party in the country.

Within Pakistan, the ulama began to exert political influence by degrees. Deputed as the Ta’limaat-i-Islami, an advisory board on constitutional questions, senior ‘alims took a strong stand in the Basic Principles Committee during the first Constituent Assembly, but failed to participate in the Punjab Assembly elections of 1951. Only the Jama’at-i-Islami ran candidates, gaining 4.4% of the vote and one seat. In February and March 1953, the Sunni ulama united in the violent Anti-Ahmadiyya Disturbances, the first across-the-board assertion of political power by the religious parties, which led to the first declaration of Martial Law in Pakistan--in this instance confined to Punjab. The religious parties fared poorly during the rule of President and Field Marshal Muhammad Ayub Khan (1958-1969). Ayub had no respect for the ulama and began the process of taking over traditional religious institutions through the Auqaf Department. He also sought to “modernize” the ulama through government madrasahs, provide a competing liberal exegesis of Islam through the Islamic Research Institute, and provide protection to women under the Muslim Family Laws Ordinance.

In the elections of 1970—the country’s first adult franchise elections at the national level—the religious parties in West Pakistan gained a combined vote of 21.8 percent in the National Assembly elections. In both National and Provincial Assembly elections, the religious parties showed pockets of strength in Karachi (Jama’at-i-Islami and Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Pakistan [JUP]), while the Deobandi party, the Jamiat-ul-Ulama-i-Islam (JUI), did well in the Pashtun districts of north-east Baluchistan and throughout the NWFP. In the NWFP, the JUI was the front-runner in the National Assembly election, taking 25.5 percent, but did less well in the Provincial Assembly, falling to third place with 13.9 percent of the vote. Nonetheless, in 1972, once the shambles of the breakaway of East Pakistan had been cleared away, the JUI formed coalition governments with the National Awami Party in both Baluchistan and the NWFP. In the Frontier, the new Chief Minister was Mawlna Mufﬁt Mahmud (d. 1980), Amir of the JUI, a native of Dera Ismail Khan District and a graduate of Deoband.102
Five years later, in 1977, in the aftermath of the rigged national election, Mawlana Mufti Mahmud led the Nizam-i-Islam Agitation, which resulted in the overthrow of Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto by General Muhammad Zia ul-Haq. The Nizam-i-Islam Agitation united both religious and secular parties—the Pakistan National Alliance—but it had a distinctly Islamic flavor in calling for the reorganization of government and law around Islamic principles. The Zia period (1977-1989) effectively reversed what some saw as the slow downward slide of the orthodox Sunni ulama and started them on the path to renewed and increasing influence in Pakistani society and governance. There were a number of reasons for this, of which we may note four.

First, there was General Zia, a pietistic individual, born in what is now Indian Punjab, of lower middle class origins (Jullunduri Ara’ins), and connected by kinship to the then Amir of the Jama’at-i-Islami, Mawlana Tufail Muhammad. Under Zia, Pakistan began a process of Islamization that placed much enhanced resources into the hands of the ulama through the Zakat Committees and other channels of patronage. General Zia also built up the authority and prestige of the senior ulama, appointing them to new national level institutions—the Majlis-i-Shura, Council of Islamic Ideology, Federal Shariat Court, etc. With the new economic foundation under them, the ulama embarked on a rapid expansion of their institutions, mainly their schools (maktabs) and colleges (madrasahs) and orphanages (yatim khanas). The vast expansion of the traditional Islamic educational system in Pakistan, which would provide the shock troops of the jihad movement in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Kashmir, began and was nurtured under Zia.

Second, there was the Gulf. In his last year, Bhutto had reached agreements with the Gulf States that, among other things, had opened these countries to temporary laborers, merchants, and professionals from Pakistan. Under Zia, the trickle of Pakistani going to the Gulf became a steady stream, eventually resulting in a Pakistani population in the Gulf of upwards of 600,000. By 1983, the Gulf workers were sending some $ 3 billion back to Pakistan through official banking channels and perhaps another $ 2 billion (estimates vary between $ 1 and 3 billion) through the unofficial, untaxed, traditional Hundi banking system. Along with the funds came reformist and Wahhabi religious influences, brought back by workers and bazaar merchants (the Sheikhs) or promoted by various missionary and educational institutions funded by the Saudi Government or wealthy Gulf businessmen. Of particular interest are the bazaari and merchant groups, some of whose members came back with more radical religious ideas and the resources to promote them. Although more research needs to be done, radicalized merchant-masjid-madrasah networks are visible in cities like Karachi, Multan and Faisalabad, where they built new madrasahs, funded groups like the Sipah-i-Sahaba-i-Pakistan (SSP), and covertly backed elements like Ramzi Yusuf, Khalid Sheikh Muhammad, and Sheikh Ahmed Omar—all top players in the international jihad movement, Al-Qa’ida, and its allied groups, and all with backgrounds in bazaari families that moved to the Gulf or the United Kingdom.

The third development was the Iranian Revolution in February 1979. Although it occurred in Shi’a Iran, the revolution had a number of important impacts in largely Sunni Pakistan. In the beginning, the Aya-t’ullah Khomeini and his bold and uncompromising
assertion of the power of Islam was widely—even wildly—popular in the Muslim world, especially among youth, including in Pakistan. The overthrow of the Shah, friend of America, appealed both to leftists and Islamists. The burning of the US Embassy in Islamabad in November 1979, was organized and carried out by Iranian students, possibly associated with the Mujahideen-i-Khalq, and by the Islami-Jamiat-ul-Tulaba (IJT), the student wing of the Jama’at-i-Islami. The overthrow of the Shah also deeply interested the Sunni ulama because it brought the clergy—the mujtahids—to power, setting an example for the Sunni world that the Taliban would be first to fulfill. In time, as the Iranian Revolution, like all great revolutions, tried to replicate itself outside Iran, it laid the basis for the on-going, tit-for-tat “Sunni-Shi’a war” in Pakistan. Both sides gained by outside funding and attempts at manipulation by unscrupulous politicians. Teheran operated through its diplomatic missions and cultural centers and funded the newly galvanized Tehrik-i-Nifaz-i-Fiqh-i-Jafria (TNFJ), the Islamic Students Front (ISF) and the shadowy Sipah-i-Muhammad-i-Pakistan (SMP). The Sunni side was upheld largely by the Anjuman-i-Sipah-i-Sahaba (ASS), reportedly funded by Iraq and Saudi Arabia. The ASS, an organization of Deobandi ulama originally from Jhang City in Punjab, changed its name to Sipah-i-Shahaba-i-Pakistan (SSP) when advised what its previous acronym meant in English.

The fourth development was, of course, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979. The Soviet-Afghan War (1979-1989) was the breeding ground of the Sunni Revolution, the decade long event that defined the concept of global jihad, engendered the organization and military skills and formed the groups to carry it out, provided the heady victory over the Soviet superpower that validated the all-important imprimatur of Allah, and directed the international jihad against its next targets. These were the Serbs in Bosnia, the Russians in Chechnya, the Indians in Kashmir, and, above all the American “behemoth”—the remaining superpower—moving into the heartland of Islam on the fulcrum of the First Gulf War. The Afghans who warred against the Soviets largely fought the Godless invader for their villages and valleys and traditional way of life. The war was understood as a jihad within a traditional paradigm, part local, part national, part tribal, part ethnic. Even the Islamist parties, the Jamiat-i-Islami and Hezb-i-Islami (Hekmatyar), saw the future within an Afghanistan context. The global agenda, built around the recrudescence of the universal Islamic state, was grafted onto the anti-Soviet jihad very late in the war by Arab volunteers—the “Arab-Afghans”—and later adopted by the hard line faction of the Taliban.

Rise of the Orthodox Ulama

The ulama along the Afghanistan-Pakistan borderland and inside Afghanistan—mostly Deobandis—were heavily involved in the Great Anti-Soviet Jihad. The ulama stepped in to assume local political, juridical, and military roles as previous leadership groups, the landowning tribal khans and maliks, merchants, professionals, and former government officials left for Pakistan or abroad. The main organization of the ulama, the Harakat-i-Inqilabi-i-Islami (HII), was largely Pakhtun and Deobandi and did field some fighting groups, but was better known for its political and judicial roles in the south and south-east—rural Kandahar, Zabul, Uruzgan, and Helmand—where it operated through the
Judicial Council of the Ulama. The smaller Hezb-i-Islami (Khali, HIK) in Paktia and Nangrahar, was almost exclusively run by ulama and produced some of the most effective warrior ulama of the conflict: Mawlana Yunis Khalis and Mawlana Jalaluddin Haqqani. Both Khalis and Haqqani were educated at the Dar-ul-Uloom Al-Arbia (Deobandi) in Peshawar and both built their fighting fronts around their own tribes—Khalis the powerful Khugianis in Nangrahar and Haqqani the smaller Jaji Tribe in Paktia. In the environs of Kandahar and in the Arghandab Valley, the largely northern (and Tajik) Jamiat-i-Islami (JIA) had pockets of territorial control under allied Pakhtun mullahs, Mullah Lala Malang and Mullah Naqib Akhund in the Arghandab, who cooperated with Commander Haji Abdul Latif of the National Islamic Front of Afghanistan (NIFA) and HIK in Kandahar and Mullah Naseem Akhundzada, HII commander in the south. Mullah Izzat in the Kabul-Paghman region was another Pakhtun commander who allied with the JIA. All were exceptionally gifted leaders and field commanders.

The ulama also had a great impact outside the war zones, particularly in the refugee camps and border towns and cities inside Pakistan. Here they started schools for refugees, raised support and recruits for the jihad, forged ties with local madrasahs, and worked with sympathetic Pakistani officials in relief work and intelligence. Many were drawn into the expanding system of religious schools. Between 1979 and 1982, the number of dini madaris (religious schools and madrasahs) in the NWFP rose by 168.0 percent, growing a further 69.0 percent between 1983 and 1986.106 These numbers do not include the religious schools set up in the Afghan refugee camps, of which there were hundreds. Many of the religious schools became training grounds for the jihad, sending foot soldiers and their teachers into the war. One more venerable Deobandi institution, the Dar-ul-Uloom Haqqaniyyah at Akora Khattak had long established links with the Afghan ulama, and trained many of those who later rose to leadership in the Taliban. During these years and up to the present, the school has maintained on its teaching staff ‘alims who divide their year between duty in the classroom and on the battlefield. Between 1995 and 2001 its students and teachers were involved in the Taliban’s spring offensives against the Northern Alliance and Ahmad Shah Masood. Now, they prepare to fight against US forces in Afghanistan.

One effect of the Soviet-Afghan War was to narrow differences between the various schools of thought in Sunni Islam in the Pakistan-Afghanistan region. The jihad against a common enemy worked a degree of unity among the religious parties in Pakistan and Afghanistan, although it did not submerge all differences of doctrine, organization, and personality. The main closure of differences occurred between the orthodox ulama and the Islamists. The Jama’at-i-Islami established madrasahs along the border in Dir and Bajaur and made a significant contribution in training recruits for the Afghan war and later for the Kashmir war. The choice of Qazi Hussain Ahmad for Amir of the Jama’at was an inspired move, for it brought leadership to a man from a traditional religious family with roots in the Peshawar bazaar, the same social milieu from which much of the orthodox ulama sprang. The Jama’at already was a natural counterpart of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad—Syed Qutb had been much influenced by Maudoodi’s idea of jahiliyyat—and close enough to the Ahl-i-Hadith (the former “Indian Wahhabis”) to be less concerned about the Wahhabism of the Saudi Arab-Afghan volunteers. The Arabian
Wahhabis would have major influence on the Deobandi ulama, particularly the hard liners around Mullah Omar, but this would come later, in the second half of the 1990s.

The effect of these developments was the advent in Afghanistan and Pakistan of a resurgent, militant religious movement, mostly based in the networks of Deobandi and Ahl-i-Hadith madrasahs and umbrella organizations in Pakistan and along the Afghanistan border. It was out of this surging jihad movement that the Taliban (literally the students of the dini madaris) emerged, aided in the beginning by Pakistan’s military intelligence agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI). The Taliban was not the only group to emerge from this milieu, however. Included were the Harakat-al-Ansar (Movement of the Helpers), which has spawned at least three successor organizations, and the Markaz al-Da’wat-wal-Irshad and its Laskar-i-Toiba (Army of the Pure), all focused in the 1990s on Kashmir, and later the Jaish-i-Muhammad (Army of Muhammad), also focused on Kashmir. The Lashkar-i-Jhangvi had its antecedents in the Sipah-i-Sahaba-i-Pakistan and served as a covert, extremist organization responsible for the killing of numerous Shi’as. The Harakat and the Markaz had strong ties to Al-Qa’ida. They used the same training camps and, until 2001, Al-Qa’ida routinely sent representatives to the annual meetings of the Markaz at Muridke, the latter’s headquarters some thirty miles north of Lahore.

Until the tomahawk strikes of August 1998, most of the jihadi fronts in Pakistan were almost exclusively focused on the jihad in Indian-held Kashmir. The missile strikes on August 20th, which killed 20 and injured more than 30 in the training camps around Zhawar in Paktia made the US the ultimate enemy and turned Usama bin-Laden into a vaulting Muslim hero, another Salahuddin, vastly popular among the ulama and the madrasah students. Several of those killed in the strikes were Pakistanis training for the Kashmir jihad at a camp run by the Harakat-ul-Ansar, and, according to some reports, the ISI. All the main jihadi organizations in Pakistan issued threats to kill Americans after the August 1998 missile strikes. The leader of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Islam (JUI), Mawlana Fazlur Rahman, son of Mawlana Mufti Mahmood, ordered his student wing to list the names and addresses of all Americans living in Pakistan—“if we cannot be safe here, they cannot be safe here.” More recently, post 9/11 and the overthrow of the Taliban, the Jaish and the Laskhar-i-Jhangvi have been cited by Pakistani authorities in the death of US journalist Daniel Pearl and the car bombing outside the US Consulate in Karachi. One presumes that since the fall of the Taliban there has been a coalescence of pro-bin-Laden, underground extremist groups in Pakistan acting at the behest of Al-Qa’ida.

Usama bin-Laden, Al-Qa’ida and the Pakhtun Base

Afghanistan formed Usama bin-Laden as a jihad leader and defined his strategic vision of a reborn Khilafat, a universal Muslim state patterned after that of the first four Khalifas, the rightly-guided successors of the Prophet. The state would be fashioned in war against the United States and its corrupt allies in the Muslim world, a war of asymmetry that, like the holy war in Afghanistan that defeated and destroyed the Soviet Union, would bring down the un-Islamic monarchies in the Middle East. It would strike at the heart of the
US, a paper tiger, and finish off the second superpower as it had the first. A reborn Islamic state would emerge united, militarily mighty, ready to reclaim all the Muslim lands and then go on to fulfill the Muslim prophecy of global conquest.

Usama bin-Laden arrived in Peshawar in 1980 at the age of 23, following his professor, Abdullah Azzam. Palestinian by birth, Azzam had taught at King Abdul Aziz University in Jiddah. He had broken with the secularist Palestine nationalist movement in favor of Islamic jihad, and adopted the theory armed Islamic struggle as the best way to achieve the recrudescence of a universal Islamic nation, rather than a piecemeal struggle state by state. In Peshawar, Azzam and bin-Laden worked to recruit mujahideen from around the world, trained them for war, provided financial and medical support, and brought in heavy construction equipment to build tunnels and fortifications in eastern Afghanistan (Paktika, Paktia, Nangrahar). In the latter half of the Anti-Soviet Jihad, bin-Laden entered the war himself as a mujahid, winning respect for his fearlessness in battle. He fought in the 1986 Battle of Jalalabad as a soldier in an Arab unit and later commanded a mixed unit of some 200 Arabs and Afghans in the defense of Jaji and Zhawar in Paktia. In 1987, he had a command position in the Battle of Shaban in Paktia. In 1989, after the assassination of Azzam in Peshawar, bin-Laden took control of the Azzam organization and founded Al-Qa’ida as a base for military operations. By the time he left Afghanistan in 1990, bin-Laden had forged close ties with Afghan field commanders in Paktia, especially Mawlana Jalaluddin Haqqani. He certainly had the great gratitude of the Afghan mujahideen for his material support, but more for his willingness to fight on their behalf as a great mujahid. His prestige was such that many Afghans sought him out to settle their disputes, a role that enabled bin-Laden to spread his influence across tribal and clan lines.

By 1990, with the Soviets out, the Arab Afghans turned to their next objective, the overthrow of their own compromised governments and replacement by Islamic regimes. With the help of bin-Laden, several thousand Arab Afghans settled in Paktia, Nangrahar, Kunar, Nuristan, even Badakshan, where they spread their extreme form of Wahhabi Islam. Their extremism was not always welcome to the Afghans and their alliance with the most extreme Pakhtun groups—those of Sayyaf and Hekmatyar—alienated non-Pakhtun Afghans, particularly the Shi’as (Hazaras and Qizilbash), the Tajiks and Uzbeks. Liberated eastern Afghanistan became a beehive of weapons dumps and training camps offering military skills to would-be mujahids from around the world—including Moros from the Philippines, Uighurs from Sinjiang Province in China, Kashmiris, Arabs from every nation, Bangladeshis, Indian Muslims, Pakistanis, and Muslim young men from Britain and the United States. Bin-Laden backed some of these training programs; Pakistan’s ISI others. The training infrastructure between Khost and Zhawar in Paktia was particularly extensive and much patronized by both Al-Qa’ida and the ISI. A major ISI site was around Gulbuddin Hekmatyar’s headquarters at Chahar-Siyab. According to one report, all told there were some 42 significant training sites in Eastern Afghanistan, several offering training in small arms, artillery, MRLs, and even tank cannons on a commercial basis. By 1993, Middle Eastern governments were beginning to confront Islamabad about the camps in Afghanistan and safehouses in Karachi that served as way
stations and transit points for *jihadis* returning home to organize against their home governments.

Bin-Laden was out of Afghanistan between 1990 and 1996. In 1992, the *mujahideen* groups finally took Kabul and overthrew the regime of President Najibullah. In 1993 and 1994, the *mujahideen* engaged in a bitter civil war that left tens of thousands dead, Kabul in ruins, criminal elements on the loose throughout the country, and the public in desperate need of peace and order. Organized in November 1994 by Mullah Omar and assisted initially by the ISI, the Taliban rapidly emerged as a new and unstoppable political force in the country. Within a year, the Taliban had gained control of half the country, from Herat in the west around through Kandahar in the south to Ghazni in the east. In April 1996, a conclave of more than a thousand *ulama* and tribal leaders in Kandahar appointed Mullah Omar *Amir ul-Momineen*, Commander of the Faithful. On September 26th, 1996, the Taliban took Kabul and moved north. Northern Afghanistan became the arena of an on-going struggle for the next five years, with battle lines moving back and forth each fighting season. The Taliban gained and lost and gained Mazar-i-Sharif, but they never defeated the two components of the Northern Alliance, the Uzbeks to the west nor the Tajiks to the east.

By the time Usama bin-Laden returned to Afghanistan in the summer of 1996, prior to the fall of Kabul in September, he was already at the center of an international *jihad* movement, with worldwide political ties and covert support networks. In his previous base, in Sudan, he had forged a close personal and ideological relationship with Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri, head of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, who would now operate as his deputy and, some assert, his ideological mentor. Bin-Laden reportedly arrived in Afghanistan convinced the time was ripe to mount a strategic war against the United States. Based on the American pull-out from Beirut after the bombing of the Marine Corps barracks and its departure from Somalia after the Blackhawk incident, bin-Laden was convinced the US was a “paper tiger.” A strategic war, based on asymmetrical methods to find and attack the vulnerabilities of the enemy, would, he believed, easily defeat the United States, force it to withdraw from the Muslim world, and make it a “shadow of itself.”

Afghanistan, he knew well, would provide the best site for his operational headquarters. It was, at the time, essentially ungoverned, with tribal *jirgas*, various councils (*shuras*), former field commanders, and warlords competing for influence. It was full of weapons and ordinance and tough, battle-tested tribesmen, many looking for a new cause. It was a country where one could buy almost anything and a narcotics industry that, if captured, could pump out literally hundreds of millions of dollars a year. It was contiguous to Pakistan, only a day away from Kabul, less from Kandahar and Jalalabad, a country with modern communications, a complicit military intelligence organization, venal politicians, its own developing terrorist infrastructure, and large sympathetic populations. Pakistan International Airlines operated flights from Peshawar to Dubai three times a week. From Karachi, flights were available to all the major cities in the Middle East, the airline hubs of Western Europe, and New York. From Lahore, PIA connected to Bangkok. Yet, it was a country with difficult and remote areas, of rugged mountains and roadless deserts,
into which one could disappear and build around oneself a protective integument of fanatical devotees and loyal, warrior tribesmen.

Upon his return to Afghanistan during the summer of 1996, bin-Laden based himself in Jalalabad and moved around Nangrahar and Paktia, inspecting training camps, firming up his old alliances, and building up his own assets. It was at this point, on August 23, 1996, that he issued his longest statement, the “Declaration of War Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places.” After the fall of Kabul, bin-Laden began to court the Taliban, particularly Amir Mullah Omar. He set up an extensive compound in Kandahar and a smaller one near Qalat-i-Ghilzai and began several construction projects in the city. By the start of 1998, with relations solidified by personal, marital, financial and ideological ties, Al-Qa’ida and the Taliban hardliners became virtually indistinguishable. Bin-Laden emerged as the Taliban’s main financier and funded a fighting force estimated, at between eight and ten thousand fighters, who backed the Taliban fighters in the northern campaigns. Indeed, arguably, Al-Qa’ida virtually took over the Taliban, controlling its main policies through Amir Mullah Omar. Certainly, it was bin-Laden and Zawahiri who fired the Taliban with the zeal to recreate the universal Muslim state, with Afghanistan as its core, followed by the ex-Soviet Central Asian states. Certainly, too, it was Al-Qa’ida that planned and carried out the assassination of Ahmad Shah Masood, whose army formed the main barrier to Kabul’s Central Asian policy, only days before 9/11.

By 1998, Usama bin-Laden and Al-Qa’ida had consolidated their position in Afghanistan. The group operated bases in Kandahar, Khost, and Nangrahar to train thousands of volunteers from around the world in basic weapons skills, bomb-making, assassination and kidnapping, commando operations, secure communications, covert intelligence and surveillance, cover occupations, and other elements of covert operations tradecraft. Further, Al-Qa’ida labs in Kandahar and Kabul were in pursuit of weapons of mass destruction and chemicals were tested on feral dogs in a camp north of Jalalabad. After the fall of Kabul to the Northern Alliance, investigators found evidence that Al Qa’ida experts were working on programs to hack into computers and were in possession of manuals and software programs used to operate the gates of major hydropower and reservoir retention dams. On February 23, 1998, bin-Laden and the World Islamic Front announced its “Jihad against Crusaders and Jews,” which included a call to “kill the Americans and their allies—civilians and military—[as] an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it…..” On August 7, 1998, the truck bomb attacks on the US Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania occurred, bringing home to Washington the reality of the war being waged by Al-Qa’ida.

It is possible that this war, like most wars, was the result of a series of miscalculations. Until 9/11, the United States under-estimated Al-Qa’ida. Having largely dropped Afghanistan and jettisoned its assets there after the Soviet withdrawal, the US was slow to develop assets and penetrations after the first World Trade Center bombing in February 1993. Certainly, it lacked sufficient intelligence before 9/11 and mishandled that which it did have. For bin-Laden, his view of the United States as a “paper tiger” was conditioned by Beirut and Somalia and lacked a realistic understanding of how the
US would respond to an event like 9/11. Al-Qa’ida analysts may have deeply studied US society and analyzed it vulnerabilities, but it is doubtful they comprehended the reach and capabilities of the US armed forces. For their part, the Taliban spokesmen and moderates like Foreign Minister Maulana Rabbani gave every sign of being clueless about international political and military realities. One presumes bin-Laden knew better, but still felt relatively safe in Afghanistan, at least until the fall of Kabul to the Northern Alliance and the US Special Forces.

Bin-Laden’s movements after the Tora Bora battles in December 2001 are unknown and one can only speculate about them. A former mujahideen base against the Soviets, Tora Bora had been built up as an Al-Qa’ida bastion and withstood several ground assaults and severe bombing before falling. Bin-Laden’s likely retreat from Tora Bora likely would have taken him south into Paktia where he had many allies. To have gone directly east across the Spin Ghar into Pakistan would have taken him through hostile Tori Khel Shi’a country. Once in Paktia, the Al-Qa’ida remnants could have gone south and west through Paktika and Zabul to Uruzgan, the home province of Mullah Omar and a region dominated by his Hotaki Ghilzai clan. In Uruzgan, the Arghandab and the Upper Helmand lead north to remote districts on the margins of the Hazarajat, but these might be too close to US forces based at Kandahar. From Uruzgan, bin-Laden would have overland access to Iran, or down the Helmand and into Pakistani Baluchistan to the Makran coast, possibly even to Karachi. These routes are long, difficult and dangerous—but not impossible. Narcotics camel and truck caravans use these routes frequently enough.

This belt of land from the Gomal River crossing of the Durand Line through to Uruzgan is Ghilzai country. The Sulaiman Khel, a half settled and half transhumant Ghilzai clan, controls the Gomal route into Pakistan. The Toba Kakar Range lies along the border between northern Baluchistan and the Afghanistan Provinces of Kandahar and Zabul. This range is easily crossed at a number of places, particularly toward the Gomal, where the ridges alternate with flatter uplands called the Kakar Khorasan, which extend across into Zabul. East of the Durand Line and running roughly parallel to the border are a series of parallel ranges that extend from northern Baluchistan into Waziristan. From ten to sixty miles east of the border, some of these ranges rise to eleven thousand feet in Baluchistan (Takht-i-Suleiman) and thirteen thousand in South Waziristan (Pir Ghar). North of the Gomal lie Pakistan’s Federally Administered Tribal Agencies (FATA), a region of independent Pakhtun tribes that recognize no authority but their own. The higher mountains in South Waziristan are held by the Ahmadzai Wazir clans, among the fiercest and most independent of all the tribes along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. Some of their villages and hamlets lie in the zone of evergreen forest above 7,000 feet. This is an extremely remote and difficult area. There are hundreds of hamlets, camps, and caves where the Al-Qa’ida elements can shelter, supported by friendly clans.
Conclusion

Though separated by a century and three-quarters, the jihad movements of Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed and Usama bin-Laden show striking similarities, but also a number of differences, all instructive. What has not changed at all in the Indus Frontier region are the land forms and the presence of the Pakhtun tribes, although the different response of the latter to each jihad shows the growth of a contemporary Islamic consciousness that overlies the historic base of Pakhtun culture. Both are important, of course, and both—the Code of Pakhtunwali and Muslim religious identity—work to protect Usama bin-Laden. Sayyid Ahmad was less fortunate. His most serious failure was his inability to retain the loyalty of the Pakhtuns, principally the larger Yusufzai Tribe. In the end, for the Yusufzais, when the two loyalties came into conflict, Pakhtunwali was more important than the jihad. Today, one doubts the Yusufzais would make the same calculation. Religious identity and loyalty are far stronger today, as is the growing hold of the ulama. The latter are almost everywhere ascendant west of the Indus, as the results of the October 2002 election show, even displacing the authority of the tribal sardars in Baluchistan. The Taliban may have been overthrown in Afghanistan, but their mentors and allies inside Pakistan are on the rise in the western provinces and undoubtedly aspire to national leadership, probably sooner rather than later.

Both Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed and Usama bin-Laden were outsiders to the region, both ascribed to Wahhabi interpretations of Islam, both sought to recover Muslim lands that had fallen under the control or influence of non-Muslims, both developed extensive covert networks of support that were difficult to uproot, both believed in the holy war formulation of jihad, both adopted the same Qur’anic basis for jihad as a military struggle, both used the Frontier region as a secure base for their operations, and both looked beyond the Frontier with a wider strategic vision. For the Sayyid, at least in the minds of his inner circle, victory against the Sikhs was to be the prelude to a larger jihad against the British, a prefiguring perhaps of the Great Rebellion of 1857. For bin-Laden, the concept of jihad was to be a global one, a worldwide assault principally against the United States and a pressing home of the attack right into the American homeland.

Their tactics were different. The Sayyid sought to counter the Sikhs on the basis of rough military equality and fight a relatively conventional war in the sense it was then understood. He lacked both artillery and command of disciplined troops, however, and won his few small victories by surprise attack and temporary local superiority in numbers. Had he survived, the Sayyid might have evolved as a guerrilla commander—his successors and Panjتari allies—went this way, but the larger political picture was turning against him. Neither the rising Akhund of Swat nor the British would long have tolerated him.

Bin-Laden’s tactics are much more effective. Indirect and asymmetrical, Al-Qa’ida seeks entry through the vulnerable interstices of the modern state to attack its most powerful symbols. Al-Qa’ida avoids a direct confrontation with American’s conventional power, but increases its own strength by turning the implements and tools of modern civilization against their creators. Bin-Laden and Zawahiri continue to try to galvanize their
extensive support base in the Muslim world, but so far have failed to break through the hold of the current power holders. The *jihad* of Al-Qa’ida is by no means over and its final result is yet undetermined. Usama bin-Laden still eludes US forces and his worldwide organization, though battered, survives. The future of Afghanistan is by no means assured. Rhetoric aside, US efforts there are by any measure paltry, allowing the Taliban and Al-Qa’ida to regroup and increase their attacks across the border. Insofar as Afghanistan is concerned, US involvement in Iraq is a major diversion, something bin-Laden undoubtedly welcomes. On the other side there is Pakistan, with its unfulfilled model of western parliamentary democracy increasingly in tatters and the “vice regal” elites divided. Musharraf remains constrained in moving against Al-Qa’ida by public opinion, and faces the emergence of a more united opposition and an increasingly influential *ulama*.

1 Bernard Lewis, *The Middle East: A Brief History of the Last 2,000 Years* (New York: Scribner, 1995), p. 120.

2 Ibid., p. 276.

3 Ibid., p. 277.


6 Shah Wali-u’llah (1702-1762) was perhaps the greatest Indian Muslim scholar of his century. Indeed, many see him as the *mujaddid* (renewer of Islam) of his age. He made his greatest contributions, first, in accepting the restoration of *ijtihad* (application of the human mind or reason) as an interpretive mechanism in determining Islamic Law (*Shari’ah*) in specific situations and, secondly, in his concept of justice (*adl*) as the key to maintaining a balanced moral order in society. As a Muslim scholar, much of Shah Wali-u’llah’s intellectual effort dealt with the nature and reality of the doctrine of monism (*wahdat-u’lwujud*), which is beyond our concerns here. See: M. Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims* (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1967), pp. 389-ff; and Barbara Daly Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900* (Pakistan edition, Karachi: Royal Book Co., 1989), p. 37-ff.

7 As one historian has put it:

> It has already been mentioned that the Battle of Panipat did not produce the results that Shah Wali-u’llah had expected. The main reason was that the Muslim potentates were willing to join hands against the Marathas but not for the sake of building anew the edifice of the Muslim Empire. Even though the Battle of Plassey had been fought in 1757 and lost, the Muslim rulers seemed to be oblivious of the danger posed by the East India Company. Sunk in the cesspool of narrow selfishness, they were incapable of taking a broad and enlightened view even of their interests; naturally any considerations of saving Muslim political power from complete destruction could not even cross their minds.

Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi, *Ulema in Politics* (Karachi: Ma’aref. Ltd., 1972), p. 127. Abdali was in Delhi from January through April, 1757, before returning to Kabul. On June 23rd, down country in Bengal, the British began their century-long conquest of India by winning the Battle of Plassey.

8 Najib Khan—Najib-u’d-dawlah—was then *Mir Bakhshi and Faujdar* of Rohilkhand, a region in the Upper Doab (Saharanpur) and Ganges left bank dominated by Pakhtun settlers. Najib Khan was born near Peshawar about 1708 and belonged to the Umar Khel of the Ysufzai Pakhtuns. For a detailed treatment of
the history of this period, see: Spear, op. cit., and Iqbal Husain, The Rise and Decline of the Ruhela Chieftaincies in 18th Century India (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994).

9 Husain, Ruhela Chieftaincies, p. 87.


11 By innovation I mean a new way of seeing or doing things within orthodox tradition—not an alteration or radical reinterpretation of fundamental doctrine. One has to be careful in using the term ‘innovation’ as this is a charge often laid by orthodox ‘alims (singular of ulama) against those who they believe have gone outside acceptable interpretation.

12 One example is of the “Islamic Socialism Group” in the Pakistan People’s Party, active as intellectuals in the 1960s and 1970s. See: Philip E. Jones, The Pakistan People’s Party: Rise to Power (Oxford University Press, 2003).

13 Metcalf, Islamic Revival, p. 43.

14 The parallel development in Shi’a Islam has, of course, been the rise of the mujtahids in Iran, legitimized by the Iman Khomeini’s doctrine of the Vilyat-i-Faqih.

15 Percival Spear, Mughals, pp. 32-59

16 Ibid., p. 37.

17 Qureshi, Ulema, pp. 138-139.


19 Ibid., p. 390 and Qureshi, Ulema, p. 139.

20 Qureshi, Ulema, p. 139.

21 Ibid., p. 140.

22 Ibid., p. 140-141. The founder of the Indian family had arrived in India during the time of Ghiyas-ud-Din Balban in the later thirteenth century and had produced several notable scholars.

23 The term is I.H.Qureshi’s in Ibid., p. 142.

24 Ibid., p. 143.


26 R.C. Majumdar, et. al., An Advanced History of India (3rd ed., New York: St. Martin’s, 1967), p 700-702. In addition to Rohilkand, Pathan (Pakhtun) significant colonies were settled in Awadh, Central India and Bengal. Amir Khan commanded a force of about 8,000.

27 There are differing views about how much the Delhi ‘ulama accepted Sayyid Ahmad as a leader. Shah ‘Abd-u’l-‘Aziz was still alive and there may have been generational differences over doctrinal emphases and the idea of promoting a jihad in India. Metcalf, Islamic Revival, pp. 54-55 is more aware of the nuances of doctrinal differences among the Delhi ‘ulama; I.H. Qureshi, Ulema, pp. 143, is more inclined to see the Delhi ‘ulama acting as a unit under Shah ‘Abd-u’l-‘Aziz. For Qureshi, Sayyid Ahmad remained a protégé of ‘Aziz, who planned the jihad and assigned his nephew (Shah Isma’il) and son-in-law (Maulana Abd-u’l-Hayy) to see the Sayyid was “properly advised.”
The Wahhabi Army under Saud ibn ‘Abd-u’l-‘Aziz, grandson of the founder of the Movement, conquered Makkah and Madina in 1803 and ruled the Hejaz for nine years, enforcing the purist, ascetic Wahhabi forms of Islam. The Wahhabis were in the end defeated in the Hejaz by Ibrahim Pasha, Ottoman Governor of Egypt. Saud died in 1814, but his son, Abdu’l-lah, was captured and executed in Istanbul in 1818. The Wahhabis-Sauds retreated to their homeland in the Najd and ruled from Riyadh for a century before founding the modern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the aftermath of World War One.

Metcalf, Islamic Revival, pp. 56-57.

According to Mujeeb, Indian Muslims, p. 396-397, Sayyid Ahmad told a group of his disciples:

Brethren, the purpose of performing the bai’ah is that you should give up everything you do which is of the nature of polytheism or heresy, your making of ta’ziyahs, setting up banners, worshipping the graves of pirs and martyrs, making offerings to them and taking vows in their name. All this you should give up, and do not believe that your good and ill comes from anyone except God; do not recognize anyone but Him as having the power to grant fulfillment of your wishes. If you continue (in the way of polytheism and heresy), merely offering bai’ah will bring no benefit.

Mujeeb, Indian Muslims, pp. 396-397.


(1) If God appoints as your Amir a man who is a slave, with his ears and nose cut off, and who puts people to death according to God’s book, then you must listen and obey him in all things.
(2) There will be Amirs among you, some of whose actions you will find conformable to law, and some contrary thereto; then when anyone who shall say to their faces, ‘These acts are contrary to law,’ verily he shall be pure; and he who has known their actions to be bad, and has not told them so to their faces, has certainly not remained free from responsibility, and he who has seen a bad act and obeyed it, is their companion in it.’ The Companions said, ‘May we not fight them?’ The Prophet said, ‘No, so long as they perform prayers.’

There is a right of disobedience in another hadith:

(3) Ibn ‘Umar said: ‘Listening and obeying (the ruler) is incumbent upon a Muslim, in what he likes and dislikes so long as he is not commanded disobedience (to Allah). If he is commanded disobedience, then neither listening nor obeying is (lawful).’ (In Muslim.) Cited in Mishkat-ul-Masabih, (Summarized Version), Compiled by Shaikh Wali-ud-Din Bin Abdullah, Translated by Maulana Muhammad Tufail Zaigham (Lahore: Kazi Publications, 1989), p. 371.


Mujeeb, Indian Muslims, p. 391-ff.


Quoted in Sivan, Radical Islam, p. 98.

Quoted in Mujeeb, Indian Muslims, p. 395.

Muhammad Ja’far Thanesari, *Hayat-i-Saiyid Ahmad Shahid* (Karachi, 1958). The claim was that the Sikhs were the enemy because they interfered in Muslim religious practices; while the British did not.

Kushwant Singh: *Ranjit Singh: Maharaja of the Punjab* (First Indian Reprint, Bombay: George Allen and Unwin, 1973), p. 162. Singh notes contacts between Sayyid Ahmad and the British. According to Singh, “Mirza Hairat Delhvi tells us in the *Inayat-i-Taiyaba* that, in consultation with Maulana Shah Mohammed Ismail, Syed Ahmed Shah informed the Lieutenant-Governor of [the United Provinces] through Sheikh Ghulam Ali Reis of Allahabad that he was preparing for a *Jihad* against the Sikhs and hoped that the British Government had no objection to it. The Lieutenant-Governor wrote back to him in reply that as long as the peace of their territories was not disturbed, they had nothing to say, nor had they had any objection to such preparation.”

Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*, pp. 60-61. According to the Hadith (Traditions), the Prophet Muhammad made several references to the Al-Mahdi (‘the directed one’), who would appear at the end of the world. According to Bukhari, the Prophet said, “The world will not come to an end until a man of my tribe and of my name shall be master of Arabia.”


Hunter, *Indian Mussalmans*, p. 6. There was little love lost between Sikh and Muslim in Ranjit Singh’s state, although it would be a mistake to label this unremitting hostility. Muslims were embittered by regulations against the *azan* (public call to prayer), the use of some mosques as stables, the prohibition against cow killing, and the occasional desecrations and slaughter that arose out of the passions of war. Both sides could do these things, of course, particularly in the Peshawar region where skirmishing and ambush could be especially brutal. Neither side took prisoners. Pakhtun mothers are said to have hushed their children by telling them Hari Singh Nalwa was coming. In Punjab, Muslims—and others of course—suffered from the sometimes chaotic implementation of Sikh administration. This got better in the latter half of Ranjit Singh’s reign, but early on tax collection, for example, was cruelly and haphazardly carried out by armed bands. In some areas, Muslim tribes and peasant bodies were pushed off the land, to be replaced by Sikh peasantry. In these cases, both groups came from the same type of Jat *pattidari* or *bhaichara* village communities. Even today in Punjab, the term *sikhashahi* denotes tyrannical, turbulent, insecure rule. It should be kept in mind the administration of the Lahore State was in its infancy. It had a corps of gifted Khatri Hindu administrators, who might have further improved things had the state survived. It should also be remembered the Sikhs were coming out of a century and a half of off-and-on conflict with the Mughals, a period in which their people at times suffered unspeakable brutalities. Nonetheless, Ranjit Singh was a moderate ruler, not given to haphazard cruelty. He detested killing. And, he allied with Muslim chiefs—the Tiwanas, for example—who agreed to pay revenue and refrain from opposing him. Also, he kept in his inner circle Muslim advisers and ministers—Faqir Azizuddin, Sheikh Islamuddin, etc.—who were devoted to the Maharajah and often required to carry out difficult political and diplomatic missions.


Not to be confused with the Hazarajat in Central Afghanistan. Here we mean the cis-Indus territory of Hazara, a Division in NWFP, that occupies the southeastern angle of the Indus between Kashmir and Punjab. Today, the major cities are Haripur, Abbottabad, and Mansehra. The first was founded by the Sikh
general, Hari Singh Nalwa, and bears his name. The second was founded by the British and honors James Abbott, the first British administrator in Hazara. The people still hold Abbott in great regard and even today refuse attempts to change the city’s name. Mansehra is older, perhaps very much older, if the Ashokan rock inscriptions there are any indication of urban life at the time. Ashoka the Great ruled much of the subcontinent from c. 273 to 232 B.C.

49 The date marks the fall of Lahore to Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni. The Hindu Shahis had lost Peshawar and their capital at Waihind on the Indus in 1001, but spent two decades unsuccessfully defending other parts of their domain. Muhammad Nazim, The Life and Times of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna (Cambridge, 1931; reprint, Lahore: Khalil and Co., 1973).

50 In 1818, the Durbar’s Sardar Makkhan Singh, Governor of Rawalpindi, made the first foray into Hazara. Both he and his successor, Sardar Amar Singh Majithia, were killed in battles with the Hazarawal tribes—the Turis, Saidkhani, Mishwanis, Tahir Khelis, Jaduns, Dilazaks—all Pakhtun tribes—and the Tanaolis (Mughal) and Kharrals (Hill Rajputs). In 1819, the Durbar’s first Governor of Kashmir and one of its most feared generals, Hari Singh Nalwa, was given charge of Hazara. His campaigns in Hazara brought a measure of Sikh control, but only intermittent civil order. In 1823, Nalwa founded Haripur, now a district headquarters, between Hasan Abdal and what later became Abbottabad. In the rising of the Hazarawals later in the same year, the Durbar lost its forts at Darband to the Tanaolis and Shinkiari to the Swathis. In 1824, Maharajah Ranjit Singh led a larger force into the region. The major Hazarawal redoubt at Srikot (modern Sirikot) on the Gandhgarh Mountains above Tarbela was captured. In 1825, Nalwa had to raise a siege of the Sikh fort at Srikot. This time the general executed the captured chiefs of the Turin, Jadun, Dilazak, and Mishwani Tribes. Hazara remained quiet for three years. For details, see: Gazetteer of the Hazara District, 1883-4 (published under the authority of the Punjab Government, Lahore: Civil and Military Gazette Press, n.d.).

51 Allard and Ventura were former colonels in the Bonaparte Army. They had arrived in Lahore together in 1822 and offered their services to Ranjit Singh, who always took an intense interest in military affairs and created forces far superior to those of his contemporaries in India—except for the Company’s army. But, even there, Sikh artillery was thought by many Company officers to be superior to their own. Later, in the Anglo-Sikh Wars, Sikh artillery took a fearful toll of the Company’s troops. Ranjit Singh never completely trusted his European officers, although he was close to Allard. Other noted soldiers-of-fortune in the Durbar’s army were M. Henri Court, a French scholar and aristocrat, who arrived in 1827 and managed the production of artillery in Lahore; and Paolo de Avitable, an Italian officer, who is best known for his brutal rule as Governor of Peshawar (1834-1839). Some 50 European officers and 150 other ranks are said to have served the Durbar army. Khushwant Singh, Ranjit Singh, pp. 139-148, has a chapter on the Maharajah’s ‘Feringhees.’

52 For a description of the battle, see: Ibid., pp. 149-157.

53 Hari Singh Nalwa stopped the Afghan invasion in the throat of the Khyber, in a costly battle for both sides. Nalwa lost his own life. Ranjit Singh formally annexed Peshawar to the Lahore dominions and sent Avitable to keep law and order. The Afghans were never reconciled to their loss of Peshawar, but this was their last major effort to recover the region from the Sikhs by main force. Dost Muhammad would be back during the troubles of the Anglo-Sikh wars. In 1848, he temporarily recovered Peshawar and made a bid to concert with the Sikh ‘rebels’ against the British. As part of the territory of the Lahore Durbar, Peshawar passed into the hands of the British after the Second Anglo-Sikh War (1847-1848).

54 Included among those who supported the Sayyid was Bahram Khan, one of the Arbabs of Takal. The Arbabs were part of the Khalil tribe, a people who controlled parts of the fertile Vale of Peshawar on the outskirts of the city. Under the Durrani, the Khalils were employed as agents and go-betweens with the Afridi khans of the Khyber—a role they informally retained under the Sikhs and indeed the British. See: Shahamat Ali, The Sikhs and Afghans: Journal of an Expedition to Kabul (1883 edition reprint by Patiala: Languages Department Punjab, 1970), p. 275.


Both sites are under the reservoir of the Tarbela Dam.

The Siran drains the Vale of Mansehra and passes into the Indus—now the Tarbela Reservoir—north of the Ghundghar Ridge. These battles and other skirmishes were costly to the *mujahideen*. Many are buried in the extensive necropolis between the Chachh Plain and the modern Lawrencepur-Tarbela Road. Philip E. Jones, *Field Notes for the Social Impact Assessment, Ghazi-Barotha Hydropower Project*, 1992.


Sayyid Ahmad ran into other points of religious controversy, according to Qureshi, *Ulema in Politics*, p. 150-152. These were (1) the adoption by Shah Isma’il of “some points of the Shafi’i *fiqh* in prayers like *raf’u yadain*, raising the hands up to the ears in the midst of prayers at the change of some postures.” For the Pakhtuns, who were staunch and unsophisticated Hanafs, such little points of ritual were of fundamental importance. Shah Isma’il was accused of a deviation close to *ghairu taqlid* (non conformity with established belief). (2) The Sayyid also had to rebut charges he was a British agent, sent to the area to corrupt the religion of the people. (3) The last charge was perhaps the more difficult one, as it accused him of inventing a “new religion which did not believe in any saint or man of spiritual greatness.” Although he was more moderate than the Arabian Wahhabis, the Sayyid “did hold and preach that reverence for saints should not be so immoderate as to compromise belief in monotheism.” This meant he considered the folk Islam of local saints and shrines as aberrations and un-Islamic, though these were deeply embedded in the Pakhtun heartland. Sayyid Ahmad had to contradict the charges of heresy in a letter to leading *ulama* in Peshawar.

We have called the ruling families of Kabul ‘Afghans’ to distinguish them from the Pakhtun Tribes around Peshawar. In fact, the Afghans are part of the larger Pakhtun confederacy—or nationality—which holds the regions on both sides of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. There are, of course, differences of dialect, tribal structure, and origin among the Pakhtuns, but they all speak a form of Pashto, follow one or another of the codes of *Pakhtunwali*, and fit into a commonly recognized genealogical system. The British called the Pakhtuns ‘Pathans,’ as do the Punjabis and most down country peoples today. As noted in the paper, the long period of invasions by Muslims, starting in the eleventh century, left numerous Pathan ‘colonies’ in India proper. Sayyid Ahmad Rae Barelvi had close ties with some of these.

According to Qureshi, *Ulema in Politics*, p. 149, this was ordered by Sultan Muhammad Khan. Karamar is east of Shahbaz Ghari—site of Ashoka rock inscriptions—and stands above the modern town of Kalu Khan. At 1030m, the mountain stands somewhat apart and outward from the curtain range of Swat-Buner. It has a small shrine (*ziarat*) near the summit. Due to this, and perhaps to older pre-Muslim traditions, the local tribesmen hold the mountain in reverence and no one may cut a single twig of the vegetation around the summit. Buddhist and Hindu remains are found on the summit itself and elsewhere on the mountain. It is almost certainly the Mount Parvala, climbed by Xuan Zang (Hiuan Tsang), the great Chinese pilgrim-traveler, in the seventh century A.D. See: A Foucher, *Notes on the Ancient Geography of Gandhara* (Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1915). This writer visited Kalu Khan and the mountain
in 1994. The sense of the mountain’s sanctity—or of the shrine on top—remains very strong, as does the prohibition against grazing or cutting. Tribal tensions prevented a more than cursory examination of the mountain. Jones, Field Notes, January 1994.

66 According to Thanesari in Hayat-i-Saiyid Ahmad Shahid, pp. 284-285, some Punjabi or Pathan member of the small guard posted to guard a comparatively unknown approach to Balakot betrayed the Sayyid. According to local tradition, the culprit was the Chief of Garhi Habibullah, the village where the Kaghan Valley track meets the road between Mansehra and Muzaffarabad. Qureshi, Ulema, p. 155, n 2.


68 Ibid.

69 Neither the shrines at Balakot nor that downstream at Garhi Habibullah have anything to do with Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed. These shrines are those of the Sayyids of Kaghan. There is an extensive graveyard across the Kunhar River (on the left bank) from the town of Balakot, which is said to have received the jihadi dead. There is a small shrine just off the road a few miles below Balakot where the head is said to have been buried. Qureshi agrees the most likely disposition of the body is the report the Sikhs burned the body and dispersed the ashes. Qureshi, Ulema, p. 155. He references Mahmud Husain, “The Mystery of Saiyid Ahmad Shahid’s Death,” Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society, Karachi, July 1955; also Wade’s dispatch to Princep, Secretary to the Governor General, Records Office, Lahore, 17 May 1831.

70 By this time, Punjab and its Frontier were in the hands of a remarkable band of soldier administrators, many of whom had arrived during the short British Regency between the two Anglo-Sikh Wars. These included the Lawerences, Herbert Edwardes, John Nicholson, James Abbott, Neville Chamberlain, Reynell Taylor, William Hodson, and Harry Lumsden. Lumsden was founder or the Queen’s Own Corps of Guides. See: Caroe, The Pathans; and Allen, Soldier Sahibs.

71 Qureshi, Ulema, p. 158. Maulana Sayyid Nasir-u’d-din was a descendant of Shah Wali-u’llah and was married to the daughter of Shah Muhammad Ishaq who had succeeded Shah Abd-u’l-‘Aziz as the principal of the Madrasah-i-Rahimiyah. The latter was the main theological school in Delhi until it was destroyed during the re-taking of Delhi in Great Rebellion. (1858).

72 Hazara was considered part of Kashmir until 1847, when Hazara was separated. In the same year, Captain James Abbott, Assistant to the Resident at Lahore, arrived to make a revenue settlement.

73 This was the First Black Mountain Expedition. The other three occurred in 1868, 1888, and 1891. The British never pacified this region on the eastern side of the Indus and south of Chilas. Even today it remains remote and difficult of access.

74 Caroe, The Pathans, p. 364.

75 Qureshi, Ulema, p. 161.

76 Caroe, The Pathans, p. 364


78 Qureshi, Ulema, p. 162.

79 The Akhund was founder of the line of Walis who ruled Swat until 1972. As a Safi tribesman, he was part of an older strata of peoples who lived across the northern arc of Gandhara before the arrival of the Mohmand and Yusufzai Pakhtuns and who spoke the older Indic language of Gujar. Many of the higher mountain peoples are still Gujar—as Gujar—as in this region, holding the uppermost villages while the
Pakhtuns live in the valleys and riverain plains. The Akhund was born a shepherd in Jabrai, Upper Swat in about 1784, well east of the traditional Safi territory, and like many of the transhumant Gujar folk moved around the region, including Swat, Buner and the Swabi Plain. He gained a reputation for gentleness and piety, is thought to have gained some sufic training farther south, and eventually settled at Saidu in lower Swat. There, his reputation for holiness grew by leaps and bounds, and there he was buried in 1877. He and his successors had been gifted with substantial land, with which to support the shrine at Saidu Sharif, and, as is the way of things in the Indus Basin, their spiritual power naturally translated into political power. Although not Sayyids, and hence not purported descendents of the Prophet, the shrine of the Akhund at Saidu Sharif became a competitor and alternative to that of Pir Baba, across the Ilam Pass in Buner. Caroe, *The Pathans*, pp. 362-ff, has a fuller biography of the Akhund.

80 Qureshi, *Ulema*, p. 164.

81 The Ismast group did not have a good reputation among the new generation of Pakhtun nationalists, led by Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan (1890-1989). Early in his career, Ghaffar Khan was mentored by the Haji Sahib of Tanangzai, who later planned a rising in Buner, and cooperated with young Pakhtun clerics educated at Deoband under the influence of Mawlana Ubaid-u’llah Sindhi. Along with Sindhi, this group planned their own center in tribal territory. Ghaffar Khan actually visited Chamarkand before picking Zagai in the Mohmand territory. But none of this came to anything, as Ghaffar found his own way through the Khudai Khidmatgar (Red Shirt) movement, a distinctly more secular and eclectic movement than could have been supported by the radical Deobandis or the ‘Indian Wahabis.’ See: Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, *My Life and Struggle: Autobiography of Badshah Khan* (Delhi: Hind Pocket Books, 1970).

82 Qureshi, *Ulema*, p. 166.


85 Mawlana Muhammad Ja’far Thanesari and Mawlana Muhammad Husain Batalawi.

86 Although the followers of Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed never called themselves Wahhabi, I have used the term ‘Indian Wahhabis’ for this group to distinguish it from the Arabian Wahhabis, who undoubtedly had had considerable influence on Sayyid Ahmad and the *Jihad* Movement. Nonetheless, the Indians did not adopt all the strictures of the Arabian movement. Unlike the latter, they accepted the sufis doctrines of mystical illumination while rejecting the speculative excesses of the sufis orders and the highly heterodox forms of popular belief in saints and shrines. In essence, the Ahl-i-Hadith *ulama* sought to cut through the whole integument of tradition, particularly that represented by the four orthodox schools of Islamic jurisprudence as sources of final authority, and to take their doctrines directly from the *Qur’an* and *Hadith*. Their rejection of the legal schools has given them the appellation, *ghair muqallid* (an independent, one who does not follow a teacher), by which they also are known. As seen by one of the founders of the Ahl-i-Hadith in 1877, Mawlana Nawab Saddiq Hasan Khan of Bhopal, this group

does not follow, either in broad principles or in minutiae of canon law, any of the four juristic schools, and which in theological dogma…binds itself to the clear injunctions of the Qur’an and the word and practice (hadis and sunnah) of the Prophet. The credo of the Ahl-i-Hadis was belief in God, His books, His prophets, and His angels as enjoined in the Qur’an. The belief in God was an indivisible totality embracing all His attributes mentioned in the Qur’an and the hadis “without modification, selection, suspension, symbolization, or Intellectualization.”

In the century after the Mutiny, the Ahl-i-Hadith had its periods of quietism, even dormancy, but today has experienced a revival. It is in this tradition that the Lashkar-i-Toiba (Army of the Pure) has its roots. Currently active in the anti-India insurgency in Kashmir, the Lashkar has ties with Al-Qa’ida, thus bringing together again the two ‘Wahhabi’ traditions.

87 I have discussed these various schools in Jones, “Religious Leadership,” pp. 59-ff.

88 The Deobandi ulama regarded themselves as the inheritors of the reformist tradition established by Shah Wali-u’l-lah, but rejected anything that smacked of innovation (bid’at). They accepted conservative sufi traditions—many of them were connected with Naqshbandi and Qadiri silsilahs (communities)—but opposed the cult of saints (piri-muridi) in Indic Islam. The Deoband ulama were particularly orthodox in their view of the Prophet Muhammad, insisting that he was fully—and only—human. They rejected all notions of the transmission of a divine spark of some form of religious charisma (baraka) through chains of lineage successors of the Prophet. They viewed festivals, such as the annual celebrations at the sufi shrines (‘urs), and the Id-i-Milad-ul-Nabi (birthday celebration of the Prophet) as dangerous forms of innovation. Deobandi polemicists negatively focused on the uses of the Surat-ul-Fatihah, the opening chapter of the Qur’an, by the sufi cultists. This Surat forms an essential part of the Muslim prayers and is also recited at funerals when praying for God’s mercy on the soul of the departed. The sufi cultists and ulama like those of the Farangi Mahal School, however, had developed elaborate ceremonies based on the Fatihah for use during the ‘urs and other special days honoring the saints. In all of this, they mirrored the ideas of Sayyid Ahmad Saheed and the Ahl-i-Hadith. Ibid, pp. 65-66. Barbara Metcalf, Islamic Revival, is the foremost Western authority on Deoband. See also works by Francis Robinson. For a contrast to the Deobandis, see Francis Robinson, “The Ulama of Farangi Mahall and their Adab,” in Metcalf, ed., Adab as Islamic Ideal.

89 Ghaffar Khan, Life and Struggle, pp. 32-38.


91 Ibid., p. 123. According to Bamford, this was not entirely a Muslim undertaking. He cites reports of contacts between the Provisional Government, the Germans, and Hardayal, leader of the Ghadar Movement—a largely Sikh insurrectionary party based in California. Further, a number of figures in the Provisional Government were Hindus. “A certain Mahendra Pratap was to be President.”

92 Ibid., pp. 122-125. Impressed by what he had seen in Lenin’s Moscow, Mawlana Ubaidullah Sindhi sought to adapt the socialist revolutionary movement to Islam, becoming a founder of “Islamic Socialism.” Although he never produced his own study, he reportedly regarded the concept of wahdah-al-wujud (Doctrine of Divine Immanence) as the closest parallel to the ontological basis of Dialectical Materialism. He was allowed to return to India in 1939 and ended his life at the Jamia Millia Islamia in Delhi. His disciple, Professor Muhammad Sarwar recorded much of Sindhi’s discourse and fragmented writings. This is available in: Muhammad Sarwar, Ifadaat-o-Malfuzaat: Hazrat Mawlana Ubaidullah Sindhi (Lahore: Sindh Sagar Academy, 1972).

93 Bamford, Histories, p. 164.

94 For general histories, see: Arthur Swinson, North-West Frontier (London: Corgi, 1967), and Caroe, The Pathans. Caroe was the last Governor of the NWFP under the British. For a study of British military policy on the Frontier, see: T.R. Moreman, The Army in India and the Development of Frontier Warfare, 1849-1947. Other British period sources, including campaign histories (official and unofficial), studies of tribes, district gazetteers, archaeological reports, etc., are listed in: Lieut.-Col. R. North, I.A., The Literature of the North-West Frontier of India (Peshawar: GS&PO, 1946). Ghaffar Khan’s Life and Struggle gives the viewpoint of a Pakhtun activist.

Winston Churchill was involved in this campaign. It was his first experience of war and it produced his first book. See: Winston S. Churchill, The Story of the Malakand Field Force (1898 edition reprint, New York: W.W. Norton, 1990). The battle in and around the Malakand Pass was not the first major battle there. The Mughal Emperor, Akbar, lost an army just below the Malakand in February, 1586. Among the 8,000 killed in the night attack by the tribesmen was Raja Birbal, Akbar’s most beloved minister. Muhammad Akbar, The Punjab Under the Mughals (Lahore: Ripon, 1948), pp. 79-80, has an account of the battle based on Mughal sources—the Akbarnama and the Muttakhab-ut-Twarikh.

Trench, Frontier Scouts, pp. 148-ff. See also John Masters, Bugles and a Tiger (New York: Viking, 1956), pp. 181-226. Masters was an officer with the 2/4th Prince of Wales’s Own Gurkha Rifles and fought in this campaign, including in the battles around Kaniguram and Arsalkot.


Their intimate cohesion, and the ramification of their class through the tribes, make them an admirable instrument for organizing a popular movement, and the prominent share they took in recent wars was due partly to the conviction of the tribal Chiefs, who all have their rivals and enemies, that the only way to unite their own and other clans for a common aim was to put forward neutral, universally respected, leaders, whom none could object to, and who, in the members of the priestly classes, possessed willing and obedient agents, in every village of the heterogeneous Afghan population.

King has excellent sections on the Orakzai Mullahs, including Mullah Sayyid Akbar (Aka Khel) (pp. 110-ff), as well as a section on the Tirah Expedition of 1897 (pp. 186-ff). The section on the 1897 war shows the connections between Mullah Sayyid Akbar, the Hadda Mullah, and the “Mad Mullah” of Swat. King was Deputy Commissioner of Kohat, 1897-1900.

Qur’an, Tr. by Abdullah Yusuf Ali, 1934, p. 198. For collected Hadith on governance, see Mishkatu’l-Masabih. Book XVI, Ch. 1.


One of these is Jamal Malik, Colonization of Islam: Dissolution of Traditional Insitutions in Pakistan (Lahore: Vanguard, 1996). Malik interprets government policy as aimed at the penetration and control over the traditional religious infrastructure; but it now appears that what really happened was the other way around—the colonization by the ulama of institutions set up by the government to control them.

For data, see: Qomi Komiti Bara’e Deeni Madaris Pakistan (Hakumat-i-Pakistan: Wazirat Mazhabi Amur, 1979); Malik, Colonization, pp. 164-ff; and

The students at Islamabad University were anticipating a US attempt to rescue its embassy hostages in Iran and, in that event, had planned to protest at the new US Embassy in Islamabad. Their plan called for taking the fleet of university busses over to the Embassy. In the end, the students were galvanized into
violent action and joined by some townsfolk from the commercial areas by the first garbled reports of the Makkah Incident that had the holy city under attack by US forces.


108Karachi harbors a substantial Pakhtun and Afghan refugee population of about a million that retains close ties with the NWFP, and with Pakhtun colonies in the Gulf, UK and US. Pakhtuns—mainly Afridis and Shinwaris—dominate the private overland trucking business, hauling fruit from the Frontier and grain and textiles from Punjab—and occasionally narcotics, guns and explosives—down from the north. The city is the location of several important madrasahs, most notably the Jamiat ul-Uloomi al-Islamiyya in Binnori (Buneri) Town.

109Usama bin-Laden, “Declaration of War Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places,” August 23, 1996. (Signed from the Hindukush Mountains, Khurasan, Afghanistan.)

110“The Al Qaeda Manual,” located in Manchester, UK, during the search of an Al Qa’ida member’s home.