

# The Taliban and the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA)

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## ABSTRACT

This study sheds light on the issue of Pakistani support for the insurgency in Afghanistan, mainly the Taliban, who, by way of being the most active, have been – for all intents and purposes – able to direct much of the insurgency in Afghanistan. In the study, it will be argued that without Pakistani support, the Afghan insurgency would not be able to keep up the level of attacks that they have, so far, been able to muster. The study will concentrate on the key political player when it comes to Pakistani support for the Taliban, the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA). The study will begin with a more general background of the present situation. This will include a discussion of some of the basic tenets of the insurgency as well as of how the present situation, with a more and more efficient insurgency, was reached. Thereafter will follow a discussion on the present set-up of Taliban – MMA relations and how it affects Pakistan and Afghanistan. Finally, there will be a discussion on how this might affect the coalition<sup>1</sup> forces in Afghanistan and some notes on possible future developments in Afghanistan.

*Keywords* • Taliban • Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) • Insurgency • Pakistan • Afghanistan • Pakistan's tribal areas

## Introduction

This study covers the issue of the resurgent Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan and, more specifically, the support the Taliban is receiving from various actors in Pakistan, concentrating on the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA). Support for the Taliban movement goes back a long time<sup>2</sup>, and the limited scope of the study does not allow for an in-depth approach. Suffice it here to say that support for the Taliban is not limited to money, weapons and ammunition. The way the Taliban has kept up the pressure on ISAF/NATO forces during winter (normally a time when fighting dies down) clearly shows that manpower is not considered

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<sup>1</sup> 'Coalition' is used throughout the study as a neutral term, encompassing all countries that are participating in various capacities on the government side in Afghanistan, be it military or civilian.

<sup>2</sup> It goes back to 1980's when Pakistan supported the anti-Soviet forces in Afghanistan.

a problem by the Taliban leadership; despite casualties, they have not had any problems in fielding new fighters into Afghanistan. In short, support comes in the form of equipment, money and manpower, i.e. new recruits. Both U.S. and British military commanders in Afghanistan say that the surge in attacks during late 2006 can be tied to the agreement reached in September 2006, between the Pakistani government and the tribal leaders in Waziristan. Through the agreement the Pakistani government pulled back its soldiers in return for a pledge from the Tribes that they would not shelter militants or allow them to engage in any cross-border activity.<sup>3</sup> Instead, the militants, including the Taliban, have been taking advantage of the agreement to launch new attacks.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, it is important to note that there is a clear connection between the various "flare-ups" in southern and in eastern Afghanistan. As will be dealt with some more below – there are other problematic groups that constitute a threat to the coalition forces, such as war- and drug-lords and more "common" criminals, but the development over the past few years clearly indicates that the Taliban have made a strong come-back in terms of more coordinated attacks and also in terms of fusing alliances with other, similar, religiously motivated Islamic groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan. In contrast to most of the more "criminal" groups,<sup>5</sup> the Taliban is also more difficult to accommodate in a new, more democratic Afghanistan. The Taliban is a Pashtun movement, and a lot of the resistance is directed against perceived attempts by the Karzai government, supported by the coalition forces, to limit the traditional Pashtun dominance of Afghanistan. Most glaring here, for the Pashtun/Taliban, is of course the way in which other ethnic groups such as Tajiks, Uzbeks and, most threatening of all since they are Shi'a, Hazaras have gained prominent places in the new political structure of Afghanistan. In this regard, therefore, one should use the term Taliban with some caution and realize that a major reason for the success of the insurgency lies in the fact that the hard-core Taliban leadership (which still has connections with foreign Jihadi groups such as remnants of Al Qaeda) has been able to draw on traditional *Pashtun* loyalties to support the insurgency.

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<sup>3</sup> *International Herald Tribune*, January 17 2007, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Among various Pakistani observers, it is a common theme that the Musharraf government "gave in" to the tribes after a series of failed military missions to curb militant cross-border activity. These military offensives have been going on for some years now, without any visible gains for the government. During several trips to Pakistan and Afghanistan, the conclusion that the Musharraf government, through the agreement from September 2006, "acknowledged defeat", was a constant message that the author received. For details of meetings, contact the author.

<sup>5</sup> Some of these criminal groups could probably be "handled" by efforts based on social and political initiatives, geared towards creating alternative ways for supporting the population.

However, in this lies also, somewhat paradoxically perhaps, a possible way to counter the insurgency by driving a wedge between the more hard-core, Pakistani-supported, part, and the Pashtun tribes inside Afghanistan.

This is already visible in that weapons and equipment are not very difficult to find in Afghanistan, but new recruits might be. A substantial part of the manpower of the insurgency comes from recruits in Pakistan. Contrary to a belief often bandied about in Western media, ideological support for the Taliban is not necessarily so wide-spread in Afghanistan, even among the Pashtun tribes in the country.<sup>6</sup> A much more common reason for supporting the insurgency, or at least "turning the other way",<sup>7</sup> is resentment and disappointment with the lackluster performance of the Karzai government and, very important, anger at the way the coalition forces are conducting the war against the insurgents with constant incidents of collateral damage, and the feelings of loyalty with one's own tribes.

Consequently, in order to keep the war going, the Taliban must get new recruits from Pakistan. And it is here that the MMA comes in by creating the ideological and religious atmosphere for the insurgency, and in teaching and training recruits.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, this study focuses on this key aspect of Pakistani support for the Taliban movement, namely the political and ideological support given by various groups and political parties within the MMA. It is the hope that the study will give some important answers on how the insurgency is sustained as well as create possibilities for a continuation of research into the various ties between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

### **Background: Afghanistan and the Taliban Insurgency**

At the end of 2006, and shortly after the NATO summit-meeting in Riga (where the U.S. and Britain in particular asked other NATO countries to

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<sup>6</sup> This was underlined again during several interviews and discussion with prominent interlocutors in Pakistan during a trip to Islamabad and Peshawar in December 2006. For details of meetings, contact the author.

<sup>7</sup> A common way of doing this throughout the Pashtun tribal areas is for the population to leave foodstuff in the mosques for the Taliban to pick up during the night. Thus, the population tries to keep a certain distance to the Taliban, but also hedging their bets in case they turn out to be more successful.

<sup>8</sup> Apart from the MMA, the general Jihadi militancy can be said to consist of three other parts: the "official" preachers being employed by the government in the state mosques, the purely militant organizations such as the Jaish-e-mohammad and the Lashkar-e-taiba, and finally, the "foreigners" in al-Qaida and other groups and parties involved in international Jihadi movement.

contribute more troops to the fighting forces in Afghanistan<sup>10</sup>), it is clear that, at best, the coalition in Afghanistan can hold the line against the insurgents, whether they are Taliban or belong to some of the foreign Jihadi groups still active in the country. Getting the violence down to a level where some serious rebuilding and reconstruction work can begin seems much more difficult.

Partly this is due to mistakes committed at the beginning of the war in the autumn of 2001. The first mistake made was perhaps the most inevitable; namely focusing too much on ousting the Taliban and hunting down the remnants of the Al Qaeda network, and this to the detriment of trying to concentrate resources on rebuilding the country.

The swift downfall of the Taliban regime (and their foreign allies within the various Islamic networks) opened up a "window of opportunity" for a rather thorough change; political, social and economic. The understandable reluctance, on part of the U.S. and her allies, to try and be too ambitious, did, however, let some of the forces that dragged Afghanistan into 20 years of civil war, slip back into the picture. During the Fall of 2006, the Taliban has regrouped and made a comeback in many areas in the south, but there has also been an increase of tactics formerly only attributed to foreign Jihadists, such as suicide attacks.<sup>11</sup>

More serious, however, was the slow start of the re-building efforts. And, tied to that, the fact that in the aftermath of the Taliban downfall, perhaps too many international players got involved without a more focused strategic vision for the country. This is not to underestimate the progress that *has* come about since the war; presidential and parliamentary elections, the (albeit limited) success of the PRT's and the fact that the Afghan National Army (ANA) has got more "say" on development projects. At some locations, as well, local progress has been made when it comes to rebuilding and "normalisation".

But at the same time, there is still no clear strategy for the future. The U.S. military strategy of aggressively hunting Al Qaeda and the Taliban, has been rather successful, but more so in parts of the country where the Taliban were never as popular as in the heavily Pashtun areas in the South and South-East. During the latest year, as well, some of these successes have been rolled back due to a failure to follow up these military victories with more vigorous re-construction work. Consequently, the price for this has been that necessary and important re-construction projects have been put on hold or abandoned altogether. This means that the support from the general population as a whole, has

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<sup>10</sup> At the end of January 2007, the British commander of NATO forces in Afghanistan, General David Richards, was complaining that promised troops from NATO countries to bolster his forces, were still not available. *IHT*, January 18 2007, p. 4.

<sup>11</sup> This has been on the increase all through 2006 on a scale not seen before.

been somewhat neglected. And without that support no long-term solution is likely to come about soon.

It is, in this regard, important to point out that this in itself does not translate automatically to more support for the Taliban (and even less for the foreign Islamists, who were never very popular in Afghanistan). The upsurge in attacks during the last year, throughout the country (even in Kunar, Uzurgan, Ghazni and Nuristan), is probably also more of a sign of a feeling, on part of the Taliban, that tactics have to change to be more "visible". That is, there is a feeling that one has to continue to fight in order to "get heard" in Kabul and by the Karzai regime. Especially since the parliamentary elections, this has been seen as a major reason for the increase in the fighting. Attempts from the Karzai government to incorporate former Taliban into the political discourse (including more federalism with more authority for local assemblies for instance) can, if they are allowed to succeed, probably go along way into curtailing these attacks. Discussions with Taliban leaders in Pakistan support this picture.

The more "hardcore" fighters, consisting of Taliban from the "inner circles" as well as Islamists trained in Pakistan, is another issue. Here, continued military pressure is of paramount importance. But as long as Pakistan only reluctantly, if at all, goes along with this, it will be difficult to bring it to a more conclusive end. And, added to this is the wariness, on part of U.S. allies such as Spain, France and Germany, to do more offensive military operations that would increase the risks of more casualties. Today, the U.S., Britain and the Netherlands do most of the actual fighting against the armed insurgents. Here lies a key-factor towards the future of the country; Allied help in this endeavor is necessary, because as long as the war in Iraq drains U.S. resources, it is highly unlikely that more can be done in Afghanistan without other NATO forces doing a more offensive job. Not only as far as the insurgents go, but far more important; going after the local criminals (mainly drug-lords). Given this, and a more centralized vision (this does of course mean more sensitivity towards *local* needs, that might very well differ from province to province) of what the country needs, the U.S. probably would have a lot more leeway than the politicians in Washington might realize.

The war in Iraq disrupted the U.S. vision of a division of labor for Afghanistan, whereby the U.S. did most of the fighting and her allies did "the nation-building". This was never a feasible strategy from the start, but it did have merits that might have worked some of the way towards a more stable Afghanistan. Today, the picture has changed, but from a military point of view, the U.S. can handle that part of the insurgency that is really long-term and intent on disrupting the normalization process (i.e. Islamists and hard-core Taliban). As for the

others, there are roughly two main groups: the first consists of disappointed and disenfranchised Pashtuns, angry with the new government for “abandoning” them (a key group here are the Gilzai Pashtuns from Zabul province who were rather prominent during the Taliban years). They can be handled through a more flexible and decentralized policy towards the country as a whole. With this group (i.e. the Pashtun tribes) it is absolutely paramount that the coalition is doing its utmost to distinguish between them and the Taliban. “Collateral damage” (here, the unintended killing by coalition forces of tribal people adjacent to a target) probably does more than anything else to create enemies of the coalition.

The other groups are the criminal networks that have made much out of the chaos created by this war by making money of the drug-trade. In some instances, these groups have allied themselves with Jihadi groups infiltrating from Pakistan.

In summary, the consecutive attacks during winter are signs that the Taliban are trying to hinder the coalition from starting reconstruction and to try and win the “hearts and minds” war. As long as the coalition constantly must be on its guard against attacks, it will not have the time to switch to a more civilian mode. Furthermore, signs are that when spring comes around we will see a lot more fighting, at least in the south and south-east. Infiltration, not only in Helmand and Kandahar provinces, and the ongoing attacks on coalition forces, as well as on civilian aid-organizations, point to a possible offensive in the spring, if not a full-scale uprising. Since the feeling among Taliban commanders are that they are “winning”, they feel confident enough to take on the coalition on a larger scale than at present.<sup>12</sup> The recent agreements, first between the British and local Taliban in Helmand and, more importantly, the agreement between the Pakistani government and the militants in Waziristan in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas - FATA - (widely regarded as a surrender by the government after having lost hundreds of men fighting militants and local tribes) in September 2006, have both emboldened militants in the insurgency. In the end, this will probably lead to an even lesser will to compromise among the Taliban. It also led to FATA being a virtual “safe haven” for militants fighting in Afghanistan.

The result of the latest violence and the return of more fighters (Taliban and Jihadi alike), is that it has become much more difficult to get extensive and thorough reconstruction going. President Karzai’s attempt to curb ethnicity as a decisive factor by trying to co-opt former Taliban into the political life of the country (tried during the

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<sup>12</sup> This conclusion was strengthened during interviews with Pakistanis and Afghans in Pakistan in mid-December 2006. For details of meetings, contact the author.

parliamentary elections), will not succeed if this is not paired with serious reconstruction work.

For this to succeed (and in the long run, the goal of trying to mould Afghans into a national entity, without – or at least more independent of – ethnicity, is probably not going to work) more troops are needed (and to the "hot parts" of the country too), political parties must be allowed to develop from out of an ethnic background since that is the basis on which most Afghans today build their identity. Finally, the coalition must show more determination in the fighting as well as in the long-term reconstruction and in long-term political work, including showing that the international community will stay on.

In this, the Taliban will play a role whether one likes it or not, but not primarily as an insurgent factor, but first and foremost as an ethnic Pashtun-based group. It is important to note that this has been the case throughout the existence of the Taliban. For a majority of the non-Pashtun population of Afghanistan, the Taliban was always primarily a Pashtun-run group, trying to impose itself over everybody else. But then again, there is not an automatic will to support the Taliban from the Pashtun tribes; the Taliban idea of how a society should be run, even though to some extent based on Pashtun traditions, was far too influenced by "imported" Wahabi and Salafi notions from the Arab world to easily fit in with the traditional Pashtuns, to say nothing of other, non-Pashtuns, in Afghanistan.

The present Afghan government's strategy of co-opting some so-called "moderate" Taliban leaders, might work to some extent. But only if this policy is not seen by other ethnic groups as another attempt from president Karzai (himself a Pashtun) to create just another Pashtun-run government. There is still a fear that this is indeed the case and the support given to Karzai from the International community is viewed suspiciously for precisely this reason. There is a real danger that if this view cannot be dispelled – through deeds, not words – the "project" to democratize and "normalize" Afghanistan will fail.

There is also the lingering suspicion among many Afghans that the West in general, and the U.S. in particular, is mainly interested in hunting activists in the various Jihadi groups and networks still in the country, and as soon as that is accomplished, Afghanistan will once again be left to its own devices.

There are several reasons for this suspicion. But one of the more important ones is the lack of progress in drug-eradication and the failure, or rather negligence on part of the West, to curb the drug-lords and a trade that in essence, forces farmers to comply with the drugtrade or getting no help (financial or other) in getting back into a more normal life (it should be pointed out here that drug-money often is the *only* source of revenue for many farmers, who have seen nothing of the

promised help from the government or the International community). This perception (which is real enough) will be extremely difficult to change, mainly because the "window of opportunity" that existed just after the fall of the Taliban, is closed now. Just after the war, the U.S. was clearly feared and there was a wide-spread feeling that the coalition would "get tough" with the war- and drug-lords. This did not happen in the misdirected fear that such an approach would only inflame more resistance.

There is also the problem with Pakistan. Despite assurances (and they can be real enough), the Musharraf regime still has no control neither over the numerous Islamic schools that are breeding-grounds for new recruits to the international Jihadi movement as well as recruiting people for immediate local struggles in Pakistan or Kashmir. Nor has he control over all parts of the ISI, which still harbors important actors that support the Taliban in Afghanistan. It is a rather common idea in Pakistan that only the Pashtun can rule the Afghanistan and that any attempts (such as imposed democracy) to "dilute" that must be countered. It is today difficult to see how this could change. At the very least, Afghanistan needs long-term support to counter Pakistani attempts to influence the country to the detriment of a democratizing project.

Also tied into all this, is the lack of will on part of the U.S. and other NATO countries to provide more manpower for offensive duties (as witnessed at the Riga summit in November 2006). This concerns not only actual fighting against Taliban insurgents and remnants of the Jihadi networks, but also such tasks as drug-eradication and countering more aggressive behaviour from drug-lords (some of whom are in the new parliament, either themselves or through proxies). Moreover, the tendency to limit stints in the country to 6-12 months for both civilians and military personnel, is sending a message – even if it is unintentional – that the West is not really serious in seeking any long-term solutions and that Afghanistan, at the end of the day, might get short-changed again. That is perhaps where the most serious challenge lies when it comes to finding common ground between the International community and the Afghan people. Without that, the long-term project of getting the country back on its feet will not succeed.

### **The Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal**

Ever since the terrorist attacks against the United States on September 11, 2001 and the subsequent invasion of Afghanistan, Pakistan has come to play an ever more significant role on the world stage. Often praised by the United States for his determination and dedication, Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf is regarded as a key player in the international efforts to reverse the trend of increased terrorist activity in

Central and South Asia. Despite Musharraf's apparent support for the struggle against international terrorism he faces strong resistance at home. The October 2002 Pakistani elections resulted in a new power dynamics with the pro-Taliban Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) gaining 60 seats in the National Assembly, an absolute majority in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) and becoming second largest party in the province of Baluchistan. The results would come to have profound implications for internal Pakistani politics. However, one should bear in mind that the elections were rigged in favor of the MMA. All the individual parties in the MMA have links to militant groups, hence this coalition is of great interest when examining Pakistani links to the Taliban. Additionally, members of the MMA are known to have contacts with the Taliban and since they now possess political power it is important to take a closer look at their actions. Even though the MMA only became the third largest party in the National Assembly, after the Pakistan Muslim League-Qaid-e-Azam (PML-Q), its leader Fazlur Rehman was granted the role of head of opposition. Due to the MMA's success in the elections the six-party coalition has been able to implement policy reminiscent of the Taliban regime, hence exacerbating difficulties for Musharraf.

The MMA is comprised of six political parties: the Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan (JUP), the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F), the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-S), Jamiat-e-Ahle Hadith, Pakistan Isami Tehrik (ITP) (formerly Tehriq-e-Jafaria (TeJ)) and the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI). All of the groups are Islamist in nature, but have emerged from different Islamic backgrounds. The three largest and most influential are the JUI-F, the JUI-S and the JI. These three groups all stem from the Deobandi School and are Sunni Muslim. In practice this means that they lay great emphasis on Islamic morals and principles in every day life. They preach a hard-line and traditional Islamist way of thinking that is shared by the Pashtuns living along the Pakistani-Afghan border, including the Taliban. These political groups all have historical and ethnic links with the Taliban, as they are all Pashtun, which is Afghanistan's largest and Pakistan's second largest ethnic group. The JUP, on the other hand, supports the Barlevi School. Despite it also being Sunni, it is more inclusive than the Deobandi School, hence less traditional. The ITP is, on the other hand, a Shia Muslim group and the Jamiat-e-Ahle Hadith follows the Wahabi sect, which stems from the Saudi Sharia system. What is striking about the MMA is that it is a coalition of Islamist political groups that have constantly been at odds with each other historically, but are now cooperating. It is important to note that the three Deobandi groups are the most powerful and influential within the coalition; the death of hundreds of Pashtuns as a result of the American

“Operation Enduring Freedom” led to growing support for the Deobandi factions and in turn the founding of the MMA. Contrary to widespread belief, ousting the Taliban from Afghanistan did not mean the end of the Taliban regime or Al Qaeda. Instead it simply moved large parts of its organization across the border to Pakistan.

In contemporary Pakistan the MMA is most influential in the NWFP and Baluchistan. Both regions border Afghanistan, hence they are inevitably affected by events in Pakistan’s neighboring state. Moreover, political parties within the MMA have played a prominent role in establishing and sustaining madrassas<sup>14</sup> in Pakistan. These institutions became infamous worldwide as a result of revelations that some of the 9/11 terrorists and one of the terrorists involved in the 7/7 bombings in London had attended madrassas in Pakistan. These schools have been put under scrutiny ever since, and the close ties that exist between them and Pakistani political parties are striking. When examining this, links to the Taliban also become apparent.

The Pakistani government has always had a close relationship with the Taliban. Pakistani support for the Taliban originated from Benazir Bhutto’s regime in the 1970s. Pakistani interests in Afghanistan have always been great for a multitude of reasons, the key ones being that it offers “strategic depth” for the Pakistani military in its confrontation with India and that it is seen as a gateway to Central Asia. The Taliban has also received extensive support from the Pakistani military and the Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI). When the Taliban came to power in Afghanistan in 1996 it enjoyed support from the JUI-F, which in turn gained popular support from Pashtuns living in NWFP, Baluchistan and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).<sup>15</sup> This support grew steadily after the Taliban was ousted by Western troops in October 2001 and it is arguably one of the greatest obstacles to winning the “war on terror”.

#### *Leadership, Madrassas and Islamic Groups*

Contrary to widespread belief the Taliban movement originated in Pakistan. Pakistani madrassas gave life to the movement, although it is important to note that only a small percentage of these schools have been found to be teaching extremist and anti-Western values. Deobandi thought lays the foundation for a number of madrassas in Pakistan, just like it does for the Taliban, hence they share a religious link. Most of the Taliban leaders have in fact graduated from madrassas run by Maulana Samiul Haq and Fazlur Rehman, leaders of the JUI-S and JUI-F

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<sup>14</sup> Pakistani religious schools.

<sup>15</sup> FATA is officially part of the NWFP, but has greater autonomy.

respectively.<sup>16</sup> Fazlur Rehman has even admitted attempting to bring about an Islamic revolution, describing the Taliban as an “ideal Islamic system”.<sup>17</sup> He is regarded as the Taliban’s main Pakistani ally and is therefore one of the most prominent figures in Pakistani-Taliban relations. Furthermore, one of the largest madrassas in Chaman, the “Al Jamia Islamia”, is believed to be a recruitment ground for rebels. The cleric Maulana Abdul Ghani, who heads the madrassa, is also a prominent leader of the JUI-F.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, an al Qaeda member, was caught in a house owned by the women’s wing of the JI. Yet another madrassa that has been of great concern has been the Shaldara madrassa in Quetta. It is run by Maulana Nur Mohammed, a member of the JUI and former Member of Parliament. According to Afghani President Hamid Karzai this madrassa is the headquarters for the Taliban in Pakistan. Nur Mohammed’s deputy Maulana Abdul Qadir has asserted “we are proud that the Taliban are made and helped here”.<sup>19</sup> Although leaders of the JUI-F and the JUI-S have not officially admitted to cooperation with the Taliban, their support base predominantly consists of people who support the mujahideen<sup>20</sup> struggle in Afghanistan. The JUI-F and JUI-S even received support from the Taliban in their electoral campaign. In addition, many MMA leaders are former jihadi commanders who fought alongside the Taliban in their struggle for power in the 1990s.<sup>21</sup> The JI, the best organized party in the MMA coalition, is also believed to have indirect ties to the Taliban. It is a staunch supporter of the Afghan commander Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who in turn is allied with the Taliban.<sup>22</sup>

The Pakistani education system has been of great concern to the West ever since September 11, as it is believed to be fuelling hatred and terrorism. Many madrassas have not only become a breeding ground for

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<sup>16</sup> *Pakistan: Madrassas, Extremism and the Military*, International Crisis Group, Asia Report No. 36, July 29 2002, p. 11.

<sup>17</sup> Owais Tohid, “Pakistan’s Frontier Passes Islamic Law, Ranking Islamabad,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, June 10 2003, <<http://www.csmonitor.com/2003/0610/p07s02-wosc.html>> (August 20 2007).

<sup>18</sup> Sumita Kumar, “Taliban Successes: A Matter of Concern,” IDA Strategic Comments, July 10 2006.

<sup>19</sup> B. Raman, “The Fall and Rise of the Taliban,” *Asia Times Online*, October 23 2003, Central Asia, <[http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Central\\_Asia/EJ23Ago2.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Central_Asia/EJ23Ago2.html)> (August 20 2007).

<sup>20</sup> Arabic word for a war or struggle.

<sup>21</sup> Syed Saleem Shazad, *Taliban’s “Call for Jihad Answered in Pakistan,”* *Asia Times Online*, June 16 2006, <[http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South\\_Asia/HF16Dfor.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/HF16Dfor.html)> (August 20 2007).

<sup>22</sup> Ahmed Rashid, “Who’s Winning the War on Terror?” *Yale Global Online*, <September 5 2003.

jihadis and criminals, but also a source of revenue for these groups.<sup>23</sup> As a result of U.S. pressure Musharraf introduced an ordinance in 2002 regulating madrassas in order to halt this development. The new madrassa law entailed two major components: mandatory registration and official scrutiny of finances. It was initially thought that these new laws would halt the constant birth of Islamic extremists. The changes were, however, met with widespread criticism from religious quarters and they proved to be superficial at the local madrassa level. Another major obstacle has been the lack of checks that are needed in order to monitor non-compliers.<sup>24</sup> Many high-ranking JUI-F officials who also run madrassas strongly opposed the 2002 ordinance. One of their major counterarguments was that most madrassas do not receive any state funding, hence it has no right to control them. Many regarded the introduced changes as an imposition from the West in an attempt to change the whole madrassa system, as argued by Maulana Samiul Haq, leader of the JUI-S.<sup>25</sup> In 2004 a ban was lifted on the registration of madrassas, which in practice meant that all madrassas needed to register and provide information on their activities, structure and administration. This modification has also encountered widespread criticism, especially from Deobandi madrassas, which are ruled by the JUI-F and the JI.<sup>26</sup>

Musharraf's close cooperation with the U.S. government in the "war on terrorism" has had implications for other parts of Pakistani political life as well. Musharraf banned several Pakistani militant groups in January 2002, but this act was of little consequence, as the banned groups simply changed their names and remained active. The second crackdown took place in 2003 and was directed at the same groups i.e. Tehrik-e-Islami Pakistan (formerly known as Tehrik-e-Jafria), Millat-e-Islami (formerly known as Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP))<sup>27</sup> and Khuddum-ul-Islam (formerly known as Jaish-e-Mohammed). This spurred furious reactions from the MMA, especially as Tehrik-e-Islami is a member of the six-party alliance.<sup>28</sup> The MMA has also cooperated with other Islamic groups outside of the alliance. The SSP is probably the most notorious one, mainly known for its violent attacks on Shia Muslims in Pakistan. The SSP has gained widespread support from various organizations in

<sup>23</sup> Laila Bokhari, *Waziristan- Impact on the Taliban Insurgency and the Stability of Pakistan*, Norwegian Defence Research Establishment, Report-2006/02895, p. 9,

<sup>24</sup>, International Crisis Group, *Asia Report*, p. 25.

<sup>25</sup> Kanchan Laksham, "Madrassa Reform: a Habit of Deception," *South Asia Intelligence Review* (Institute for Conflict Management) 4, 9 (September 12 2005).

<sup>26</sup> Ashutosh Misra, "MMA-Democracy Interface in Pakistan: From Natural Confrontation to Co-habitation?," *Strategic Analysis* (Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses) 30, 2 (April-June 2006).

<sup>27</sup> The Pakistani Army of the Prophet's Companions.

<sup>28</sup> Zaffar Abbas, "And Islamabad Plays Footsie with Islamism," *The Indian Express*, December 20 2003.

Pakistan that fear an increase in Shia power. These include support from the ISI and the Taliban. Several high-ranking leaders within the SSP are known to have attended Afghan mujahideen training camps in the 1990s, both aiding the Taliban and using their experience on the home front to kill Shias. The SSP has been run by Deobandi clerics since its formation. For this reason it has always kept close ties with the JUI. Ever since the rise of the Taliban in the 1990s, links among the Taliban, Deobandi madrassas in Pakistan and Islamic extremist groups like the SSP have deepened.<sup>29</sup> The SSP's most profound links are known to be with the JI and the JUI-F. The SSP readily recruits members for its organization in the madrassas run by members of the JUI-F. When extremist groups such as the SSP were banned by Musharraf in 2002, madrassas run by these groups were also closed down. They were, however, soon reopened because there were no other schools for the students to attend.<sup>30</sup> To conclude, it is evident that members of the powerful MMA have been able to continue running their madrassas, despite connections with extremist groups and the Taliban. The madrassa network is difficult to undercut, as the schools are controlled by some of the most influential politicians in Pakistan.

#### *North West Frontier Province (NWFP)*

Since the NWFP directly borders Afghanistan it has always had a special relationship with its northern neighbor. This region is predominantly inhabited by Pashtuns, the same ethnic group the Taliban belongs to. The MMA started gaining ground in this area as early as in October 2001<sup>31</sup> when it won a majority in the NWFP regional elections (Deobandis have ruled the MMA government in the NWFP ever since). Ever since the MMA's seizure of power in the province, there has been a marked increase in attacks on Coalition troops by insurgents originating from the Pakistani Pashtun belt.<sup>32</sup> This trend gives credence to the claim that certain elements of the MMA are closely linked with the Taliban. The MMA's regional predominance has resulted in it giving refuge to the Taliban in Pakistan without any serious repercussions from the government; President Musharraf has been dependent on the MMA for support since its electoral success in 2002, hence outright condemnations of the MMA's policies are unlikely. The MMA's main policy goal in the

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<sup>29</sup> Eric Brown, Hilel Fradkin, and Husain Haqqani, (Eds.) *Democracy and the Future of the Muslim World*, Current Trends in Islamic Ideology, Hudson Institute, Center on Islam, Volume 4, p. 84.

<sup>30</sup> International Crisis Group, Asia Report No. 36, p. 21.

<sup>31</sup> The Pak-Afghan Defence Council was established in October 2001 consisting of 26 parties including the six MMA parties.

<sup>32</sup> International Crisis Group, *Pakistan: The Mullahs and the Military*, Asia Report No. 49, March 20 2003, p. 4.

NWFP has been to restore, as they see it, the fundamental tenets of Islam within society.<sup>33</sup> This includes introducing sharia law and a vice and virtue police, the core components of the Hasba Bill passed in November 2006. The Bill also entails further segregation of the sexes and marginalization of the role of women in society. In practice this means that a large part of Pakistan will be under Taliban-like rule. The MMA has described these developments as “a step towards the Islamic system that (it) promised in its election manifesto”.<sup>34</sup>

#### *Baluchistan*

Baluchistan is yet another province with extensive links to the Taliban. A large majority of Pakistan’s madrassas are located in Baluchistan. Many of them are controlled by the Deobandi JUI-F. Ever since their electoral success back in 2002, the JUI-F has contributed to the expansion of madrassas in Pashtun majority areas.<sup>35</sup> This development has been made possible due to Musharraf’s unrelenting support for the MMA in Baluchistan. Reminiscent of the situation in the NWFP, the extensive madrassa network in Baluchistan has also led to an increased number of Taliban recruiters. Mir Jan, a Taliban fighter in Baluchistan’s capital Quetta, has commented on the JI’s and JUI’s influence in the region by saying “we are at home as we were before Musharraf hatched a conspiracy against us at the behest of the Americans. But our brothers (the mullahs) are in power, so it means we are in power”.<sup>36</sup>

Since Baluchistan has as of late become the breeding ground for violent conflict between Baluch nationalists and Pashtuns, there has been little focus on the Taliban’s manifestation in the province. Furthermore, Musharraf’s dependence upon the JUI-F has translated into something of a non-interventionist policy with regard to their political cooperation with the Taliban. Paradoxically, the weapons the Pakistani government has been given by the U.S. in order to use in the “war on terrorism” are in fact being used by the military in a national conflict where one of the main political actors supports the Taliban.<sup>37</sup>

Ever since the rise of the MMA in Baluchistan, the connection between the Taliban, al Qaeda and Pakistani political leaders has become increasingly apparent. Maulana Abdul Bari Agha, the Minister of Public

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<sup>33</sup> International Crisis Group, *The State of Sectarianism in Pakistan*, Asia Report No. 95, April 18 2005, p. 17.

<sup>34</sup> Bill Roggio, “Expanding Talibanization,” *The Fourth Rail*, November 14 2006, <[http://billroggio.com/archives/2006/11/expanding\\_talibanist.php](http://billroggio.com/archives/2006/11/expanding_talibanist.php)> (inaccessible).

<sup>35</sup> International Crisis Group, Asia Report No. 95, p. 20.

<sup>36</sup> Scott Baldauf and Owais Tohid, “Taliban Appears to be Regrouped and Well-funded,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, August 5 2003.

<sup>37</sup> International Crisis Group, *Pakistan: The Worsening Conflict in Baluchistan*, Report No. 119, September 14 2006, p. 21-22.

Health in Baluchistan, serves as a striking example. His ambition is to introduce the Hasba Bill into Baluch law, so as to replicate developments in the NWFP. This legitimates the fear that Baluchistan may also become a Talibanized province. Furthermore, Bari has made some telling appearances and announcements with regard to the Taliban. In May 2006 a young Pakistani man from Baluchistan died in Afghanistan while fighting for the Taliban. Bari attended the young man's funeral praising him as a martyr and asserting that his place in heaven was now guaranteed. Both Taliban and JUI-F flags were used as decorations at the funeral. Since such a prominent Baluch politician has referred to Taliban fighters as martyrs one could speculate that Baluch politics are headed in a pro-Taliban direction. Furthermore, the explicit expression of support for Taliban fighters clearly illustrates the JUI-F's stance with regard to their cause. Many Taliban leaders are believed to be living in Quetta, Baluchistan's capital, without interference from the provincial government.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, there have been reports of training camps set up by the Taliban and al Qaeda in both the NWFP and Baluchistan. These training camps are believed to be mobile, moving from village to village providing people with training in arms, map reading and methods of attack. Although no direct connections have been found between the MMA and these camps, it would not be too far-fetched to speculate that a connection does indeed exist. Interestingly enough, however, Fazlur Rehman has accused the military of training extremists, not admitting to any links of his own.<sup>39</sup>

#### *Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA)*

FATA, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas in northeastern Pakistan, is also an area of great concern to advocates of the "war on terrorism" (Neither the British – in their time – nor any Pakistani regimes has ever been able to fully control FATA). The region is semi-autonomous and consists of seven tribal agencies. Conventional politics and political parties have always been banned in FATA, as the tribal areas have been granted special status by the Pakistani government. However, Islamic leaders have been able to gain support from the electorate, as they control all mosques and madrassas. Consequently, the presence of corrupt politicians has flourished, particularly those with roots in radical Islam. During Taliban rule in Afghanistan in the 1990s, Deobandi influence significantly increased in FATA. This led to increased power for the JUI-F with Rehman in the forefront. His status predominantly derived from cooperation with the Taliban concerning

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<sup>38</sup> Declan Walsh, "Baluchistan Feeds Taliban's Growing Power," *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 5 2006.

<sup>39</sup> Sumita, IDA Strategic Comments.

cross-border smuggling. At present Rehman's party, the JUI-F, is the only party allowed to operate freely in FATA<sup>40</sup> As of 1997 FATA is represented in the Pakistani National Assembly, but the state's power over the region is still minimal, as laws made by the National Assembly do not apply to the tribal areas. FATA is predominantly inhabited by Pashtun tribes, hence the tribal code is regarded as law. The smallest of these regions, the Bajaur Agency, is significantly influenced by the MMA, as two politicians from this area are members of the National Assembly and one is in the Senate. This area of FATA is one of the most critical in counter-terrorism efforts, as it has reportedly been used as refuge for terrorists such as Osama bin Laden and Abu Faraj al-Libbi. Furthermore, it borders the Kunar province in Afghanistan, which is reportedly also an infamous hiding place for terrorists, as well as a Taliban stronghold. Bajaur has gained a great deal of media attention lately as a result of the recent bombings of a madrassa in the region that killed more than 80 people.<sup>41</sup> The leader of the MMA, Qazi Hussain Ahmed, condemned the attack. Although the official announcement stated that it was committed by Pakistani authorities many believe that the U.S. bears responsibility.

The MMA has not only demonstrated its support for the Taliban by implementing the aforementioned Hasba Bill, but also by negotiating a peace settlement with the Taliban in Waziristan. In 2002 the Pakistani army entered the Tribal Areas for the first time in decades. Their mission was to track down al Qaeda, Taliban and any tribal peoples who were cooperating or supporting these groups. The resistance proved harder than anticipated and in April 2004 the Pakistani military signed a peace deal, also known as the Shakai agreement, with tribesmen in South Waziristan. The terms of the agreement included a ceasefire between the military and the tribal peoples believed to be sheltering al Qaeda and Taliban members, as well as an amnesty for all individuals involved in these affairs. They in turn promised to refrain from using Pakistani soil in order to fight foreign countries. Some of the tribesmen in question were on Pakistan's most wanted list for FATA.<sup>42</sup> They included Saud Memon, the owner of the grounds where American journalist Daniel Pearl was killed in 2002, and Ghulam Mustafa, al Qaeda's chief in Pakistan who is believed to have in-depth knowledge of al Qaeda's

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<sup>40</sup> International Crisis Group, *Pakistan's Tribal Areas: Appeasing the Militants*, Asia Report No. 125, November 12 2006, p. 11-12.

<sup>41</sup> Hassan Abbas, "Profiles of Pakistan's Seven Tribal Agencies," *Global Terrorism Analysis* 4, 20 (October 19 2006)

<sup>42</sup> "Pakistan "ends al Qaeda search", *BBC News*, April 22 2004. <[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/3649421.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/3649421.stm)> (August 20 2007).

finances and logistics in Pakistan.<sup>43</sup> Maulana Merajuddin Qureshi and Maulana Abdul Malik Wazir, two tribal parliamentarians from South Waziristan and members of the JUI-F, negotiated the Shakai agreement, affirming that it would bring peace to the region. In practice this meant that the MMA had encouraged a deal where the Taliban and al Qaeda members could move around freely in the region. A pro-government FATA senator commented on the deal saying that the military had made a mistake by relying, "...[on] the mullahs for brokering peace with militants (...) this is a vicious cycle that undermines the state and reinforces the influence of the mullahs".<sup>44</sup>

The Shakai agreement eventually failed, leading to another one being drafted and signed in February 2005. Comprising the same goals as in the first agreement, this one also failed and violence erupted once again. It is clear that both agreements negotiated by MMA members were unsuccessful, as they led to increased violence. It should also be noted that the increasing control and power of the Taliban has led to the position of FATA tribal elders being undermined. Taliban customs and traditions have been enforced at the expense of tribal traditions. Many tribal elders have even been killed by the Taliban in attempts to eliminate any challenge to power.<sup>45</sup> It is also interesting to note that more recently, in April 2006, the Taliban was allowed to set up an office in Wana, South Waziristan, in a desperate attempt to restore order. The decision was made in the Jamia-ul-Aloom madrassa, which is run by Maulana Nur Mohammed, a member of the JUI. The office was supposed to work as a local court and was established as a replacement for the traditional jirga (tribal assembly) system.<sup>46</sup> In short, it could be argued that pro-Taliban militants have infiltrated every level of society, as described by the BBC, "...various local Taliban groups in South Waziristan have taken over the administration of justice, including imposing fines. They also collect taxes and recruit fighters".<sup>47</sup> This has raised fears that FATA, just like Baluchistan, is becoming a state within a state, subsequently wholly undermining the Pakistani government.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Saleem Syed Shazad, "Pakistan: Hello al Qaeda, Goodbye America," *Asia Times Online*, September 8 2006, <[http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South\\_Asia/HI08Df03.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/HI08Df03.html)> (August 20 2007).

<sup>44</sup> International Crisis Group, Asia Report No. 125.

<sup>45</sup> Suba D. Chandran, *Peace Agreement in Waziristan: New beginning or False Dawn?*, Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, New Delhi, Issue Brief 37, September 2006, p. 4.

<sup>46</sup> Sohail Abdul Nasir, "Taliban set up Office in South Waziristan," *Global Terrorism Analysis* 3, 14, April 11 2006, <<http://jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2369958>> (August 20 2007).

<sup>47</sup> "Pro-Taliban militants in tax move", *BBC News*, October 23 2006, <[http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/south\\_asia/6078380](http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/south_asia/6078380)> (August 20 2007).

<sup>48</sup> Christine C. Fair, Nicholas Howenstein, and Alexander J. Their, *Troubles on the Pakistan-Afghanistan Border* (United States Institute of Peace, December 2006).

In September 2006 yet another deal was negotiated in the FATA agencies, more specifically in North Waziristan. This settlement, known as the Waziristan Accord, was also signed by the Pakistani military with the help of the JUI-F and it virtually turned northern Waziristan (one of the seven FATA agencies) over to the Taliban and al Qaeda. Being the only party still in operation in the Waziristans, the JUI-F did this in order to check the power of the Taliban and to get the military to retreat. In doing this the JUI-F offered the Taliban a political apparatus in order to restrict their ambitions; the Taliban has been granted de facto control, consequently granting the JUI-F superficial power.<sup>49</sup> The deal encompasses two major points: an end to cross-border movements as well as to attacks on government and security forces in the region. In practice the deal has led to grave human rights abuses against individuals believed to be conspiring with the U.S.. Since its implementation, there has also been a three-fold increase in attacks on Coalition troops in Southern and Southeastern Afghanistan. Clearly the deal has led to increased insecurity for the public and to protection of the Taliban. The few restrictions that were placed on the militant groups as a result of the Waziristan Accords have been ignored or reneged on by the signatory parties. It is clear that the security situation has in fact deteriorated as a result of the agreement. It is also imperative to highlight the long-term implications of the agreement. The Taliban are reportedly feeling very secure in Waziristan, hence the region has become a new recruiting ground for both the Taliban and al Qaeda. Several areas of FATA have been used by the Taliban in order to regroup, rearm and attack coalition troops in southern Afghanistan. The Taliban movement would probably not have had a second coming had these bordering regions not been readily accessible to them. The JUI-F has made no effort to halt this development. Interestingly enough the JUI-F's leader Rehman has condemned the Pakistani government for allowing and aiding militants' entry into Afghanistan from Waziristan.<sup>50</sup>

The Waziristan Accord has also increased the Taliban's presence in neighboring provinces such as the NWFP. This poses a grave threat to future developments in the province, as the NWFP may well *also* be lost to the Taliban.<sup>51</sup> One recent incident that has proven to be a catalyst for developments in this direction was the afore-mentioned attack on a Bajaur madrassa on October 30, 2006. This has given the MMA and the Taliban further reason to preach anti-Americanism and jihad in greater

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<sup>49</sup> Syed Saleem Shahzad, "The Knife at Pakistan's Throat," *Da Pashto Network*, September 4 2006, p. 1-2.

<sup>50</sup> *Daily Times*, August 8 2005.

<sup>51</sup> Bill Roggio, "Pakistan's Slide," *The Fourth Rail*, November 29 2006, <[http://billroggio.com/archives/2006/11/pakistans\\_slide.php](http://billroggio.com/archives/2006/11/pakistans_slide.php)> (August 20 2007).

areas of Pakistan. One could speculate that these incidents will have a domino effect and spread to all parts of the country if not met by fierce resistance.

The cooperation between the MMA (mainly members of the JUI-F) and the Taliban is still prevalent today and the Taliban's current upswing in Afghanistan would have been made more difficult had the sanctuary in FATA not existed. The increasing power of the mullahs is manifest in the large number of Taliban existent in Pakistan. This reality has come about at the expense of the authority of traditional elders in FATA, which previously had replaced maliks (traditional tribal chieftains) as power brokers.<sup>52</sup> The deteriorating security situation has even led to the formation of a "Pakistani Taliban" with close ties to the Afghan Taliban. At present the Pakistani Taliban controls large parts of Waziristan and its influence is believed to be spreading, as no counter forces exist in the region.<sup>53</sup> To conclude, some argue that the cooperation between al Qaeda, the Taliban and Pakistan has led to the increasingly coordinated campaign against the Coalition that has taken place in Afghanistan as of late. The prominent Pakistani journalist Ahmed Rashid has asserted, "al Qaeda...has helped reorganize the Taliban, create unlimited sources of funding from the sale of Afghan-grown opium and forge a new alliance linking the Taliban with extremist groups in Pakistan, Central Asia, the Caucasus and Iraq".<sup>54</sup> Clearly the Taliban does not only receive assistance from Pakistan, but from other states in the surrounding region as well.

#### *Drugs, Weapons and the Military*

The smuggling of drugs and weapons between Pakistan and Afghanistan is yet another area of great concern for all states trying to combat terrorism. The Pakistani and Afghan economies have become increasingly integrated in recent years, something the drug trade has greatly benefited from. It is no coincidence that both the NWFP and Baluchistan act as lucrative drug smuggling routes in South Asia. These provinces are just one stop in the long journey for illegal drugs that are destined for Europe and the United States.<sup>55</sup> With pro-Taliban parties dominating the political scene in these provinces the Taliban's drug smuggling business makes great profits. It could be argued that the business would become heavily undermined without these links. Some analysts even claim that parties in the MMA coalition, such as the JUI-F,

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<sup>52</sup> International Crisis Group, Asia Report No. 125, p. 11-12.

<sup>53</sup> Bokhari, Norwegian Defence Research Establishment, p. 18.

<sup>54</sup> International Crisis Group, Asia Report No. 125, Quote by Ahmed Rashid, p. 22.

<sup>55</sup> Lowry Taylor, *The Nexus of Terrorism and Drug Trafficking in the Golden Crescent: Afghanistan*, U.S. Army War College Research Project, p. 6.

are benefiting financially from the drugtrade.<sup>56</sup> Since FATA is only nominally controlled by the Pakistani government, it plays a pivotal role in the smuggling of drugs, weapons and other illicit items across the border. When the Pakistani army entered the region at U.S. request in order to track down al Qaeda and Taliban leaders it made certain promises to the tribal peoples. These promises included a non-interference policy in the smuggling of goods, mainly drugs, between Pakistan and Afghanistan. It was also agreed that the sale of weapons and ammunition would be allowed.<sup>57</sup> With the signing of the recent Waziristan Accord the militants in the area have been compensated for their losses resulting from the military's invasion. Moreover, they have been allowed to retain their weapons.<sup>58</sup> Consequently we have a whole region where drugs and weapons move freely as a result of a deal brokered by MMA members.

When discussing the drug trade, Afghanistan's infamous heroin production is of great importance, especially as it has multiplied in recent years. The mullahs of the JUI-F are known to be aiding the Taliban by offering logistical support for the drugs industry. Afghan President Hamid Karzai has attempted to negotiate with the JUI-F in order to stop support for the drug trade and especially the regrouping of the Taliban in Quetta (also one of the major bases for the drug trade), but without avail.<sup>59</sup> With support from the MMA, revenue from the drug trade is used to fuel the Taliban movement. This is one of the greatest obstacles facing the Afghan government, especially considering how widespread opium cultivation is in Afghanistan.

The MMA does not only keep close ties with the Taliban, but also with the Pakistani army, despite denials from both parties. The army has initiated crackdowns on secular politicians, meanwhile letting MMA leaders carry on their business in the NWFP, Baluchistan and FATA. It is also widely known that both the army and the ISI helped the MMA in the run up to the October 2002 elections in the NWFP.<sup>60</sup> Pakistani officers have even been arrested for having links with the Taliban and Pakistani extremist groups. It seems that together the MMA, the army and the Taliban form a triad of cooperation that is becoming increasingly difficult to crack. Since the MMA is in a position where it can exercise extensive political power and is currently urging the government to

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<sup>56</sup> Iffat Malek, "Islamists Rise to the Challenge," *Al-Ahram Weekly*, November 1-7, 2002, <<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2001/558/2war.htm>> (August 20 2007).

<sup>57</sup> Rashid, "Who's Winning the War on Terror?"

<sup>58</sup> Fair, Howenstein, and Thier, *Troubles on the Pakistan-Afghanistan Border..*

<sup>59</sup> Raman, "The Fall and Rise of the Taliban,"

<sup>60</sup> Ahmed Rashid, "America's War on Terror Goes Awry in Pakistan," *Yale Global Online*, June 4 2003.

implement Sharia law throughout all of Pakistan, the coalition must be taken very seriously. It seems that Musharraf is failing to do this.

### **Concluding Remarks- the Talibanization of Pakistan?**

The Taliban has undoubtedly increased in both scope and strength in the past few years. The "Operation Enduring Freedom" did not manage to eradicate or even undermine the Taliban movement on a long term scale. It is clear that certain elements in Pakistan have worked as contributing factors to the Taliban's recent successes. Musharraf seems to be in a deadlock where he is dependent on the MMA for support and simultaneously must appease the United States. As the MMA has the ability to tip the scale in parliament it has had the ability to influence politics on all levels. The situations in the NWFP, Baluchistan and FATA are the most striking and worrying examples of this. They lend weight to the argument that the MMA's pro-Taliban stance and links to the Taliban have radicalized these areas. Furthermore, one could speculate that the Taliban would be significantly weaker without the present aid stemming from members of the MMA.

Musharraf's maneuvers will arguably come to play an even more important role for predicting the future of the MMA and in turn the Taliban. It will be interesting to see how Musharraf deals with the situation in 2007, especially as elections are approaching. One could speculate that he will feel obliged to rely on the MMA for support once again, which could have detrimental effects for several Pakistani provinces and indeed lead to the further Talibanization of Pakistan. In a worst case scenario it could come to have negative effects on the international community's struggle against the Taliban and international terrorism.

Finally, this will also have repercussions for the internal security situation inside Afghanistan, including the foreign troops in the northern part of the country. The expected spring offensive will also affect the northern provinces, albeit not as much as in the south and south-east. For the past year, the Taliban have been active also in the north and have made alliances - new and old - with like-minded Islamic parties and groups there. Among those allies are members from the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), who have infiltrated across the border with Waziristan in the FATA-area of Pakistan.

What all this points to is a situation whereby the Taliban, and their allies, feel confident enough to mount new military offensives and to take on NATO-forces in battles. As pointed out above, they also feel secure in the knowledge that they can re-supply their losses quite easily.

Moreover, since *all* foreign troops are considered enemies, forces from countries not active in actual combat in the south are clearly in danger of

being targeted, given that the Taliban can muster the expected number of manpower needed. Targeting those troops is also considered less risky, since they are believed to be “softer” than the more battle-hardened forces from the UK and the U.S. for instance. It is important to remember that the Taliban have watched developments in other locations such as Iraq, whereby attacks on other, smaller and more vulnerable forces than the U.S., have brought about changes in politics as well. Both Spain and Italy are often quoted as examples of this development. In conclusion then, the international forces in Afghanistan should prepare for a continuation and rise in attacks from the Taliban and their allies, even in the North. Judging from events during Spring and early Summer of 2007, this trend is already present, with a rise in attacks in the northernmost Afghan provinces.

The key, as is shown in the study, to successfully combat the insurgency, is to manage a combination of several initiatives simultaneously; political initiatives to make as many ethnic groups as possible feel they have a stake in the success of a “new Afghanistan”; economic initiatives to create alternatives to the drug-trade and other criminal activities such as smuggling. This part would also demand a “sea-change” on part of the coalition forces as well as the Afghan government, in that these actors need to get tough with the drug-traders,<sup>61</sup> a continued military effort to combat the Taliban and their allies, at the same time as work on re-construction goes on *in the same areas*. The hitherto followed line, that before the insurgency is defeated, no serious re-construction is possible, has shown itself to be a failed strategy. It is at present not certain that this understanding of the basic tenets of the insurgency has penetrated the political and military minds that so far has directed counterinsurgency-operations for the coalition in Afghanistan.

But most challenging, from a more long-term perspective perhaps, is to counter the extensive support that the Taliban is receiving from Pakistan, without weakening the position of Pakistani President Musharraf – who himself is politically dependent on some of the same parties that is supporting the Taliban. To charter a successful course between all these potentially lethal obstacles, will decide whether the “afghan project” will succeed or not.

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<sup>61</sup> It is a clear sign of failure on part of the coalition that the actual export of drugs from Afghanistan has *gone up* since the invasion in late 2001. As long as drug-trafficking is still such a profitable economic endeavour, the normalization of Afghanistan is bound to fail.