

TEHREEK-E-LABBAIK PAKISTAN (TLP): A RISING EXTREMIST FORCE, OR JUST THE TIP OF A LARGER RADICALISED ICEBERG IN THE AFPAK REGION?

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Abstract: *As if Afghanistan's recent takeover by the Taliban was not a sufficiently significant development in the AfPak region, reports indicate that Pakistan's largest sect, the Barelvi, becomes increasingly militant and aggressive by the day. Since another important movement for the history of Pakistan - the Deobandi - has generally dominated the violence scene in Pakistan starting with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, this trend within the Barelvis is a rather new one, and deserves extensive attention keeping in mind the recent regional developments.*

Taking a brief look at the history of the region to identify possible causes that may underlie the radicalization of the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan group, it is noticeable that emergence of Barelvi and Deobandi sects in the first part of 19th century was part of a larger movement to revive Islam in the Northern part of India, but in different manners: while the Deobandi kept close to the Hanafi Sunni teachings in a strictly manner, the Barelvi sect – developed itself mostly on a Sufi legacy, as part of a larger Folk Islam inherited from the Mughal Empire, despite being itself affiliated with the Hanafi school. The differences between the two movements became critical from a political, security and social point of view, especially after the division of British India in 1947, into two states: a Muslim one – present day Pakistan, and a Hindu one - present day India, of which, the first, became the state entity that encompassed both Hanafi revivalist movements, Deobandi and Barelvi.

Therefore, this research is aiming to analyse the history of Barelvi movement starting with the British Raj, the way in which Pakistan was established as a state and the problems that arose with the partition of the former British colony, the very Islamic essence of the new established state, and the potential for destabilization of Barelvi organisations in an already prone to conflict area. Consequently, the current research aims to identify the patterns of latest developments in Pakistan, their historical roots and causes, main actors active in religious, political and military fields in this important state-actor from the AfPak region, in order to project Barelvi recent in a defined environment, mainly by using a historical approach.

Keywords: *Barelvi sect, Deobandi sect, Pakistani madrassas, Pakistani Directorate of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP), British Raj*

1. INTRODUCTION

Pakistan as a country is situated in an extremely complicated region from all points of view, an area where conflicts and tensions seem to have found their home for at least the last four decades. Therefore, any further potential destabilisation of this nuclear state could lead to a greater destabilisation of the region, which has already been hit hard by the situation in Afghanistan, with consequences difficult to predict on short, medium and long term as well.

Relations between Iran, China and the United States are in constant distress, fuelled by ongoing events/alliances/agreements in the wider Middle East region. The Taliban are in control of power in an Afghanistan almost suffocated by an economic and political crisis on the brink of the endurance of an otherwise hard-fought society. Iran is on the verge of war with Israel, at least at the discourse level, both as neighbours of Persian Gulf countries.

Against this regional political-military background, in a seemingly security-stable country, namely Pakistan, a relatively new party has increasingly incited protests and radicalization of a society that identifies itself strongly with Islam: Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP). In a short period of time, TLP obtained 7 agreements with the government, following 7 protests (Geo News, 2021). A closer look reveals that this party organisation is ideologically associated with the Barelvi movement that emerged in the British Raj, when Pakistan, India and Bangladesh formed a colony under British control. Given the violence caused this organisation's protests, the situation in Afghanistan, and the tensions between Pakistan and India, increasingly visible in the virtual space at least, an investigation of the context in which such an extremist political party emerged is necessary, meant to reveal the causes, connections and its place within the Pakistani society, etc.

Consequently, this research is aiming to analyse the history of Barelvi starting with the British Raj, the way in which Pakistan was established as a state and the problems that arose with the partition of the former British colony, the very Islamic essence of the new established state, and the potential for destabilization of Barelvi organisations in context. The historical background of Barelvi sect is closely related to that of the Deobandi, a competitor for Muslim legitimacy in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

The historical approach has been selected as research method due to a series of reasons. Firstly, the apparently fast radicalisation of certain Barelvi groups is not easily explicable. Secondly, the role of Barelvi in nowadays Pakistani political environment and government is apparently still marginal, despite the fact that the sect encompasses a larger number of adepts than the dominant Deobandi. Finally, historical research would enable establishing whether the developments are completely new or anchored in long-term processes and who are the main direct and indirect actors that contributed to recent outcomes.

2. THE BRITISH RAJ AT A GLANCE

Following the Battle of Plassey from 1757, won through bribe offered to Mir Jafar Ali Khan Bahadur – a Nawab from Bengal, *the East India Company* instated British rule upon India, under a royal charter from 1600 that mandated them to trade with the Indies. The trade referred to Indian goods that became popular in Britain, but in the first part of the 19th century the East Indian Company became notorious for the *Opium Wars*. The competition to sell poppies to China was increasing at time, with entrepreneurs like the American John Jacob Astor challenging the dominant British role. Among many sources that document the monopoly sought by the company in opium trade (Downs, 1968), a BBC article from 2019, entitled "*How Britain's opium trade impoverished Indians*" (Biswas, 2019) explains that 1.3 million peasants from Northern India, nowadays Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, and by the end of the century approximately 10 million people were depending on this industry for survival.

Coincidentally or not, the impoverished population from these two Indian states was Muslim and the two prominent movements that are relevant for Pakistan's Muslim heritage, the Deobandi and the Barelvi, were founded in Uttar Pradesh.

Literature(Hussain, 2017, pp. 9-12) mentions that in the first part of 19th century, Muslim influence was decreasing in India: they had to pay more land tax, the British were favouring Hindu population, and before the 1857 mutiny from Uttar Pradesh, there took place 40 rebellion. In terms of religion, from the 47 million total population of North West Frontier, at least 40 million were Hindus and 6.5 million Muslims, the small rest encompassing Christians, Jainas and Sikhs. The alleged “*benevolent neutrality*” of the British meant that following any religion was ensured, but in 1950, the “*Freedom of Religion Act*” overruled religious prescriptions from Hinduism and Islam with respect to inheritance, in the name of human right to inheritance. Hussain’s study mentions that starting with the 1850s, the British became involved in religious affairs and started to modify the educational system, calling the Muslim teachings “barbaric”. This determined a change in attitudes of population and the 1857 rebellion from India ended the rule of *East Indian Company* over this territory.

The British Raj, i.e. the direct rule of the Crown over India, was instituted in 1858 through the “*Government of India Act*” and lasted theoretically until 1947 partition. The Raj was enlarged through the annexation of Upper Burma in 1886. The British council running the territory was consisting of representatives for home affairs, law, finance, revenue and military affairs. The Suez Channel was inaugurated in 1869 and steam ships encouraged trade between the British Empire and the Indies. While business was booming for the British, the poorer local populations started to build resistance and later liberation movements. Among these initiatives, the following two are relatively important: the *Indian National Congress* (political party established in 1885), the *All-India Muslim League* (political party established in 1906). At the beginning of World War I, British India had already sent 300’000 people on different fronts, local politicians hoping to obtain concessions from the Crown later. The migration of Muslims from India towards West started before the partition. In a rise against the British rule, the Ali Brothers founded the *Khilafat Movement*. On this background, in 1920, the Indian Muslims started to consider India ruled by the British - *Dar-ul-Harb (the House of War)*, and Afghanistan, the only country in the region free from European rule, as *Dar-ul-Islam/the House of Islam*(Ali, 1982). The migrants had chosen Afghanistan for their “*Hijrat*” because Persia, Turkey and the Arab states were dominated by Europeans.

Along with India, Burma (nowadays Myanmar) and Bangladesh, nowadays Pakistan used to be part of the British Raj until 1947, when the alleged independence of Pakistan translated into the creation of the Dominion of Pakistan (also Federation of Pakistan, 1947 – 1956), which included nowadays Pakistani territory (West Pakistan in the 1956’s Constitution) and that of Bangladesh (*East Pakistan*). In 1971, Bangladesh won its independence after violent repression from (West) Pakistan, a development that crushed Pakistan’s aspirations towards a larger Muslim state and prompted questions related to United Kingdom (UK) and United States (US) neutrality in the regional competition between India and Pakistan. However, the US government (in a split from US Congress) at that time had a visible interest in preserving the relation with Pakistan and strengthen the relations with China, in a bid to contain that time USSR’s influence/expansion in the region. The UK was also concerned with maintaining a foothold in the rich region and kept a certain neutrality, less interested in the outcomes of the conflict, but in relations with future power holders. The exchange of population between India and the new Pakistan (including nowadays Bangladesh) was one of the most intense throughout history, different accounts mentioning millions displaced. Khaldi mentions: “*When Pakistan did actually come about in August 1947, its formation was accompanied by a horrific human disaster, even by the standards of a world grown accustomed to genocide*”.(Khaldi, 1998, p. 339).

3. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PAKISTAN IN A BRIEF

The only state at the global level *created with the purpose of being Muslim was meant to host all Indian Muslims and have Islam as official faith*. The British Raj ceased to exist on the 15th of August, 1947, when the Dominion of Pakistan and the Dominion of India became “independent nations”. The negotiations on post-colonial arrangement evolved under pressure of civil war: the Direct-Action Day (16.08.1946) resulting in the *Calcutta Killings*, among other conflicts, and *The Week of Long Knives* were just some of the large-scale incidents that pressured the British rule.

1.1.Relevant institutions of the” secular state”. The fundamental law and population

Mountbatten Plan, or the “*Indian Independence Act, 1947*”(UK Gov., 1947), coined the names of the two dominions, established their territories, the roles of the new governors-general, legislation, Secretary of State’s services, (Indian) armed forces and other provisions. After the plan was announced, the Sikhs, present in both new India and Pakistan, concluded that they did not receive anything from the partition. The first Governor-General of Pakistan, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, was called “*Quaid-i-Azam*”, the *Great Leader* in Urdu, and he represented the sovereign Crown in Pakistan.

3.1.1. Pakistani Army. The army came into being officially on the 15th of August, 1947, as well. On the institution’s official page(Pakistan Army, 2021) it is mentioned that arrangements to split the Indian Army in 1947, were started in June. In the period 1939 – 1945, the Indian Army reached a maximum of 2.018 million, but the day before the partition, there were 11’800 officers and 450’000 other ranks, without approximately 50’000 forces of princely states. Besides mixed combat units, there were two complete Muslim units and more complete Hindu and Sikh units. The Pakistani Army complains on the website that while troops were relocated, 53 trains with personnel and families were attacked and massacred, leading to the establishment of the Bombay – Karachi Sea route for this purpose. Seven million Muslims are said to have migrated to Pakistan, and five million Sikhs and Hindus to India, a million of them perishing during migration.

The same source indicates that the 2’300 Pakistani officers active at the beginnings of Pakistan were completed by a group of 484 British officers, who voluntarily helped developing the Pakistani army, while more Polish and Hungarian officers also offered their services. The first Commander in Chief of the Pakistani Army was Field Marshal Mohammad Ayub Khan, but he assumed command only in 1951, when Sir Douglas Gracey renounced at the command of Pakistan. After the dissolution of the Dominion of Pakistan and adoption of the Constitution in 1956, Ayub Khan became the second president of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (1958-1969), after removing the first president, Major General Iskander Mirza (1956-1958). Both Ayub Khan and Iskander Mirza, but also other important officers like Admiral Mohammed Siddiq Choudri were educated at Sandhurst, were awarded with “Most Excellent Order of the British Empire” and influenced political environment: the list of governors-general and presidents of the subsequent Pakistani Islamic Republic(Pakistani Government, 2021) indicates that as of 2021, many military officers held offices: Major General Iskander Mirza (1955/1956, 1956 - 1958), Field Marshal Mohammad Ayub Khan (1958 – 1969), General Agha Mohammad Yahya Khan (1969 – 1971), General Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq (1978 – 1988), known for the accelerated Islamisation of the Pakistani Army) and General Pervez Musharraf (2001 – 2008).

Pakistan’s short history has been marked by many coups, coup attempts and periods with martial law enforced. Additionally, a constant tension between Pakistan and India led to successive armed conflicts and Pakistan becoming a nuclear power in 1998.

The US joined the British in developing the Pakistani Army starting with 1954, in the endeavour of curbing the *expansion of communist influence*, assisting not only with equipment and training, but also providing substantial financial aid to Pakistan.

3.1.2. The Directorate of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) of Pakistan - ISI became known relatively late, especially for its role against the Soviets in Afghanistan. Founded in 1948 by two-star General Sir Robert Cawthome, ISI was/is a military institution in charge with gathering and processing internal and international intelligence for Pakistan. It is probably the most relevant intelligence structure in terms of relations with various faith-based groups from Pakistan. The *Operation Cyclone* is discussed in literature and media under different circumstances, and the role of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) or British intelligence in financing, founding and training the Taliban and other *mujahedeen* with the help/through ISI to fight against the Soviets is questioned. For example, the book “Ghost Wars” by Steve Coll, managing editor at the Washington Post (Wilson Center, 2004) is revealed as source in other studies. At the same time, the website “Verify USA” may confuse the reader with the question “Did the U.S. directly fund the Taliban?”. The answer provided is “no”, but it refers to direct founding, not founding in general (Verify USA, 2021). In a 2016 article (Jaffrelot, 2016), Jaffrelot supports many views expressed by Indian government and intelligence agencies in media and studies, by stating “*The ISI has constantly promoted new jihadi groups to counter or balance those going out of hand. The JeM was sponsored by the security establishment after it lost control of the Harkat nebula. Azhar remained close to the establishment while other Harkat operators distanced themselves from Musharraf after he became “too close” to the US*”. JeM – *Jaish-e-Muhammad* and LeT – *Lashkar-e-Taiba* are some examples of organisations supposedly supported by ISI to destabilise India in Jammu and Kashmir region. The alleged connections between extremist groups and intelligence services appear repeatedly in literature, the other important development related to current research topic being the islamisation of Pakistan’s Army, that will be discussed later.

3.1.3. Pakistani Government’s structure - Islamic Federal Republic of Pakistan’s government is organised in *three branches* (National Democratic Foundation, 2021): *executive, bi-cameral legislative (known as the Parliament) and judicial*. Within the judicial branch, *the Federal Shariat Court* examines whether the laws of the country comply with *Sharia*, while *Mohtasib* (Ombudsman) is an institution meant to enforce administrative accountability, a function described as typical in previous Muslim states.

3.1.4. The fundamental law - The Constitution of Pakistan as of 31.05.2018 (National Assembly of Pakistan, 2021) exhibits different particularities of the federation, with respect to Islam as religion: article 2 mentions that Islam is “State religion”, defines Muslim and non-Muslim in article 260, the entire Part IX of the constitution (articles 227 – 231) introduces “Islamic Provisions”, etc. The Islamic Council, functioning as described in article 230 of the Constitution, will advise assemblies, presidents, governors “... *on any question referred to the Council as to whether proposed law is or is not repugnant to the Injunctions of Islam*”. Hence, the Islamic Council and Federal Shariat Court ensure a rigorous harmonisation of legislation and government work with the Holy Quran, Sunnah and Sharia.

3.1.5. Population - The population of Pakistan exceeded 220 million in 2020 (United Nations, 2021), had a GDP of 282.35 billion, and a GDP per capita of only 1330 per year. Its trade balance deficit and current account deficit are rising. As of 2017, there were 3.4 million migrants living in Pakistan, coming mainly from India and Afghanistan (UN IOM, 2019). Territorial disputes of Pakistan relate mainly to *Durand Line*, between Afghanistan and Pakistan and the territories *Jammu and Kashmir*, administered by India.

4. PAKISTAN'S RELIGIOUS ENVIRONMENT AFTER 1947 INDEPENDENCE

As in other parts of the world, during previous centuries, the population in AfPak/former British Raj region was experiencing divisions along different religious, ethnic, ideologic/political lines. The most relevant for this research will be initially *the religious split*. In terms of religion, a clear division between Hinduism and Islam resulted in the 1947 Indian and Pakistani states. The self-determination principle however, was applied and understood differently: the founders of Pakistan envisioned a Muslim state, based on religious criteria, when applying self-determination, whereas the Indian side was more receptive to the ideas of a secular entity accommodating religions, at least initially.

From a British perspective, the split was probably meant to allow higher local autonomy within a British Commonwealth, but the 1947 division was not ideal, at least on long term: Kashmir region was contested, the Northern part of India was inhabited by Muslims, while its ethnic composition was relatively diverse. The same situation occurred in Pakistan: ethnic groups like Punjabi, Pashtun, Sindhi, Urdu, Balochi, Bengali found themselves united in a common state, in which religion was supposed to play a unifying role. However, supported by foreign powers or not, the Bangladeshi secession appears to have followed primarily ethnical lines, a development direction that is theoretically encompassed in the nationalist ideology, although a large majority of the population was and is Muslim. *The difficulties of former Western Empires to seed nationalism outside Europe are not visible only in Africa or the Middle East, but also in the former British territories*: a different cultural and historical context did not allow the implementation of the (secular) nationalist ideology as easy as in other parts of the world, neither by the West, nor by at that time the *Union of Soviet Socialist Republics* (USSR). The struggle to reshape societies on current territory of Pakistan did not translate into an easily recognizable win, and since this ideology has already been affected by other ideological directions like neoliberalism, globalization, protection of environment, etc., its chances to succeed in the future are diminishing by the day. From this perspective, following aspects should be retained: the solid cultural foundations of communities in AfPak region allowed currents like nationalism or socialism to penetrate, but the well-established symbiosis between Islam and pre-Islamic customs appears to have survived, in a way or another. Furthermore, the post-World War II order and foundation of post-colonial states appear more and more to remain a short instance in history of humanity, as the ideologies promoted during 20th century have apparently proven their limits: the preconditions for democracy appear to be impossible to replicate in all parts of the world, the question on how self-determination should work generally has not been fully answered in its prominent age, e.g. first half of 20th century.

Researchers point out that the Pakistani state was envisioned as one based on Islam from its very foundation according to both British view(Debnath, 2021) and Pakistani view(Roach, 2013). But this perspective represents only a side of the coin: the Partition of Bengal in 1905 under Lord Curzon, cancelled after 6 years, determined (then Indian) Muslim leaders in 1906 to form the *All India Muslim League* in Dacca(Ziring, 2003, p. 21) (the British name at that time for Dhaka, Bangladesh). On both Pakistani and Indian sides, two types of political forces could be observed: progressive, that hoped the British India could become independent and remain intact, under a nationalist government, and (ethnically and religiously) conservative, that tended to seek separate independence for Muslims and Hindus. The strong reaction of Hindus against Bengal's partition helped raising legitimacy of the *Muslim League* (a political party), and Mohammad Ali Jinnah, considered the founder of Pakistan, joined the Muslim League in 1913.

Ziring mentions that although both Jinnah and Mahatma Gandhi were educated as British barristers, Jinnah was addressing educated Indians while Gandhi was trying to unite less literate or middle class against the British Empire. Although Jinnah joined the League, he was acting as a moderate (Muslim), a good negotiating position from two perspectives: the British did not perceive him as a direct threat and he was able to address moderate Hindus. But Gandhi's bold political stance against what he saw as Jinnah's accommodation of foreign interests, including also his support for (Ottoman) Khilafat movement in India managed to successfully counter Jinnah, that moved temporary to England. Although Jinnah was not awarded a "*Khan Bahadur*" or "*Sir*" title, in the political landscape of 1920s India he was associated with the political camp that accommodated relatively well British interests. The situation changed during the next decade, as Jinnah started to increase his support for an independent Muslim Pakistan, but his relations with the British were maintained as he received the Governor-General of the Dominion of Pakistan in 1947 after the partition. The Muslim League maintained power after Jinnah's death, but lost governance to the *All-Pakistan Awami League* in 1954, another Muslim party.

The most relevant characteristic of this period vis-à-vis the direction of this research is the polarisation of religious establishment along two main lines: a camp that accommodated British interests, be it in the name of a moderate/tolerant religious approach or accommodation of the secular progress, obviously connected to British presence and interests, and a reactionary, anti-colonial camp, that came in direct conflict with the British and indirect conflict with the moderate camp. One can consider in this context that the moderate camp envisioned initially a united India, if possible, multi-ethnic, encompassing the two main religious directions, while the anti-colonial camp tended more towards secession on ethnic and religious lines. These general tendencies cannot be confirmed in every case or on long term, as most of the involved actors changed their positions constantly and sought short-term advantages over long-term consistency. From a British perspective, the general outcomes of self-determination became secondary as long as main interests could be preserved, especially in the context of a global decolonization. Additionally, the British realized that the agreements they stoke with important actors like *the All-India Muslim League*, *Members of the India National Congress*, or representatives of the Hindu secessionists, were neither stable nor reliable, since the representatives of these large communities did not exert far-reaching authority over their claimed group. The British do not appear to have driven the events, since this would have been probably expensive, but to preserve certain interests through various instruments of power: they neither pushed for a full secession, that would have led to a more divided Pakistan (Balochi and Punjabi groups have many elements in common, but they do not form a fully homogenous society), nor for a fully preserved India. This research will not pursue the development of Pakistani politics after independence, or army's interference in government of the country, although the latter appears to have dominated the political stage. These topics, along with the interplay between politics, army and religion, are very large, complex and might require special research designs in order to produce conclusive results.

4.1. Main developments related to relevant sectarian groups from Pakistan. These groups were subjected to many dynamics, with factions joining and leaving, many conflicts, and last but not least a strategic post-colonial presence of the British challenged by new actors - at that time - like the United States (US), USSR and China. The characterization of these developments will be performed through analysis of selected episodes from Pakistan's history and of relations between events.

The study will be focused on characters and their actions at certain time points, in order to recognize patterns in development of religious organizations. An additional complexity factor is introduced by the dynamics of individuals within and among organizations: for example, Jinnah appears to have inherited an Ismaili Shia religious family, studied within the Twelver Shia community and is said to have died as a Sunni Muslim. Another typical situation may refer to legitimacy of organizations and their spinoffs: for example, Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan was initially considered associated to Barelvi sect, but as soon as it became a militant separate entity, the Barelvi relinquished them officially, but helped the Pakistani government to strike a deal with them. All these events take place in a grey legitimacy zone, that carries a short-term excuse due to acute needs, but the chronic problems appear to be very difficult to address. In order to understand the level of fragmentation among religious but also political organisations, the observation from a 2003 Canadian study will be mentioned: the number of religious parties in Pakistan increased from 30 in the year 1979, to 245 in 2003. From the total 245 in 2003, 48 were Barelvi and 45 were Deobandi (Canada, 2003). The way in which the *All-India Muslim League* represented Muslim interests from a religious and political perspective is also relatively difficult to characterize from a secular perspective, as the political structure “party” is part of secular terminology, while in Pakistan, it acts in a political, religious and possibly other dimensions, simultaneously.

Pakistan is said to have been built by the “*muhajir*”, Muslim migrants arriving from North part of India. The cited Canadian study (Canada, 2003) mentions that many Deobandi migrants coming from Punjab and Haryana were speaking Punjabi and Seraiki languages, integrating easily in their new homes from Pakistan in which these languages were common. On the contrary, the Barelvi muhajirs did not speak the local language when they arrived in Pakistan, Urdu language, and “*did not immediately identify themselves with the native inhabitants of Pakistan*”.

The confederation of Muslim educational/religious associations from Pakistan for the period 1988 – 2000 is introduced in *Figure 1*. The source cited (Khawaja, pp. 161-162) states that in 1988, there were a total of 2’861 madrassas, their number increasing to 6’761 in 2000. According to a later study (Tempelin, 2015), the number of madrassas reported by the five members of ITMD increased further to 11’700 in 2008 and 19’366 in 2011. In 2011, 65% of madrassas were Deobandi. In terms of population, 20% of population was adhering to Deobandi sect while Barelvi represented approximately 80% of Pakistan’s Sunni population. Hence, the number of madrassas is not reflected by the distribution of population within the Sunni faith. Finally, Tempelin’s study mentions that as of 2012, 1 – 1.7 million Pakistani students were attending madrassas in Pakistan, from which approx. 65 % enrolled in Deobandi Madrassas.

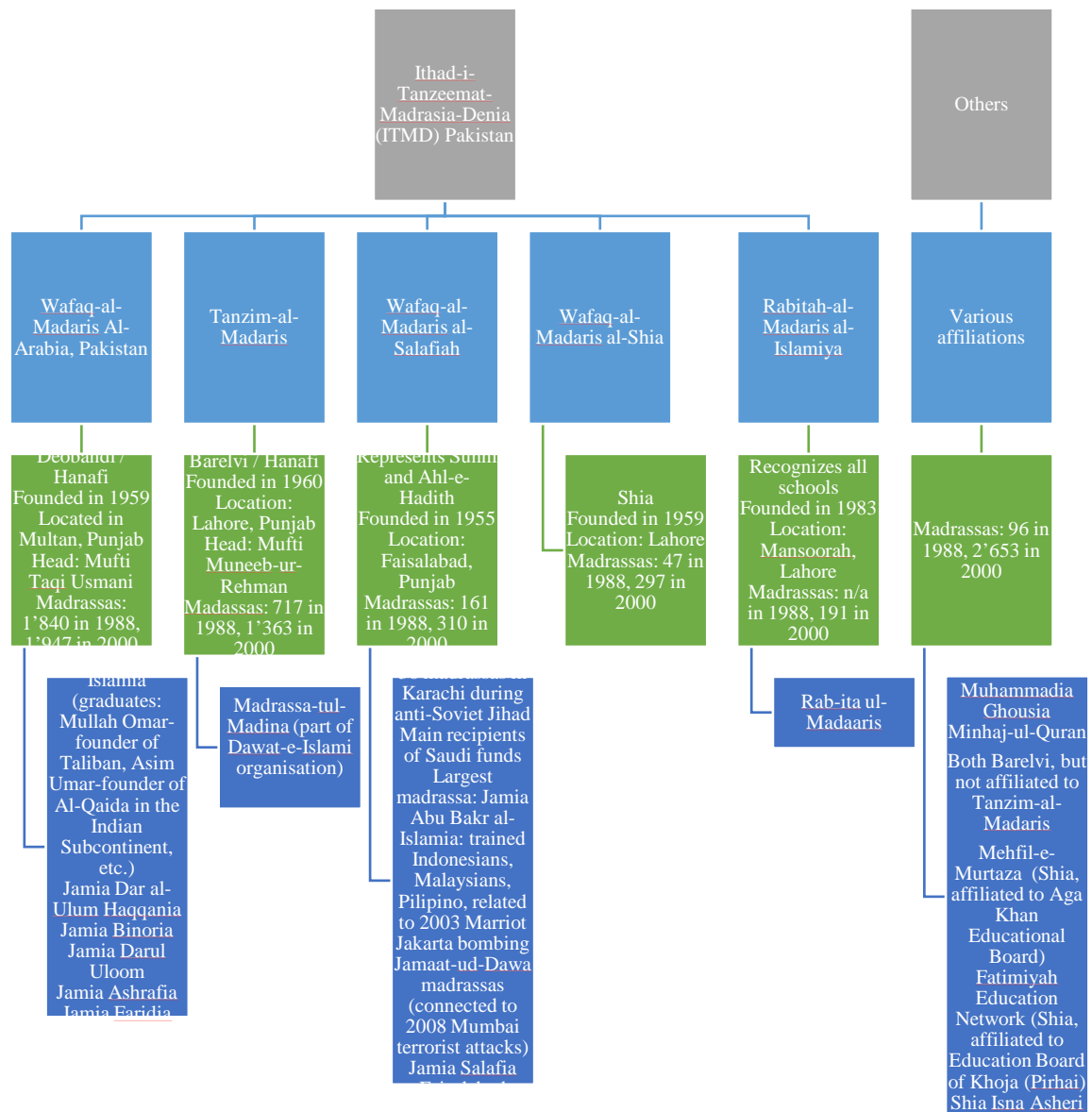


FIG. 1 Confederation, boards of madrassas and selected madrassas from Pakistan (sources in text).

The Deobandi and Salafi madrassas appear to have trained students that were involved in extremist attacks after 1990s, while the Barelvi and Shia appear to be rather victims than perpetrators in the historic religious aggression throughout Pakistan. The five associations do not govern all religious educational institutions from Pakistan and while some may not be accredited by Ministry of Federal Education and Training, some apply for licenses under supervision of other boards, some try to affiliate themselves to reputed educational institutions, while others are not even declared. A series of madrassas, organised independently or in education networks supervised by independent boards, do not appear to have been involved in major violent events.

In Fig.1, the list of madrassas from the lowest level of the graph is not an exhaustive one. It represents a small compilation of representative madrassas from different literature sources (Gulzar, 2020) (International Crisis Group, 2007), cross-checked. The complex formation and transformation of different Islamist or militant organisations, their role in founding or running madrassas may represent itself a separate research topic.

The names utilised tend to follow the sources in which they were observed, but two main notations were noticed: a transliteration that tends to pursue local/Pakistani wording while another transliteration tends to use Arabic wording. Furthermore, certain literature sources indicate that Deobandi and Barelvi sects may be part of the Hanafi School, while others present them as independent. This difference of opinions requires further study.

The 2001 Pakistani Madrassa Ordinance and 2002 Dini Madrassa Ordinance aimed to increase control on madrassas, initially by obliging them to register, but this initiative was not very successful (Borchgrevink, K., NOREF, 2011, p. 8). The new laws asked them to disclose financing sources, but this was also perceived as a part of foreign agendas for Pakistan. A US Program from 2002 meant to help secularise madrassa curriculum through a \$ 225 million funding, but after five years, only 250 schools accepted the secular program (Tempelin, 2015, p. 18).

The short overview on madrassas and their historic evolution reveals that declared education networks, well-known for the religious violence of some graduates, are public institutions under scrutiny of state institutions. They trained Pakistani, but also foreign students and received funds from abroad, especially from the Gulf states in an era in which the number of madrassas was increasing exponentially in Pakistan. The talks between government and ITMD are meant to harmonize curricula and introduce more transparency in madrassas, but they are progressing slowly and a relatively long time might be needed to achieve significant results. Nowadays, the educational system from Pakistan is evolving towards a secularised one. However, the madrassas still represent an important part of the educational system and this is proved by the high-level meeting from 2020 in which the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training met ITMD. During this meeting, ITMD apparently agreed to “abide by the decisions of government” (The Nation, 2020). This decision indicates that it ITMD did not abide by government’s decisions, terms were probably negotiated and if they will really abide both formally and informally remains to be seen.

The study of madrassas and their development in recent history of Pakistan has revealed connections with larger/other organisations, active in different spheres from Pakistan and abroad. Such faith-based entities exhibit activism and even extremist behaviour in certain circumstances, confirming or rather expanding the questionable directions of education from madrassas. Data from *Table 1* has been compiled from sources utilised for *Figure 1*, as well.

Table 1. Organisation connected directly or indirectly to madrassas' activity or faith-based organisations.

Organisation	Affiliation	Founded in	Observations
<i>Dawat-e-Islami</i>	Barelvi	1981, Karachi	Worldwide Islamic movement, basic education system, Madani TV Channel
<i>Tablighi Jamaat</i>	Deobandi	1926 India, 1947 Lahore	Banned in Russian Federation, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan (Times Now News, 2020)
<i>Jamaat-e-Islami Party</i>	Political Islam, legal/ lawful approach	1947, Lahore	Pakistani successor of movement Jamaat-e-Islami from Aurangabad, India, 1941. Sponsor of Hira School System, Rab-ita ul-Madaaris madrassa network
<i>Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI)</i>	Deobandi	1945	Deobandi political party, run the Deobandi madrassas ran by Pashtun in Karachi. Maulana Sami-ul-Haq sometimes mentioned as “Father of the Taliban” and assassinated in 2018 (Anadolu, 2018)

Organisation	Affiliation	Founded in	Observations
<i>Siphane Sabaha Pakistan (SSP)</i>	Deobandi	1985	Anti-Shia and Barelvi, banned in 2001, reorganized as Millat-e-Islami
<i>Lashkar-e-Jhangvi</i>	Deobandi	1996	Branch of SSP, tried to assassinate PM Nawaz Sharif (1999), PM Benazir Bhutto (2007)
<i>Jamaat Ahl-e-Sunnat (or Ahle Sunnat wa Jamaat)</i>	Barelvi		Bombed by Lashkar-e-Jhangvi in 2006 event, advised against attending the funeral of Salman Taseer, governor of Punjab assassinated in 2011 allegedly for his stance against blasphemy laws (Georgy, Michael (Reuters), 2011)
<i>Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LT)</i>	Salafi / Ahl-e-Hadith	1990	Militant organization, armed faction of Markaz al-Dawa al-Irshad from Muridke, Punjab. Renamed as Jamaat-ud-Dawa
<i>Tehreek-e-Jafaria (TJP)</i>	Shia	1979	Banned in 2002 by Pervez Musharraf's government

Pakistan's religious environment after 1947 is a dynamic one, and appears to be dominated by *the muhajir*, i.e. the migrants arriving from India after 1947, and their organizations. The Deobandi and Salafi groups appear to drive most of the violence in Pakistan. The Deobandi are not leading in terms of adepts' number, but they do in terms of number of madrassas and students. A study claims that a "neo-fundamentalism" is based on Deobandi fundamentalism, but influenced by Wahabi and Salafi ideologies (Borchgrevink, 2010). The level of (religious) extremist violence reached in Pakistan can be exemplified through a 2020 newspaper article (Gabol, 2020): a guard shot dead a bank manager for alleged blasphemy and when victim's uncle tries to demonstrate that this was not the case, he mentioned that their family is Muslim, "not Ahmadi". In another blasphemy case, a US citizen of Pakistani origin was shot dead in a courtroom, while standing trial for blasphemy, by a teenager. While religion appears to be the reason for such assassinations, data from the article suggests that personal reasons could add to the main excuse: Pakistan is one of the poorest countries in terms of income per capita, ranking lower than India and Bangladesh. One can presume that the number of reasons for extremism and extreme manifestations can be relatively high.

Yasser Latif Hamdani, an author featured on the "*Tony Blair Institute For Global Peace*" website (as of 17.11.2021), engages in an exchange, probably with the Deobandi and Barelvi, in which he defends the Ahmadi (sect) against accusations of supporting British rule (Hamdani, 2014). In his argumentation, Hamdani claims, among others, that the founder of Barelvi sect, Ahmad Raza Khan declared in his treatise *Al-Mohajat, Al Mohtamanat Fi Ayat-al-Mumtahanat* that jihad against the British rule was "unlawful". While the dispute is obviously polarized, literature about the relations of British with different Pakistani groups indicates indeed that Barelvi-British relations have been maintained, but the number of Deobandi mosques is the highest, with 797 in 2017. On second place, the Barelvi mosques come with 459 in the same year, and the Salafi with 182 mosques (Naqshbandi, 2017). The fact that Britain hosts so many Deobandi mosques may indicate that, at least its intelligence services have a good idea about certain Deobandi groups. If the working hypothesis of the British would have been to support more peaceful groups like the Ahmadi or the Barelvi, this would have been a logical choice. But the numbers of mosques in the UK does not indicate any preference for the Barelvi sect. The fact that Deobandi and Barelvi mosques dominate the chart reflects that colonial heritage, but also post-colonial ties that outlived independence.

Given the tense situation in/among Pakistan and India, the observing position of the UK is probably a privileged one, but maintaining it might require further impartiality with respect to internal religious conflicts, and probably in the conflict between Pakistan and India.

The claim that Pakistani blasphemy laws were initiated by the British was analysed (CRSS, 2010, p. 6). While Christian blasphemy laws might have appeared previously in Britain, and Indian Penal Code from 1860 protected religious institutions, activities and “religious feelings”, it does not mention death penalty. The turns taken by such legislation after 1947 in Pakistan were determined also by the fact that Pakistan was envisioned as a Muslim country and mobilising the population in conflicts like the one in Afghanistan against USSR or against India in Kashmir required apparently also concessions even from theoretically secular institutions like the army. What appears to be very significant is the instrumentalization of blasphemy laws by various Pakistani actors in order to incriminate either political or even religious competitors.

4.2. Instrumentalization of faith by General Mohammad Zia ul-Haq

Pakistan’s Islamic trajectory was predictable. After 1947 independence, the foundation of the Islamic Republic was a natural step. But in terms of Islamisation, a major acceleration was noticed during the presidency of General Mohammad Zia ul-Haq (1978 – 1988). A study from the Middle East Institute, Washington (Ed. Middle East Institute, 2021) collected articles from different authors on the topic of Pakistan’s Islamisation. Aasim Sajjad Akhtar claims in his article “Moving beyond Islamic” that Zia ul-Haq “*made Islamization the raison d’être of his regime*”. Nasim Ashraf explains in his article “The Islamization of Pakistan’s Educational System 1979-1989” that Arab states were asked to found the fight against communism and at the same time contain Khomeini’s Islamic Revolution. He suggested to use *Zakat* for to improve learning conditions in madrassas, took steps to employ graduates of these schools, approved modification of the curriculum in public schools to refocus on *jihād* and Islamisation. His article cites a source mentioning that University of Nebraska was funded with \$ 5.1 mln. by USAID to “*develop and design textbooks to promote jihād*” for the period 1984 – 1994. the author concludes that the educational policies from the decade 1979 – 1989 actually destabilised Pakistan and the effects are to be seen nowadays.

Fahrat Haq’s article “*Jamaat-e Islami*” claims that Zia ul-Haq instrumentalized Jamaat-e-Islami in his Islamisation of Pakistan as a civilian counterpart for his programs. The members of this political party received places in government, Islamic organisations that he created and funds/opportunities channelled from Arab states. At the same time, Jamaat-e-Islami strongly supported Khomeini before and after the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Citing various sources, Roach mentions that Zia ul-Haq (Roach, 2013):

- a) *Changed army’s motto from “Unity, Faith, and Discipline” to “Faith, Piety, and Jihad for the sake of Allah”;*
- b) *Declared himself as “soldier of Islam”;*
- c) *Introduced religious evaluation in all officers’ performance;*
- d) *Made military academies more accessible to Deobandi groups;*
- e) *Recruited more from regions with Deobandi madrassas.*

Although General Zia ul-Haq’s rule ended in 1988, the dynamics he initiated were continued by the structures and power groups he created. Winning the Cold War was achieved by his Western allies, but the cost of methods employed will become visible only approx. one decade later.

5. MAINSTREAM CONTEMPORARY BARELVI ORGANISATIONS

The consensus in the Sunni tradition is that interpretation of Islamic Law ended with the four schools: *Hanafi* (founded by Imam Abu Hanifa 699 - 767), *Maliki* (founded by Imam Malik 711 - 795), *Shaafi* (founded by Imam al-Shaafi 767 – 820) and *Hanbali* (founded by Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal 780 – 855). Delhi Sultanate and then the Mughal Empire supported the spread of Islam, under various forms over centuries. In the AfPak region, the original Hanafi teachings were complemented by *Sufi orders* and *Folk Islam*.

Especially when the Muslim empires and states began to lose ground worldwide in the 18th and 19th centuries, a series of revival/reform movements began to appear. Relevant for AfPak region, following can be mentioned: *Faraizi Movement* (founded by Haji Shariatullah), *Wahabi Movement*, *Aligarh Movement* (Syed Ahmad Khan received the Star of India award from the British Crown), *Ahmadiya Movement* (Mirza Ghulam Ahmad declared himself Mahdi and his movement is not considered Sunni), *Deobandi Movement* and *Barelvi Movement*, among others.

The Barelvi and Deobandi movements are presented in literature either as part of or completely separate from the Hanafi School. Due to their Sufi influences, the Barelvi are not considered part of the Sunni Hanafi School of Law. Naki Ali Khan, the father of Ahmed Raza Khan (founder of Barelvi Movement in the 19th century) was also an Islamic Scholar, and Hassan Raza Khan, the brother of Ahmed Raza Khan, was also an Islamic scholar and Sufi poet. Literature mentions that Ahmed Raza Khan might have been polarised against the Wahabi by Ahmed Zayni Dahlan, the Grand Mufti of Mecca at that time that was in conflict with the Wahabi Movement (Hussain, 2017, p. 36). The same source mentions that various works suggest the British were using Ahmed Dahlan in the Arabian Peninsula and Ahmed Raza Khan in the Indian subcontinent to weaken Muslims. Taking into account that the European powers were striving to divide and conquer the Ottoman Empire at that time, and that the French were also advancing their colonial agenda in other parts of the world, this hypothesis cannot be fully excluded and requires further research.

Hussain analyses the writings of Ahmed Raza Khan in order to extract beliefs that he considers suitable for a comparison to Christianity, among these: the Messenger was created from light and light came from the essence of God, the Messenger had divine ability and was capable to relieve calamities and affected people, the Messenger could be in more places at the same time and in charge of what occurs in our world. He also believed that saints had divine powers. Ahmed Raza Khan was very convinced of his beliefs and according to Hussain, he would make *takfir* anyone who disagreed with his views (Hussain, 2017, p. 44).

5.1. Main groups of Barelvi Movement - From the perspective of political organisation, the Barelvi appear to have acted in a reactionary manner rather than based on initiatives: the *All-India Sunni Conference* was created by Barelvi leaders in order to compete with the Deobandi *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind*, *Sunni Tehreek* was created to prevent Deobandi from taking over the Barelvi mosques, etc. The Barelvi *All India Sunni Conference (AISC)* was created in 1925 and was not part of the Muslim secessionist coalition formed by the Deobandi *Jamiat Ulema Islam Hind (JUIH)*, together with *Jamaat-e-Islami (JI)* and *Ahrar Movement*. Both AISC and its successor from 1947, *Jamiat Ulema Pakistan (JUP)*, did not play an important role in Pakistan's politics according to literature, although it was supporting activism against Ahmadiya and General Ayub Khan (second president of Pakistan) (Paracha, 2021).

Ahle Sunnat wa Jamaat, another Barelvi organisation founded by Maulana Okarvi characterizes itself on the webpage of Maulana Okarvi University as “*the largest group of Muslims and the only group whose beliefs and teachings are accordance with the Holy Quraan and Sunnah. The Holy Prophet*”(Maulana Okarvi Academy , 2021).

5.2. (Pakistani) Sunni Tehreek (ST) - ST is an organisation founded in 1990 and characterized as “the radical expression of the Barelvi school”(Roy, Oliver / UNHCR, 2002). Maulana Salim Qadri, ST’s leader in 2001 was assassinated in Karachi in 2001. His son, Bilal Qadri formed his own faction, while Ejaz Qadri formed Pakistani Sunni Tehreek (PST). The 2006 Nishtar Park bombing, allegedly organised by the Deobandi Lashkar-e-Jhangvi group, killed leaders of both PST and Ahle Sunnat wa Jamaat plus other Barelvi representatives, while they were celebrating the birthday of Prophet Muhammad in a *mawlid* ceremony(Tanoli, 2014). The objectives of the Sunni Tehreek described in literature are casting light upon the Barelvi reactions to possible changes in Pakistan’s blasphemy laws: protecting the sanctity of Prophet Muhammad, his companions, saints, protecting mosques, “controlling the Department of Oqaaf (Islamic Affairs) and protecting the two-nation theory(Nabeel, Fahrad et all - CSRC Pakistan, 2016, p. 5). Cited report mentions that ST was involved in criminal and terrorist activity starting with 2011 and in 2014, ST registered a blasphemy case against Junaid Jamshed and organised protests for his arrest. Along with *Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan*, Sunni Tehreek staged massive rallies in 2016, after the hanging of Mumtaz Qadri, that carried out the assassination of Salman Taseer in 2011, former governor of Punjab, alleging breaches of blasphemy laws.

The 2011 assassination of Punjab’s governor by the Barelvi follower Mumtaz Qadri reveals a radicalisation path initiated by the Barelvi relatively recently. The political and ideological steps taken by this initially peaceful sect appear, once again, to be a continuation of the reactive behaviour: after starting activism against the Deobandi and Salafi expansion in Pakistan amid the end of the cold war in the 1990s, it started to position itself as a defender of the blasphemy laws and gain political legitimacy. The assassination and call towards followers to abstain from attending governor’s funeral was only one aspect of Barelvis’ increasing political force. In 2014, before the condemnation and hanging of the assassin Mumtaz Qadri in 2015/2016, the Barelvi inaugurated the Mumtaz Qadri Mosque. In a normal secular state, obtaining an authorization for such a mosque would probably be impossible under similar circumstances, but the special structure of secular institutions of the Islamic Republic with religious authorities might be more complex than expected. The Mumtaz Qadri Mosque needed funds to double its capacity immediately after its opening in 2014(Boone, John, 2014).

In October 2018, Asia Bibi, the Christian that was supported by Punjab’s governor when she was accused of blasphemy, was released, questioning the purpose of assassination in the first place.

5.3. Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP). TLP it is a political party created in 2015 by Khadim Hussain Rizvi, whose political platform is focused on preservation of blasphemy laws. His biography(Pakpedia, 2021) reveals that in 2009 he suffered a car accident and remained paralysed. TLPs political agenda includes, among others: stopping interference “of the enemy” from inside and outside of Pakistan, meeting all basic needs of people through *zakat*, *usher kharaj*, *jizyah* taxes, abolishing mixed education system (separating religious and secular education), foundation of a ministry to promote Islam, treatment at doorstep and industrial and trade education for the entire nation. This agenda appears to capitalise on the weakness of Pakistani society rather than political goals.

Rizvi transformed his political capital into a weapon to exert pressure on state institutions several times after founding TLP, mobilising large crowds of protesters relatively fast and effective. He made international headlines when declaring that he would have wiped out Netherlands if he had an atomic bomb, after Geert Wilders announced that he would hold a competition with cartoons depicting Prophet Muhammad. The competition was eventually cancelled.

The TLP is associated with recent extremism and violence(Pakpedia, 2021): the killing of Sareed Ahmad, a college principal by a student on alleged blasphemy charges. The discussion occurred due to principal's complaint on student's absence for participating at TLP rallies. In 2019, associated professor Khalid Hameed was killed by student Khateeb Hussein in Bahawalpur, after apparently receiving approval from senior TLP member Zafar Gillani on Tinder. After Khadim Hussain Rizvi's death in November 2020, his son Saad Hussain Rizvi became president of TLP. Geo News mentions that TLP staged 7 protests and received 7 agreements from the government: in November 2017, April and October 2018, November 2018, November 2020, January and April 2021, as the government tried to ban the movement. Saad Hussain Rizvi, TLP's leader arrested in April 2021 was released in November, amid an agreement through which PM Imran Khan had agreed to release further 2000 members of TLP against their commitment to stop the policy of violence and abstain from asking to expel the ambassador of France(Reuters, 2021).

In November 2018, a newspaper article claims that Sunni Tehreek and allies distanced themselves from TLP's calls for protest(Dawn, 2018), condemning hate speeches from Rizvi. While this development should have indicated that Sunni Tehreek does not support extremism, other instances, presented previously, indicate otherwise. TLP came third in 2018 elections for the Punjab region and emerges as a mainstream political force(Janjua, 2021). During recent years, ISI and the Army appear to have been supporting Barelvi movements and their protests. For example, Major General Faiz Hameed, that took office June 2019 and was substituted in November 2021, was accused of supporting the TLP in the 2017 Farizabad protests in a Supreme Court case finalised in 2019(Samaa, 2019). The English translation of the decision does not point out at Major General Faiz Hameed(Supreme Court of Pakistan, 2019), but it criticises in strong terms political and military/intelligence actors for their approach to the protest and to court proceedings. A 2017 BBC article, which contains information similar to other websites, mentions that Punjab Rangers Major General Azhar Navid was filmed when distributing envelopes with 1'000 rupees to participants at the same 2017 Farizabad protest organised by TLP(Khan, 2017).

Finally, it is worth noting that Pakistan's government is not challenged only by the Barelvi in recent period. At the beginning of November 2021, an agreement between Pakistani government and the Deobandi Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) was signed(Gul, 2021). Imran Khan's government received critique in the media for its soft stance on extremist groups, but such claims require better substantiation. Besides the punctual challenges that the Pakistani government faces nowadays from either Barelvi or Deobandi groups, other long-term threats emerge from organisations like Balochistan Liberation Army.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The research on development of Muslim sects Barelvi (and partially Deobandi, for comparison purposes) revealed that Muslim roots of Pakistan are well anchored in history. The British colonial empire was seeking to consolidate its power over the Indian subcontinent, due to various direct and indirect reasons: in Europe, it was competing with other colonial powers, on the American continent it had already lost control and in the Middle East it was working to abolish the Ottoman Empire and eventually win possessions. Its policies to contain Islam in British India were motivated by both the threat of re-emerging Mughal centres of power and a need to increase control over relevant capitalist production systems. *However, its intervention in the balance between Hindus and Muslims polarised communities, and its preference for loyal subjects from different Muslim sects antagonised even further.* The British rewarded especially peaceful leaders with either support, concessions, education in Britain or different distinctions and awards, in a bid to gain support in the confrontation with hostile groups like the ones from Afghanistan. Its then-internal policies reflect in partitions like the Durand Line or Radcliffe Line, and the effects they produced, will be assessed in history along with other delimitations that influenced communities in former British colonies. Although the UK maintained influence after the apparition of the United Nations, its position in the AfPak region was challenged by different actors like the US or the Soviet Union and its manoeuvring space reduced. Beyond religious grievances, the *muhajir* left North of India to resettle in Pakistan due to poverty as well.

Pakistan's state structure and institutions were inherited from the British. Many members of the Pakistani military were trained at Sandhurst, ISI was the concept of a British national, many Pakistani politicians travelled to the UK and this continuous contact with the elites maintained a good connection with Pakistan's decision centres. It was the recent case of Nawaz Sahrif's visa extension refusal that shed light on a long-term connection between the two countries.

But the British influence was gradually limited by the very Islamic essence of Pakistan. Attributed to General Zia ul-Haq, the Islamisation of the Pakistani Army starting with the 1970s had a long-term impact: as of 22.11.2021, the three fundamentalist messages on institution's website were: "*Imaan*" (Faith and Trust in Allah), "*Taqwa*" (The Fear of Allah) and "*Jihad*" (Fight for the lordship of Allah)(Pakistan Army, 2021). The translations were already available on the website, they are not adapted. While it can be argued that General ul-Haq accelerated Islamisation of the army, the development does not appear as an exception to the rule of Pakistan, but rather a step in the long process of a continuously sustained Islamisation process. Religious individuals gained more access to the Army, but probably the same can be claimed about ISI, government, justice system, etc.

Current research has employed a deductive method to attempt establishing relations between state institutions and religious establishments, from the perspective of Western secular or Westphalian states. Historical development of Muslim centres like the madrassas and related organisations should have revealed processes, key developments, achievements and key promoters. While the assessment managed to identify key episodes and their consequences in Pakistan's history, a proper characterisation of the entire political and/or religious system as such became difficult to a series of factors: the religious and ethnical fragmentation of Pakistan may be eventually compared to that of other regions like the Middle East or North Africa, but its state and non-state institutions and organisations, its history and the speed at which events occur are probably unique. Likewise, its unquestioned Islamisation, which remains a goal and a process it is

undertaking since its very beginning, is comparable only to that from Afghanistan nowadays. Hence, an analysis mainframe closer to Pakistani realities may be required in order to characterise properly historic developments in Pakistan. ITMD and other expressions of politically powerful organisations are testimony to the fact that the Pakistan's government has possibly a more complicated mission than others.

Should one compare the attempt of the British to favour peaceful Muslims more than one century ago, with the attempt of the Coalition to “deradicalize” Afghanistan, it can be concluded that the retreat, portrayed as failure by the fundamentalists that claim victory, strengthened hardliners from Afghanistan but also the ones from Pakistan or from trans-border groups like some of the Deobandi. This indirect contribution to strengthening religious fundamentalists, along with questionable practices, like, for example, the ones revealed by the case of Kamran Faridi (double agent, former FBI operative), raise questions about a chronic problem: how can relevant global powers help in regions where they historically did not succeed?

The systemic roots of violence from Pakistan are often connected to Islamic fundamentalism in literature, but in terms of mobilisation for concrete action, the Jammu and Kashmir problem facilitated militancy and US's interest to counter i.e. the Soviet Union favoured violent action. The violence landscape in Pakistan reached unimaginable limits: many persons carry out assassinations allegedly in the name of blasphemy laws, substituting the legal process and without even carrying out due diligence in advance. The blasphemy laws, a niche mobilisation factor discovered by the Barelvi resemble with the Islamisation of the army by General Zia ul-Haq in terms of political gains when promoting Islamic endeavours that the population understands and is ready to follow. However, a solution to regress army's Islamisation has not become visible yet, and the question related to blasphemy laws is whether there is a way back to the pre-2011 assassination of Punjab governor and the entire instrumentalization of these laws by various Barelvi firebrands.

Barelvi evolution towards militantism and violence can be associated to a series of factors: rising number of their adepts, the perception by other sects of Barelvi as representatives of a distorted Islam and the repression from assertive groups like the Deobandi. The Nishtar Park bombing may signalise an extreme act of violence coming from a terrorist organisation, but also the fact that Barelvi may have become an important political factor and competitor to traditional power centres. While the Barelvi managed to rally adepts in an ever higher political force demonstrations, their political platforms can be characterised as utopic from a secular perspective. Promising healthcare at doorstep sounds very promising, especially in a stage in which a party is not in power, but implementing such a system is probably very difficult.

The nuclearization of Pakistan is a clear message that *the Jammu and Kashmir issue* will remain at least alive for the decades to come. The two historical problems that appear to have contributed significantly to rising violence of the Barelvi groups were instrumentalization of faith to help carry out wars by Pakistanis or foreigners against India and Soviet Union throughout entire Pakistan, and particularly the violence of historically dominant religious groups like the Deobandi.

Taking into consideration what a hypothetical destabilisation of Pakistan can signify for the region now, after the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, main global actors that can influence the balance between Pakistan's state intuitions and extremists that promote violence should constantly assess the directions and steps taken. UK's decision to add Pakistan to the list of high-risk countries in the first part of 2021 under the “Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing” regulations, instead of blacklisting organisations that carry out attacks might produce results, but has also the potential to empower indirectly

organisations other than the state. However, such an assessment is theoretical, since relations between state and non-state actors in Pakistan appears to be very complex and requires further analysis. Regarding a potential answer to the question from the title of this research, at first sight TLP could be interpreted as both a rising extremist force and as well a tip of a larger radicalized iceberg in the AfPak region, but not limited to these two labels, given that Pakistan is a nuclear power, and that keep in mind the geographical position of the Pakistani state where the potential for both ethnic and religious conflict is extremely high, a complete and firm answer is difficult to formulate in such a complex context.

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