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Khan, Simbal

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Dynamic Militant Insurgency in Conflicted Border Spaces: Ferghana, the Afghanistan-Pakistan Border, and Kashmir

Simbal Khan

Most analysts agree that during the last fourteen years the presence of Western military forces has acted as a counterweight to the threat of militant and terrorist organizations to the security of South-Central Asian states.[1] These militant organizations are still viewed largely from the perspectives of globalization and terror. Both regional states and international stakeholders still routinely identify these organizations as a primary threat to regional stability. This chapter argues that the issue of transborder militant organizations is much more complex in character. A broad look at the most notable transborder militant organizations operating within South-Central Asia reveals that almost all of them, in one way or another, have cleaved to long-enduring geopolitical faultlines in the region. The faultlines that specifically interest us in this chapter run along the three most problematic borders which geo-spatially frame much of South-Central Asia: the state borders in the Ferghana Valley, the disputed Pakistan-Afghanistan boundary, and the Pakistan-India border in Kashmir. Notably, some of the better known and better organized transborder militant movements are associated with these three border spaces. The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban, and Kashmiri militants are all intertwined with the complex histories of these border spaces.

At the same time as the global war against terror is becoming increasingly diversified and sophisticated in its technology, most accounts of transborder terrorism fail to ask the simple, yet crucial, question about how

[1] "Dangerous to Withdraw All Troops from Afghanistan: Experts," *First Post*, July 11, 2013, http://www. firstpost.com/world/dangerous-to-withdraw-all-us-troops-from-afghanistan-experts-947785.html; also see Seth G. Jones, "After the Withdrawal: A Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan," *RAND Corporation Testimony*, March 19, 2013, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/testimonies/CT300/CT382/RAND_CT382.pdf; also see Jeffrey Mankoff, "The United States and Central Asia After 2014," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, January 2013, 12, http://csis.org/files/publication/130122_Mankoff_USCentralAsia_Web.pdf.

regional states continue to relate to their conflicted border spaces. Also absent from analysis is how old geopolitical faultlines within the region have shaped the structures and created space for these transborder forces. Before 9/11/2001, South-Central Asia was seen as a hotbed for the proxy wars of the Cold War era. Some of these proxy struggles involved international actors, such as the U.S.-supported mujahedin war against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s.[2] Accounts also exist of U.S. and Pakistani intelligence collaboration in supporting the infiltration of transborder militant actors in Soviet Central Asia, notably in Tajikistan.[3] In other instances, regional states have used non-state actors as proxies to revise post-independence borders, including both Pakistan and India. Pakistan has used non-state actors in Kashmir starting as early as 1948 to support the independence of Kashmir.[4] India in 1971 successfully supported Bengali insurgents and helped in the secession of the eastern wing of Pakistan into an independent Bangladesh. Even now, the presence of armed non-state actors capable of attacking targets across borders, or what is being called the "sub-conventional threat,"[5] is extremely worrying when we consider that the nuclear security regime in the region, which has two nuclear-armed states (India and Pakistan), is extremely volatile and vulnerable.[6]

Since 9/11, however, old complexities of inter-state relations in the region and the conflicted geopolitics of borders have become subsumed by the dominant narratives of the Global War on Terror and concepts of "jihad"

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2 Vincent Burns and Kate Dempsey Peterson, *Terrorism: A Documentary and Reference Guide* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2005), 5.

3 Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004), 104–5.

4 Christine Fair, "The Militant Challenge in Pakistan," *Asia Policy* 11 (January 2011): 107; and see S. Paul Kapur and Sumit Ganguly, "The Jihad Paradox: Pakistan and Islamic Militancy in South Asia," *International Security* 37, no. 1 (Summer 2012): 114.

5 "The sub-conventional threat" is a term coined by George Perkovich referring to the presence of non-state actors carrying out attacks on behalf of, or against, nuclear-armed states. This threat is particularly dangerous because non-state actors such as terrorist organizations do not adhere to the "unitary rational actor model" that forms the basis of nuclear deterrence. See George Perkovich, "The Non-Unitary Model and Deterrence Stability in South Asia," *Stimson Center,* November 13, 2012, 1–2, http://www.stimson.org/images/uploads/research-pdfs/George_Perkovich_-_The_Non_Unitary_Model_and_Deterrence_Stability_in_South_Asia.pdf.

6 "Mumbai Attacks: India Raises Security Footing to 'War Level'," *Telegraph*, November 30, 2008, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/india/3536416/Mumbai-attacks-India-raises-security-footing-to-war-level.html; also see "Mumbai Attack Might have Led to Ind-Pak Nuclear War: Roemer," *Indian Express*, September 1, 2011, http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/mumbai-attack-might-have-led-to-indpak-nuclear-war-roemer/840092/0.

(holy war or struggle). Although most militant movements have subscribed to the ideas of "Islamic Jihad" and have freely used its populist narratives, such a one-dimensional characterization of their dynamic is too simplistic. Furthermore, this obscures the intricate ways in which ideational aspects of Islamic Jihad have intersected with geopolitical forces in the region to create transborder militant actors. U.S. preoccupation with the fight against al-Qaeda's presence in the region and the need to ensure regional support for the war effort in Afghanistan have dominated the international agenda. There was an assumption amongst U.S. policymakers that the threat to regional security posed by transborder militant and Islamist organizations could be a common cause for greater regional cooperation between Central Asian countries.[7]

Many regional states also found it expedient to subsume all their domestic challenges and regional geopolitical agendas and couch them within meta-narratives related to the Global War on Terror. This has obscured the fact that states sharing these three troublesome political borders continue to attach great importance to unfinished conflicts related to these ill-defined spaces. All have complex interests intertwined with these borders, which have shaped and continue to shape practices towards the communities that straddle these borders as well as inter-state relations. In other words, state policies and practices have shaped the nature, forms, and actions of transborder militant organizations, and they continue to do so in significant ways.

This chapter explores the mechanism through which the peculiar geo-spatial aspects of the three conflicted border spaces intersect with community-level solidarity groups. This is intended to explain how the ability of groups to move across or transcend borders itself changes and transforms these groups. We examine this dynamic process of existence by asking how initial, more local agendas become scaled upwards, thereby embracing more international jihadist causes with expanding geo-spatial and regional links. This is followed by brief accounts of the three border spaces: the Ferghana Valley, the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, and the Line of Control—the Pakistan-India border in Kashmir, which all relate to some of the largest transborder militant groups in the region. Finally, we conclude

[7] Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, "India and Pakistan: Is Peace Real this Time?," (a conversation between Husain Haqqani and Ashley Tellis), April 1, 2004, 9, http://carnegieendowment.org/files/India-Pakistan.pdf.

that policies developed to address the issue of transborder militant actors must take into account two primary contexts: local conditions around border regions; and state practices towards their conflicted borders. The trend of militancy within border communities is without exception linked to economic marginalization and chronically low development.

Border Spaces: Points Where Jihad and Geopolitics Intersect

The transformation of community-level solidarity groups into transborder organizations with links to regional and international jihadist causes is tied to the peculiar geo-spatial features of border spaces. A feature shared by all three border spaces, that is, the Ferghana Valley, the Pakistan-Afghanistan border zone, and the Line of Control in Kashmir, is that co-ethnic, transborder communities are present in significant numbers around these borders, hugging them very closely at certain points. Cycles of societal and political change in the region, such as the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 or periodic foreign interventions, have led to revolts, insurgencies and other forms of group mobilization in the region. The states connected with these areas have used coercion through their respective security apparatuses to deny space to opposition forces and defeat them, and have consequently maintained a status quo on power within their countries for the last quarter-century. The presence of transborder, co-ethnic communities straddling some borders has allowed threatened groups to secure their survival in sanctuaries across state borders.

The majority of the populations in the South-Central Asian region are Muslim. Consequently groups in the region have used the Islamic concept of "jihad" or struggle for a cause—both armed and peaceful—throughout contemporary history in reaction to the consequences of nineteenth-century imperialism and twentieth-century interventions in the region. The Basmachi uprising against Bolshevik expansion in Central Asia in the 1920s and 30s,[8]

[8] The Basmachi Movement (or Revolt) was a national liberation movement that occurred from 1916 to 1934. It was carried out mostly by Turkic Muslims in Turkestan in response to attempts at the Sovietization of Central Asia. Enver Pasha, a former Turkish army general, led the movement at the height of the resistance. Pasha's death, as well as Soviet economic

and Afghan mujahedin-led insurgency during the 1980s[9] against the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, are examples of early and late twentieth-century struggle against foreign interventions. In both cases the concept of jihad was invoked by a coalition of religious and local communal leaders in order to rally resistance against domination by foreign occupiers.[10]

In both cases, these movements included solidarity groups that were either familial, clan or tribal, or that related to a mosque or madrassah and had wider transborder communal links. It is only over the last fourteen years, due to the Global War on Terror and the presence of al-Qaeda leadership in South-Central Asia, that there has been a conflation of practically all transborder armed actors waging jihad in the region with transnational terrorism.[11] This rapid change calls for an examination of the processes by which limited, national-level struggles of transborder organizations or solidarity groups grow to become associated with wider "jihads" being fought regionally. The Afghan Taliban, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and the Kashmiri mujahedin groups, all born out of very specific and limited geopolitical and spatial contexts have, over the years, gone on to embrace other causes that encompass regional "jihads." All three aforementioned organizations have at one point described their cause or struggle in the typical language of jihad, but all three remain bound to more localized geopolitical contexts which shape their goals and aspirations.

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and religious concessions, brought about the end of the uprising. See Didar Kassymova, Zhanat Kundakbayeva, and Ustina Markus, *Historical Dictionary of Kazakhstan* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2012), 47.

9 The Soviet-Afghan War was a conflict that lasted from 1979 to 1989 and was fought between the Soviet army and the government of Afghanistan on one side and the mujahedin rebels and their foreign supporters on the other. The battle became a proxy war in the Cold War between the U.S. and the USSR, in which the U.S. funneled anti-aircraft weapons to the rebels through the Pakistani ISI. The mujahedin rebels became an emblem of Muslim resistance against foreign invaders, and attracted support from across the Middle East in the form of money, weapons and fighters. They eventually forced a Soviet pullout, thereby leaving behind a power vacuum and provoking civil war. See Alam Payind, "Soviet-Afghan Relations from Cooperation to Occupation," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 21, no. 1 (February 1989): 124.

10 Kassymova, Kundakbayeva, and Markus, *Historical Dictionary*, 47; also see Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006), 146.

11 Christine Fair, *The Counterterror Coalitions: Cooperation with Pakistan and India,* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2004), 24; also see Jacob N. Shapiro and Christine Fair, "Understanding Support for Islamist Militancy in Pakistan," *International Security* 34, no. 3 (Winter 2009): 88.

Much has been written about the jihad infrastructure in the region, including the training camps and sanctuaries in the Pakistan and Afghanistan border areas since the 1980s.[12] There are a number of accounts describing how these training facilities for the Afghan mujahedin brought together their local Pakistani supporters, Arabs, and other Muslims from around the world.[13] By most accounts, these training camps functioned as platforms for the cross-pollination of ideas, exposing Afghans and Pakistanis who trained there to the wider struggles in the Muslim world, which over time contributed to the formation of international terrorist networks in the areas covered by Pakistan and Afghanistan. The basics of jihad that were learned in these training facilities may very well have provided the ideational glue to bind together these denominationally different religious forces, thereby enabling them to cooperate across the geopolitical lines that separate them. For example, the Afghan Taliban (who are predominantly Pashtun) have cooperated with a whole spectrum of ethnic-based groups, including the Uzbek-Tajik IMU, which has been utilized to extend Taliban control to northern Afghanistan.[14] The Deobandi Taliban have also at times cooperated with the Pakistani extremist group Lashkar-e Taiba (LeT), which is Ahl-e-Hadith, a different religious denomination, in eastern Afghanistan.[15] However, the focus on "jihad infrastructure," while it highlights the ideational aspects and the appeal of jihad as motivational factors for group actions, omits a discussion of the wider socio-political dynamics at hand.

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[12] Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 83–87, 134; and see Peter Bergen and Katherine Tiedemann, *Talibanistan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 99–101; also see Rizwan Hussain, *Pakistan and the Emergence of Islamic Militancy in Afghanistan* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2005), 121–24.

[13] Coll, *Ghost Wars,* 83–87.

[14] Michael Fredholm, "Uzbekistan and the Threat from Islamic Extremism," *Conflict Studies Research Centre*, March 2003, 24, http://www.da.mod.uk/Research-Publications/category/69/uzbekistan-the-threat-from-islamic-extremism-8801; also see Ahmed Rashid, *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 175–76; and see Jessica Stern, "The Protean Enemy," *Foreign Affairs* 82, no. 4 (July–August 2003): 2; and see Michael Fredholm, "Islamic Extremism as a Political Force," *Asian Cultures and Modernity Research Report*, no. 12 (October 2006): 19, http://gpfeurope.com/upload/iblock/874/fredholm%20islamic%20extremism%20in%20central%20asia%20rr12.pdf.

[15] Stephen Tankel, "Lashkar-e-Taiba in Perspective: An Evolving Threat," *New America Foundation*, February 2010, 3–4, http://carnegieendowment.org/files/Lashkar-e-Taiba_in_Perspective.pdf; Alyssa Rubin, "Militant Group Expands Attacks in Afghanistan," *New York Times*, June 15, 2010, http://www. nytimes.com/2010/06/16/ world/asia/16lashkar.html.

One aspect of militancy in the region evident in all three cases which has received far less attention is that the spatial relocation of each organization within the region has also induced the relocation of varying numbers of dependents. This has been sufficiently documented over the years: in the case of the Afghan Taliban, literally millions of their co-ethnic communities still live in Pakistan and, over the years, have become part of the political economy of Pakistan's border spaces. The IMU's transborder migrations from Uzbekistan to Tajikistan to Afghanistan, and then to Pakistan, have been accompanied by the migration of family members from Andijon, Namangan and other border regions in the Ferghana Valley.[16] Although there is less evidence for the migration of families of Kashmiri fighters from Indian-controlled Kashmir, in recent years the patronage of the Indian Kashmiri diaspora by the Pakistani state already in early decades has had a profound impact on the agendas of Pakistan-based Kashmiri militant groups.[17] In short, transborder movements of Islamic militants in search of sanctuaries in South-Central Asia are accompanied by the migration of extended families, clans and in some cases entire communities. All states of origin, as well as host states, have used violence, retribution, torture and detention of family members of militants as a punishment for anti-state activities. In times of civil war, armed non-state actors and factions have also used ethnic violence against wider communities related to opposing solidarity groups. The Afghan Civil War in the 1990s is a good example of such communal violence.[18]

These migrations across geopolitical lines in themselves constitute an important next step in a group's transformation. Transborder militants and their community members are immediately confronted with the need to negotiate space and sanctuary. This negotiation for space by transborder groups takes place both at the level of local power elites, as well as with the agents of the host states, who are often members of intelligence and border

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16 Fredholm, "Islamic Extremism," 28; and see Noah Tucker, "Uzbek Extremism in Context, Part 1: The Uzbek Jihad and the Problem of Religious Freedom," *Registan*, September 12, 2012, http://registan.net/2013/09/12/uzbek-extremism-in-context-part-1-the-uzbek-jihad-and-the-problem-of-religious-freedom/.

17 Marta Bolognani and Stephen M. Lyon, *Pakistan and its Diaspora: Multidisciplinary Approaches* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 100–2.

18 Chris Johnson and Jolyon Leslie, *Afghanistan: The Mirage of Peace* (New York: Zed Books, 2004), 47–60.

security agencies.[19] In short, all sanctuaries come with strings attached; for a transborder group which finds itself in a new environment, becoming involved in and giving support to new local struggles or “jihads” may almost immediately become a means of survival. Their ideational co-optation into wider (regional or global) meanings of jihad probably follow later and take place through the common experience of formal training camps.

All the states in the region which share the three complex border areas—Kashmir, Ferghana, and the Pakistan-Afghanistan border—play a very significant role in shaping the agendas of these groups. This is primarily achieved through administrative policies and the use of state security apparatuses. State practices of coercion and the use of force against local opposition are not only responsible for denying space to these groups in their home bases but also for shaping how these transborder actors adjust within their new environments. The Uzbek government’s brutal attempts to stifle all opposition changed the contours of the IMU by pushing group leaders into exile in Tajikistan. Participation in the Tajik Civil War broadened the IMU’s agenda and regional network of contacts. The use of overwhelming force by the Indian military in Kashmir in the 1990s swelled the ranks of Kashmiri militants who found sanctuaries, training camps, and also financial support provided by the Pakistani state on the other side of the disputed border.[20]

Lingering inter-state disputes have distorted states’ relations with border communities in these border areas, which often are referred to as being “ungoverned.”[21] However, although these areas are predominantly rural and underdeveloped, and the state’s capacity to provide goods and services there is limited, they are not beyond the reach of the state’s security apparatus. Once on the other side, migrating groups are confronted with the

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19 Fredholm, “Islamic Extremism,” 20–21, 25–27.

20 Stephen Phillip Cohen, “India, Pakistan and Kashmir,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 25, no. 4 (December, 2002): 47–48; also see Haley Duschinski, “Destiny Effects: Militarization, State Power, and Punitive Containment in Kashmir Valley,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 82, no. 3 (Summer 2009): 697.

21 Ahmad Raza Rumi, “Pakistan: Ungoverned Spaces,” *Centro de Documentación Internacional de Barcelona*, July 2012, 2, http://razarumi.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Pakistan-Ungoverned-Spaces.pdf; and see David Danelo, “Anarchy is the New Normal: Unconventional Governance and 21st Century Statecraft,” *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, October 14, 2013, http://www.fpri.org/docs/Danelo_-_Anarchy_the_New_Normal.pdf; also see Phil Williams, “Here Be Dragons: Dangerous Spaces and International Security,” in *Ungoverned Spaces: Alternatives to State Authority in an Era of Softened Sovereignty*, ed. Anne L. Clunan and Harold A. Trinkunas (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 39–40.

omnipresent, coercive security apparatus of the new host state. States with unresolved territorial conflicts with their neighbors view such local communities as the first line of defense against the revisionist or hostile designs of these neighbors and, consequently, they have developed complex political and security practices to control these border communities.

India has increasingly militarized the zone along the Line of Control in Kashmir and has recently hardened the border even further by fencing large sections of it. Its relations with the Muslim Kashmiri communities that live along the border are marked by suspicion.[22] The Indian-controlled Kashmir Valley remains excessively militarized, with over half a million Indian military forces deployed in a very narrow part of the territory. There is heavy penetration of state intelligence agencies within community groups, and the security force's special powers for detention have led to gross violations of human rights.[23] The Uzbekistani state has instituted arbitrary border control practices and put in place a complex web of checkpoints in order to control social and economic activity in the Ferghana Valley.[24] Its worsening relations, in particular with Tajikistan, are reflected in the coercive practices of border guards at checkpoints against significant Tajik minorities, who thereby become victims of extortion.

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22 Duschinski, "Destiny Effects," 700; and see Cohen, "India, Pakistan and Kashmir," 48; also see Sameer Yasir, "Fear Stalks Villages on Kashmir Border," *International New York Times*, August 9, 2013, http://india.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/08/09/fear-stalks-villages-on-kashmir-border/?_r=0.

23 Nick Allen, "Wikileaks: India 'Systematically Torturing Civilians in Kashmir,'" *Telegraph*, December 17, 2010, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/wikileaks/8208084/WikiLeaks-India-systematically-torturing-civilians-in-Kashmir.html; and see U.S. Department of State, "2010 Human Rights Report: India," April 8, 2011, 1, http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/160058.pdf; also see Caitlin Huey-Burns, "Amnesty International Cites Human Rights Abuses in Kashmir," *US News and World Report*, March 28, 2011, http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2011/03/28/amnesty-international-cites-human-rights-abuse-in-kashmir.

24 International Crisis Group, "Central Asia: Border Disputes and Conflict Potential," *Asia Report*, no. 33 (April 4, 2002), http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/asia/central-asia/Central%20Asia%20Border%20Disputes%20and%20Conflict%20Potential.pdf; also see Nick Megoran, "Borders of External Friendship? The Politics of Pain of Nationalism and Identity along the Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan Ferghana Valley Boundary 1999–2000," (Unpublished thesis, Cambridge: Sydney Sussex College, 2002), 46–50, https://www.staff.ncl.ac.uk/nick.megoran/pdf/nick_megoran_phd.pdf; also see Morgan Y. Liu, *Recognizing the Khan: authority, space, and political imagination among Uzbek men in post-Soviet Osh, Kyrgyzstan* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2002), 164.

The most complex case here is Pakistan's relations with its tribal population on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.[25] The rise of a left-leaning Pashtun nationalist movement in the 1970s rekindled the Pakistani state's insecurities related to the old dispute over its border with Afghanistan. Pakistan inherited the Durand line, or the British-era border between India and Afghanistan, after its independence in 1947.[26] The refusal of subsequent Afghan governments to recognize the border, and claims on Pakistan's frontier regions by various Afghan leaders, have shaped the state's relations and practices with its border communities. Over the years it has cultivated local tribal elites through patrimonial practices enshrined in the British-era FCR (Frontier Crimes Regulations), with its archaic system of rewards and collective punishment.[27] The FCR guaranteed tribes a certain level of autonomy and patronage in exchange for their allegiance to the state and its interests. This allowed the Pakistani state to control tribal territories in border areas without deploying its regular military forces.

The 30-year cycle of war in Afghanistan and changes in the political economy of the tribal areas has led to the breakdown of societal structures and the system of the traditional tribal elite. The Pakistani state has responded by undertaking a complex set of practices, which seek to reconstitute its old patrimonial relations with the tribes around the new militant factions that have emerged as modern power elites.[28] Through neo-patrimonial relations built around an informal system of rewards and use of force, the Pakistani state continues to shape the politics of these militant factions in line with its own geopolitical and security interests.

The deployment of Pakistani military forces in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) since 2004 has had a destabilizing impact on Pakistan's tribal belt. It has brought the state into direct confrontation with some militant tribal factions, while also increasing its

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[25] Richard Sisson and Leo E. Rose, *War and Secession: Pakistan, India, and the Creation of Bangladesh* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 222.

[26] Jayshree Bajoria, "The Troubled Afghan-Pakistani Border," *Council on Foreign Relations Backgrounder*, March 20, 2009, http://www.cfr.org/pakistan/troubled-afghan-pakistani-border/p14905.

[27] Amir Mohammad Khan, "Justice Denied," *Newsline*, December 6, 2004, http://www.newslinemagazine.com/2004/12/justice-denied/; also see S. M. M. Qureshi, "Pashtunistan: The Frontier Dispute Between Afghanistan and Pakistan," *Pacific Affairs* 39, no.1/2 (Spring–Summer 1966): 99.

[28] Hussain, *Pakistan*, 137–41, 161–63, 183–84, 225; also see Fair, *The Counterterror Coalitions,* 19–25.

coercive power on the ground. Within this tight security environment, transborder migrant groups have few choices: they can either try to frame their goals and actions in line with pro-state local factions and assist them with their "jihads" in return for sanctuary, or they become allies of local militants who have taken up arms against the Pakistani state and military. The IMU, due to changing hostile state practices and local alliances, have taken the latter approach.[29] Afghan Taliban factions, such as the Haqqani network, have taken the former approach.[30] The Haqqani and other eastern Taliban groups have echoed the Pakistani state's regional policy preferences in acting against Indian presence in Afghanistan. Under the same principle, Afghan Taliban have allegedly assured the Chinese government that they will not allow the establishment of an Uighur sanctuary for dissident members of the East Turkistan Independence Movement (ETIM) or other separatists in Taliban-controlled areas.[31]

In short, conflicted and disputed border spaces in South-Central Asia have recreated geopolitical faultlines that have played a complex role as drivers of conflict in the region. These border spaces form the physical terrain along which much of the operational activity of transborder militant movements has taken place. Within this physical terrain, militant organizations demonstrate a remarkable ability to operate on various geopolitical fronts simultaneously. In addition, they have shown the capacity to shift their focus from one geopolitical hotspot to another, closely following the regional flashpoint of the moment. In turn, states in the region have sought to mitigate threats to their security and to maximize control over their border spaces. In doing so, they have responded to this challenge by

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29 Antje Passenheim, "Back in the Business of Killing," *Deutsche Welle*, October 22, 2013, http://www.dw.de/back-in-the-business-of-killing/a-17175001; also see David Rohde and Mohammad Khan, "Ex-Fighter for Taliban Dies in Strike in Pakistan," *New York Times*, June 19, 2004, http://www.nytimes.com/2004/06/19/international/asia/19STAN.html.

30 Jane Perlez, **"**Pakistan is Said to Pursue Role in U.S.-Afghan Talks," *New York Times*, February 9, 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/10/world/asia/10pstan.html; also see William Dalrymple, "A Deadly Triangle: Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India," *Brookings Institution*, June 25, 2013, http://www.brookings.edu/research/essays/2013/deadly-triangle-afghanistan-pakistan-india-c#.

31 Jane Perlez, "China Shows Interest in Afghan Security, Fearing Taliban Would Help Separatists," *New York Times*, June 8, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/09/world/asia/china-signals-interest-in-afghanistan-after-nato-leaves.html; and see "Pakistan, China, Agree to Strengthen Intelligence Cooperation," *Dawn*, May 6, 2011, http://www.dawn.com/news/634744/pakistan-assures-china-of-intelligence-cooperation.

adopting a complex set of practices. We now examine more closely the three different conflictual border spaces and transborder militant networks which operate around them.

Nested in Ferghana: The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan

The above-described process through which transborder actors transform into regionally networked groups is clearly visible in the development of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. The IMU evolved from a small-scale, local vigilante-style "Adolat" (justice) movement in Namangan, a city in the Ferghana Valley.[32] The group emerged against the backdrop of the chaos that marked the early years of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, a period of extreme uncertainty and upheaval.[33]

In 1992, when the "Adolat" movement emerged onto the scene, it was one of several new political platforms formed by diverse groups to challenge the old guard of the incumbent communist party. Empirical accounts suggest that it was not the primary challenge facing Islam Karimov's regime as it grappled with post-independence chaos in Uzbekistan. It was the Tashkent-centered Birlik party (led by Abdurahim Pulatov) and its splinter group Erk (led by Muhammad Salih) which contested the first presidential elections against Islam Karimov.[34] At the time both Birlik and Erk had a significant following amongst the urban elite as well as intellectuals and students, and were a cause of greater concern for Islam Karimov and other ex-communist elites. By 1993, all three parties (including Adolat) had been banned, their members detained, and their leadership forced into exile.[35]

Escaping the Uzbek state's crackdown, Tahir Yuldashev, leader of Adolat, and his deputy, Juma Boi Namangani, both sought refuge in

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32 International Crisis Group, "Central Asia: Islamist Mobilisation and Regional Security," *Asia Report*, no. 14 (March 1, 2001): 4, http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/asia/central-asia/Central%20Asia%20Islamist%20Mobilisation%20and%20Regional%20Security.

33 Fredholm, "Islamic Extremism," 19; and see Matthew Stein, "The Goals of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and Its Impact on Central Asia and the United States," *US Army Foreign Military Studies Office*, January 2013, 2.

34 Shahram Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States: Authoritarianism, Islamism and Washington's Security Agenda* (New York: Zed Books, 2005), 14–15.

35 Ibid., 16; and see Meryem Kirimli, "Uzbekistan in the New World Order," *Central Asian Survey* 16, no. 1 (1997): 58–59.

Tajikistan.[36] Whereas over the years the Uzbekistani state's extreme and repressive practices against all political dissent—both Islamic and secular—led to the disintegration of the more urban-based Birlik and Erk, the geo-spatial relocation of Adolat helped the movement to survive and to sustain and transform its agenda. The transborder migration of the Adolat leaders with their small group of followers into Tajikistan was the first step towards the evolution of what later became the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan.[37] The scaling up of the IMU's jihad agenda followed each stage in the spatial migration of the group; from invoking Islamic practices and social ideas to promising a remedy for the chaos in Ferghana, displacement to Tajikistan immediately led to a widening of its jihad agenda. Adolat leaders were quick in siding with Tajik Islamists against the ex-communists in Tajikistan's civil war.[38]

Repressive use of force and coercion by the Uzbekistani state also meant that Adolat members moved together with their families, if possible, or their families followed soon after.[39] Family members who were left behind faced detention, arrest and torture. Some reports suggest that three of Yuldashev's brothers were arrested and spent time in Uzbek jails, which are notorious for human rights violations, including torture. According to some sources, when Namangani arrived in Kurgan-Tyube (presently known as Qurghonteppa), Tajikistan in 1992, his entourage included only thirty Uzbeks and some Arabs who had served as emissaries to Adolat from Saudi Islamic charities (Saudi Arabia contained a large Uzbek diaspora, whose ancestors had fled during the 1918–1928 Basmachi Revolt).[40]

Subsequent migrations across multiple borders not only expanded the IMU's political agenda but also transformed the group as it negotiated space in new environments and faced new political and economic realities. In Tajikistan, Namangani started out with a small group of close members and went on to form a substantial personal military force composed mostly of Uzbeks, Tajiks, and Chechens, but also of Arabs. Many of the men were

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[36] John Schoeberlein, "Islam in the Ferghana Valley: Challenges for New States," in *Islam in Politics in Russia and Central Asia*, ed. Stéphane A. Dudoignon and Komatsu Hisao (New York: Routledge, 2009), 327.

[37] Stein, "The Goals of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan," 2.

[38] Ibid., 3; and see Mathieu Guidère, *Historical Dictionary of Islamic Fundamentalism* (Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, 2012), 156.

[39] Fredholm, "Uzbekistan," 5.

[40] Ibid., 4.

accompanied by their families, and survival of the group in rural Tajikistan in the midst of a civil war necessitated finding new ways of adjusting to the political economy of the area.[41] Namangani and his group soon involved themselves in the drug trade;[42] and he appeared to have become heavily involved in the transportation of heroin from Afghanistan to Tajikistan and onwards to Russia and Europe, at times travelling to Afghanistan himself.[43] Reports suggest that despite the deaths of Namangani and Yuldashev long before, the IMU cadre remain an important link in trafficking routes for narcotics connecting northern Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and the enclaves in the Ferghana Valley.

More importantly, Yuldashev's move to Afghanistan together with the leaders of Tajikistan's Islamic opposition who refused to lay down their arms as required by the Russia-brokered peace settlement in the Tajik Civil War enabled him to launch a wider political and financial campaign to raise funds for the group.[44] Joining the Tajik opposition leaders in exile in Afghanistan further expanded the Uzbek group's network of alliances and consequently led to the broadening of their political agenda. Yuldashev's campaign to raise finances for the expanding group brought him into contact with Afghan Arabs and other radical groups, as well as their financiers in the foreign security agencies present in the region immediately after the Soviet war in Afghanistan ended in 1989.[45] According to various sources, Yuldashev travelled to Pakistan and Saudi Arabia and later to Iran, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, and perhaps the Caucasus as well, in order to make contacts with Uzbek diaspora members in these countries.[46] His travels seem to have expanded his links to the intelligence services in these countries and possibly allowed him to access their covert funds. His relationship with Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Agency (ISI) is of particular interest here. According to some sources, he was based in Peshawar, Pakistan from

[41] Rashid, *Jihad*, 144, 145, 148.

[42] Fredholm, "Uzbekistan," 8–9; and see Ahmed Rashid, "The Taliban: Exporting Extremism," *Foreign Affairs* 78, no. 6 (November–December 1999): 22–35.

[43] Fredholm, "Uzbekistan," 6; Ahmed Rashid, *Descent Into Chaos* (New York: Viking, 2008), 69.

[44] Vitaly V. Naumkin, *Radical Islam in Central Asia* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 71.

[45] Rashid, *Descent into Chaos,* 68–69; explained further in Ahmed Rashid, "They're Only Sleeping," *New Yorker*, January 14, 2002, http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2002/01/14/theyre-only-sleeping.

[46] Naumkin, *Radical Islam,* 71.

1995 to 1998, where he operated out of the Center of the Afghan Arabs.[47] Many of the same Arabs went on to form the core of al-Qaeda at the end of the 1990s. Yuldashev also received funds from various Islamic charities and, according to Russian and Uzbekistani officials, from the intelligence services of Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey. The IMU's relationship with the Pakistani state security services was to change significantly in later years due to developments related to the U.S.-led wars in Afghanistan and against al-Qaeda.

The changing nature of wars and geopolitical conflicts in the region has had a profound impact on the IMU's goals and structure, and increased its incentives to wage "jihad." A major triggering event was the end of the civil war in Tajikistan in 1997, which threatened the sanctuary and operational space of Uzbek militants and their dependents in this country. When the majority of Islamic groups, organized under the umbrella of the United Tajik Opposition (UTO), signed the peace deal with ex-communists to share power, Namangani and his followers became isolated.[48] By this time, the group had come to include Uzbeks, Tajiks, Chechens, and Uighurs based primarily in the valleys of the Rasht region in central Tajikistan. It is at this point in time that Yuldashev, along with Namangani, decided to re-launch the group as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan with its stated goal—as posted on the internet in August 1999—as the "establishment of an Islamic state with the application of the Sharia" in Uzbekistan.[49] Thus, almost six years after the small Adolat group moved out of Namangan, the IMU emerged as its new hybrid face with a broader regional profile and agenda.

The emergence of the IMU coincided with Namangani and Yuldashev's relocation to Afghanistan. As the group was no longer welcome in post-civil war Tajikistan, the Afghan Taliban agreed to provide them with a sanctuary and a base.[50] With their goals still focused on Uzbekistan, the IMU launched armed incursions into Uzbekistan from the Batken exclave in the Kyrgyz part of the Ferghana in 1999.[51] Over the course of a year they continued to make forays into the Ferghana Valley by using routes out of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, attacking Uzbek border guards and taking some Japanese and

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47 Rashid, "They're Only Sleeping."

48 Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda: Global Network of Terror* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 170.

49 Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States,* 157.

50 Rashid, *Descent into Chaos,* 69; and see Fredholm, "Uzbekistan," 6.

51 Stein, "The Goals of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan," 4–5.

American hostages.[52] By 2001 the IMU incursions started to abate without any lasting impact on the Uzbekistani state's control in the Ferghana Valley. On the contrary, the IMU incursions were used by the Uzbek state to enhance its security presence in the conflicted border zones.[53] These incursions also allowed Islam Karimov's government to increase Uzbek engagement with the U.S. and other Western states, which were by now becoming increasingly focused on the global threat of terrorism.[54]

When the U.S. military attacks against the Taliban-led government in Afghanistan began in autumn 2001, the IMU fought on the Northern Front in Kunduz under the al-Qaeda-led 555 Brigade, which was commanded by Juma Namangani.[55] After the fall of the Taliban in November members of the IMU found refuge in the South Waziristan Agency, the territory of the Masood tribe in the Pakistani FATA.[56] Up to this point, the rhetoric on the website of the IMU still remained focused on Central Asian governments. Some messages appeared to be more in line with the objectives of other Afghanistan and Pakistan-based groups with which the IMU was coming into contact. It is important to note that Yuldashev's and the IMU's online messages started to directly attack the U.S. only after the group moved into Pakistani tribal regions in the FATA.[57]

In 2002, the IMU split into the IJU (Islamic Jihad Union), a group that has acted as al-Qaeda's recruitment and outreach wing to Europeans of Turkish descent.[58] Western European Muslims have also been trained by the IMU in camps in North Waziristan, Pakistan. German nationals of Turkish and Moroccan descent have been identified based on their threat messages

[52] Ibid., 4; and Naumkin, *Radical Islam,* 91–92.

[53] Fredholm, "Uzbekistan," 6.

[54] Ibid., 11; also Rashid, *Descent into Chaos,* 69–71.

[55] Rashid, *Descent into Chaos,* 17; also EN Rammohan, *The Implacable Taliban: Repeating History in Afghanistan* (New Delhi: Vij Books, 2010), 29; for specific reference to Namangani as commander, see Seth G. Jones, *Hunting in the Shadows: The Pursuit of Al Qai'da since 9/11* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012), 67.

[56] Stein, "The Goals of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan," 5–6; also David Witter, "Uzbek Militancy in Pakistan's Tribal Region," *Institute for the Study of War Backgrounder*, January 27, 2011, 2, http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/BackgrounderIMU_28Jan.pdf.

[57] Stein, "The Goals of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan," 12–13.

[58] Einar Wigen, "Islamic Jihad Union: al-Qaida's Key to the Turkic World?," *Norwegian Defense Research Establishment*, February 23, 2009, 8, http://www.ffi.no/no/Rapporter/09-00687.pdf; also Jeremy Binnie and Joanna Wright, "The Evolving Role of Uzbek-led Fighters in Afghanistan and Pakistan," *Combating Terrorism Center Sentinel* 2, no. 8 (August 2009): 2.

against Germany. In September 2009, Pakistani investigators discovered a "village" of mainly German insurgents, including Muslim converts from this country but also a number from Sweden, who were being trained in a camp controlled by the IMU in the Waziristan area of Pakistan.[59]

In 2007, under pressure from the U.S. and other Western partners, Pakistan's military launched an operation, with support from tribal forces under Maulvi Nazir, to evict the IMU from North Waziristan.[60] The Pakistani state's changing approaches and security perceptions regarding its own border spaces have had a profound impact on the changes that the IMU as an organization has undergone. IMU's original leaders, Yuldashev and Namangani, both had very clear goals, one of which was establishing an Islamic caliphate in the Ferghana Valley. After its move into Pakistan's tribal belt, much of the group's energy became focused on surviving in an increasingly hostile environment, as the Pakistani state's perceptions of the IMU changed. Yuldashev had to postpone his agenda of jihad in Central Asia as he and the IMU became more involved with local militant dynamics in FATA, including the Pakistani state's complex relations with some of these local militant groups. The IMU became closely associated with Baitullah Masood, the leader of the Masood tribal militants and IMU's main host in FATA.[61] As the leader of a group of militants based in South Waziristan, Baitullah Masood became increasingly hostile towards the Pakistani military. In 2007, he launched the umbrella militant organization Tehrik-e-Taliban (TTP), which has waged a war against the Pakistani state and military. The IMU has become increasingly linked with the TTP.[62]

In short, the IMU's geo-spatial journey has not only influenced its agenda and scaled up its goals, but it has also changed the very nature of the

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[59] Dean Nelson and Allan Hall, "Pakistan Discovers 'Village' of White German al-Qaeda Insurgents," *Telegraph*, September 25, 2009, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/pakistan/6226935/Pakistan-discovers-village-of-white-German-al-Qaeda-insurgents.html.

[60] Daan van der Schriek, "The IMU: Fish in Search of a Sea," *Eurasianet.org*, March 13, 2005, http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/pp031405.shtml; and see Witter, "Uzbek Militancy," 6.

[61] Mansur Khan Mahsud, "The Battle for Pakistan: Militancy and Conflict in South Waziristan," *New America Foundation*, April 2010, 4, http://www.operationspaix.net/DATA/DOCUMENT/4799~v~The_Battle_for_Pakistan___Militancy_and_Conflict_in_South_Waziristan.pdf.

[62] Witter, "Uzbek Militancy," 6; also Amir Mir, "TTP Using Uzbeks to Conduct Terrorist Attacks," *The News,* December 18, 2012, http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-2-149025-TTP-using-Uzbeks-to-conduct-terrorist-attacks.

organization itself. After the death of Namangani in 2001 and Yuldashev in 2009, the IMU seems to have lost its original focus on Central Asia. The list of martyrs posted on its websites by the organization includes ever fewer names of fighters of Central Asian origin.[63] The IMU of today appears to be made up mostly of members from northern Afghanistan and to be working in partnership with other local militant groups. Finally, the IMU's lack of clear end-goals makes it difficult to distinguish it from other militant groups operating in Afghanistan or Pakistan, particularly when the remnants of the IMU rely on local forces to stay operational. Within their southern zone of operation around the border spaces between Afghanistan and Pakistan, they operate closely with groups allied with the Pakistani Taliban, which are fighting the Pakistani military forces in FATA.[64] Intelligence reports suggest that the IMU cadre has also served as a bridgehead for the Taliban in helping them to expand influence in the northern zone of operation around the Afghanistan-Tajikistan border and in the Afghan border provinces of Kunduz and Baghlan.[65]

The Troubled Border Between Afghanistan and Pakistan

The role played by Pakistani state policies, including those of its intelligence agencies, in shaping tribal transborder forces, such as the Afghan Mujahedin in the 1980s and Taliban in the 1990s, is well known and documented. What is less understood is how the thirty-year cycle of war and conflict within the border spaces between Afghanistan and Pakistan has accelerated the process of change within these areas and how it, in turn, has impacted state practices.

The political geography of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border shares some of the features of the borders in the Ferghana Valley described earlier. A colonial-era relic, the 2,600-km-long Durand Line is badly defined and in

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63 Stein, "The Goals of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan," 13.

64 Mahsud, "The Battle for Pakistan," 5–6.

65 Riccardo Mario Cucciolla, "Uzbekistan, a Key Player in the Post 2014 Scenario," *Italian Institute for International Political Studies Analysis*, no. 263 (June 18, 2014), 2–5, http://www.ispionline.it/en/pubblicazione/uzbekistan-key-player-post-2014-scenario-10687; also Roman Kozhevnikov, "Al Qaeda Ally Claims Tajik Attack, Threatens More," *Reuters,* September 23, 2010, http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/09/23/us-tajikistan-security-idUSTRE68M28M20100923; also Guido Steinberg and Nils Woermer, "Escalation in the Kunduz Region: Who are the Insurgents in Northeastern Afghanistan?," *German Institute for International and Security Affairs Comments* 33 (December 2010): 6, http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2010C33_sbg_wmr.pdf.

places practically nonexistent.[66] It is also largely unregulated and inhabited by transborder Pashtun tribal groups. The British Envoy, Sir Mortimer Durand, and the Amir of Afghanistan, Abdur Rahman Khan, agreed to this boundary in November 1893, but no Afghan government has ever officially recognized it as an international boundary.[67] Afghanistan was the only state in 1947 that opposed the admission of Pakistan into the United Nations after its independence from India.[68] The conflicted history of the border has had a complex impact on inter-state relations between the two countries.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the ensuing war in the 1980s critically transformed the demographic, societal, political and economic structures within the tribal regions of Pakistan. An important legacy of the war in the 1980s in Pakistan is the continued presence of more than 70 Afghan refugee camps and settlements scattered along Pakistan's western border. There are still 1.5 million registered Afghan refugees in Pakistan, and Pakistan's internally displaced (IDPs) add a further 1.4 million (half of them caused by the ongoing security operations) to the people living in the camps maintained by the UNHCR.[69] The enduring refugee populations have had a complex impact on transborder militant networks and solidarity groups built around the camps, schools, and madrassahs attended by both Afghan refugees and local tribesmen. An example is the Shamshatoo Refugee Camp run for the last thirty years by the mujahedin leader Gulbadin Hikmatyar's group Hizb Islami.[70] It is still a recruiting ground for the Hizb today.[71] Over

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[66] American Institute of Afghanistan Studies and The Hollings Center, "The Durand Line: History, Consequences, and Future," Report of a conference organized in July 2007, Istanbul, published in November 2007, 3, http://www.bu.edu/aias/reports/durand_conference.pdf.

[67] Ibid., 4.

[68] Sadika Hameed, "Prospects for India-Pakistan Cooperation in Afghanistan," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, August 2012, 6, http://csis.org/files/publication/120821_Hameed_ProspectsIndianPakistan_Web.pdf.

[69] "Afghanistan-Pakistan: Pressure Mounts on Afghan Refugees," *IRIN*, July 24, 2012, http://www.irinnews.org/report/95937/afghanistan-pakistan-pressure-mounts-on-afghan-refugees; United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR), "Country Operations Profile—Pakistan," 2015, http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/page?page=49e487016, and UNHCR, "Global Appeal: Pakistan," 2015, http://www.unhcr.org/5461e60916.html.

[70] Omid Marzban, "Shamshatoo Refugee Camp: A Base of Support for Gulbuddin Hekmatyar," *Terrorism Monitor* 5, no. 10 (May 24, 2007).

[71] Ben Farmer, "Afghans Halt Convoy of Boys 'Headed for Suicide Training Camp'," *Telegraph*, February 23, 2012, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/9101670/Afghans-halt-convoy-of-boys-headed-for-suicide-training-camps.html.

the past three decades, the camp has become a small city of more than 64,000 inhabitants, with mosques, madrassahs, high schools, a university, a hospital, and even two local newspapers.[72] These camps have played a profound role in the recruitment strategies of militant organizations and the ability of groups like the Afghan Taliban to regenerate.

While the Afghan Taliban operate in Afghanistan, for the past three decades they have also become embedded within the social, political, and economic landscape of Pakistan's border zones. This includes Baluchistan province, parts of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK, formerly known as the Northwest Frontier Province), and key cities in the Pakistani heartland (e.g. Karachi, Peshawar, Quetta). The Afghan Taliban emerged from Deobandi Madaris (madrassahs) in Pakistan.[73] They have retained their nearly exclusive ethnic Pashtun and Deobandi sectarian orientation, which they share with a large number of Pakistani Pashtun tribesmen, many of whom have also studied in the same seminaries and madrassahs.[74] These multiple solidarity networks born out of the common experiences of war, conflict, and migration have resulted in a closely-knit network of contacts that have deepened connectivity between border communities from both countries.

The transborder movement of men and materials has become more varied and complex today than it was before the U.S.-led war. On the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, large refugee movements have now given way to labor migrations, along with continued social and cultural exchanges between the country of origin and the country of exile. This is facilitated by the presence of well-established transborder social networks on both sides. According to the UNHCR, approximately 80,000 to 100,000 Afghans cross the border daily into Pakistan from the two border crossings at Torkham and Spin Boldak for work as day laborers or for family visits.[75] The vast majority (almost 75 percent) of them are young, single, working-age males.[76] Most of

[72] Ron Moreau, "How Afghan Insurgents Recruit High School Students," *Newsweek*, April 24, 2011, http://www.newsweek.com/how-afghan-insurgents-recruit-high-school-students-66507.

[73] Christine Fair et al., *Pakistan: Can the U.S. Secure and Insecure State?* (Washington: RAND Corporation, 2010), 47–48.

[74] Ibid., 48.

[75] Eric Davin and Nassim Majidi, "Study on Cross Border Population Movements Between Afghanistan and Pakistan," *UNHCR* and *Altai Consulting*, June 2009, 4, http://www.unhcr.org/4ad448670.html.

[76] Ibid., 4.

the transient labor migrants are from southern and eastern Afghanistan. These regions still remain Afghan Taliban strongholds and the Taliban's main support bases in Afghanistan.

These networked interests between the Afghan Taliban and their Pakistani tribal affiliates have had a complex impact on the Pakistani state's security practices related to transborder militant groups. Forced into the tribal areas in support of the U.S. war in 2004, the Pakistani military has acted selectively and targeted only those groups with a narrower transborder support base. The IMU, with their Central Asian roots and their local hosts, the Masood tribal militants from South Waziristan, became the main targets.[77] Most military operations avoided taking on the Afghan Taliban and their close networks among Pakistani tribal militants.[78]

This selective targeting of transborder groups has led to a complex reconfiguration of the militant landscape within the border regions. For the IMU sanctuaries within Pakistani border regions have shrunk, especially since the Pakistani military's large-scale South Waziristan operation in 2009, and Operation Zarb-e-Azb launched more recently in June 2014 in North Waziristan Agency.[79] Consequently, most of the IMU fighters and their dependents have relocated to northern Afghan provinces bordering Tajikistan.[80] Some obdurate Central Asian fighters affiliated with IMU and IJU still remain in FATA and have joined al-Qaeda remnants and their other Pakistani affiliates in fighting the Pakistani military.[81]

On the other hand, the targeting of local Pakistani militants by the Pakistani military has led to the rise of another militant organization: Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan. The TTP operates as an umbrella group for organizations that endorse al-Qaeda's Takfiri[82] ideology and consider the Pakistani state,

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77 "Uzbek militant group IMU claims involvement in Karachi airport assault," *The Guardian*, June 11, 2014, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/11/uzbek-militant-group-imu-karachi-airport-assault-pakistani-taliban-drone; and see Mahsud, "The Battle for Pakistan," 14–15.

78 Tony Karon and Omar Waraich, "Under U.S. Pressure, Pakistan Balks at Helping on Afghan Taliban," *Time*, December 17, 2009, http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1948207,00.html.

79 Mahsud, "The Battle for Pakistan," 5–6; Farhan Zahid, "The Successes and Failures of Pakistan's Operation Zarb-e-Azb," *Terrorism Monitor* 13, no. 14 (July 10, 2015), http://www.jamestown.org/uploads/media/TerrorismMonitorVol13Issue14_02.pdf.

80 Stein, "The Goals of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan," 5.

81 Mahsud, "The Battle for Pakistan," 5–6.

82 A Takfiri (from Arabic: تكفيري takfīrī) is a Muslim who accuses another Muslim of apostasy. The accusation itself is called takfir, derived from the word kafir (infidel) and is described

its citizens, and its cities legitimate targets because of their perceived complicity with the U.S. and the coalition forces in Afghanistan. Some Pakistani militant groups affiliated with the TTP from the Bajaur Agency in FATA and from the district of Swat have found sanctuary in the Kunar province in eastern Afghanistan.[83] From these sanctuaries, militant groups launched several armed cross-border incursions into Pakistani territory in 2011–2012,[84] to which Pakistani military has since responded with the shelling of border villages on the Afghan side.[85] This has added another dimension to the already tense inter-state relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Presently, more than 150,000 Pakistani military troops remain deployed along the border,[86] engaged in several small and large military operations against an assortment of militant groups. The selective use of force by the Pakistan military against some militant factions has had a transformative impact on militant group structures and agendas. It has pushed the TTP and IMU remnants in FATA closer to al-Qaeda's more internationalist jihad ideology. Since 2008, the U.S. has expanded the use of drone strikes to target al-Qaeda, the Afghan Taliban and their affiliates such as the Haqqani Network and their Pakistani networks in the tribal belt.[87] These strikes have inflamed local resentment and have been successfully exploited by anti-Pakistani state militants such as TTP and al-Qaeda in order to increase

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as occurring when "...one who is, or claims to be, a Muslim is declared impure." See Kepel, *Jihad*, 31.

83 Tahir Khan, "TTP Admits to Having Safe Haven in Afghanistan," *The Express Tribune*, June 26, 2012, http://tribune.com.pk/story/399205/ttp-admits-to-having-safe-haven-in-afghanistan/.

84 Kapur and Ganguly, "The Jihad Paradox," 134–35.

85 Maria Abi-Habib, "Afghan Villagers at Border Flee Shelling from Pakistan," *Wall Street Journal*, July 12, 2011, http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702304584404576439591958759406.

86 Ian S. Livingston and Michael O'Hanlon, "Pakistan Index: Tracking Variables of Reconstruction & Security," *Brookings Institution*, November 29, 2011, 5, http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/Programs/foreign-policy/pakistan-index/index20111129.PDF.

87 Declan Walsh, Ihsanullah Tipu Mehsud, and Ismail Khan, "Drone Strikes are Said to Kill Taliban Chief," *New York Times*, November 1, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/02/world/asia/drone-strike-hits-compound-used-by-pakistani-taliban-leader.html; and see Karen DeYoung, "U.S. Steps up Drone Strikes in Pakistan Against Haqqani Network," *Washington Post*, October 14, 2011, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia-pacific/us-drone-strike-kills-haqqani-insider/2011/10/13/gIQA5rT3gL_story.html.

recruitment.[88] The TTP, along with remnants of al-Qaeda, has retaliated to drone strikes and Pakistani military operations by launching terrorist strikes against soft targets in all major Pakistani cities and military installations.[89]

The Disputed Kashmir Border Between India and Pakistan

The history of the disputed Kashmir border has defined inter-state relations between the two South Asian neighbors, Pakistan and India, for the past sixty years. This high altitude border in the Himalayan foothills has several features in common with the two other disputed borders described earlier. Transborder communities comprised of ethnic Kashmiris tightly straddle the 740-km-long border at certain points.[90] After the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, a dispute over the state of Jammu and Kashmir started in 1948–1949.[91] The military control line or the cease-fire line between the Indian and the Pakistani parts of the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir became the de facto border. The Line of Control (LoC), to this day, does not constitute a legally recognized international boundary. Running through the heart of villages and communities, it divides families and clans and disrupts all normal societal interactions such as commerce and trade in these areas.

The presence of Kashmiri militant groups and their training camps within Pakistani-controlled parts of Kashmir has been a cause of inter-state tensions and war. The link between the Kashmir dispute and the Pashtun tribes from FATA dates back to 1948, when Pakistan used irregular forces and tribal militias from this area to infiltrate the state of Kashmir and prevent its accession to India.[92] This practice of state support for non-state actors as a tool of foreign policy by employing the principle of "plausible deniability" is not confined solely to Pakistan. For example, India used the same practice

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88 Imran Awan, "U.S. Drone Attacks and Further Radicalizing Pakistan," *The Guardian*, June 2, 2013, http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/jun/02/ us-drone-strikes-pakistan-terrorists.

89 Fair, "The Militant Challenge," 123.

90 Debiddatta Aurobinda Mahapatra, "Positioning the People in the Contested Borders of Kashmir," *Centre for International Border Studies Research Working Paper* 21 (2011): 14, http://www.humiliationstudies.org/documents/MahapatraContestedBordersKashmir.pdf.

91 Victoria Schofield, "Kashmir: The Origins of the Dispute," *BBC*, January 16, 2002, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/1762146.stm.

92 Fair, "The Militant Challenge," 107.

when it supported and armed transborder insurgent groups in East Pakistan in the 1970s, successfully helping Bangladesh to secede from Pakistan.[93]

The lingering disputes between India and Pakistan, and especially over Kashmir, have impacted how both states treat their border communities and transborder militants. The Indian state has had a zero-tolerance policy in regard to Kashmir-centered militant groups and has responded with brutal force to all political mobilization and dissent by Kashmiris. Since the 1990s, it has deployed a growing number of military forces to quell a populist uprising in the Kashmir Valley.[94] Starting in the 1990s and ending in 2004, India proceeded to install landmines and an electrified double fence along 550 kilometers of the LoC. In addition, it has deployed around 700,000 military and paramilitary forces within the narrow valley and along the border spaces, thereby making the LoC one of the hardest, most excessively militarized borders in the world.[95] A large number of Kashmiri militants have been forced to relocate to the Pakistani part of Kashmir so as to escape being killed or captured. This has allowed them to continue their armed struggle from the other side.[96] On the other side of the border, the Pakistani state has provided varying levels of support to Kashmiri militants, including training camps and financial support for militants and their dependents.[97]

Over the last two decades, the old conflict over the Kashmir border has become intertwined with the ebb and flow of war on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. The links built between certain Kashmiri and Punjabi fighters from Pakistan with the Afghan mujahedin during the Soviet war in the 1980s have persisted and gone through various complex transformations. Most of these transformations have followed larger trends in the inter-state relations between India and Pakistan and other flashpoints within the broader region.

Several militant groups operating across the LoC proclaim Kashmir to be their sole focus. These include the Jamaat-e-Islami-based Hizb-ul-Mujahedin, or HuM, and Al Badr, which tend to be comprised of ethnic

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93 Subir Bhaumik, *Insurgent Crossfire: North-East India* (Delhi: Lancer Publishers and Distributors, 1996), 34–36.

94 Cohen, "India, Pakistan and Kashmir," 47–48.

95 Mahapatra, "Contested Borders of Kashmir," 10; and see Sangeev Miglani, "India Says Pakistan Testing its Restraint in Kashmir," *Reuters*, August 19, 2013, http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/08/19/us-india-pakistan-idUSBRE97I0EE20130819.

96 Cohen, "India, Pakistan and Kashmir," 47–48.

97 Ibid.

Kashmiris and have retained their focus on Kashmir.[98] However, there are a number of other groups with different religious denominations that have expanded their jihad agenda since the latest phase of the U.S.-led war in Afghanistan. These include Deobandi groups such as Jaish-e-Mohammad (JM), Harkat-ul-Jihad Islami (HuJI), and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), as well as the Ahl-e-Hadith group, Lashkar-e Taiba (LeT), which in the last ten years has moved away from an exclusive focus on Kashmir.[99] Various intelligence sources suggest that, since at least 2005, LeT has increased its focus on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border and currently operates in some areas in eastern Afghanistan, albeit on a limited scale.[100]

One reason for this shift in focus was the 2003 ceasefire agreement between India and Pakistan over the LoC.[101] According to the agreement, Pakistan would act to reduce militant incursions from the LoC into the Indian-held Kashmir Valley. A number of Pakistani and Kashmiri militants saw this as an act of appeasement by General Musharaff to the Indians and the U.S., and this led to the splintering of some of these groups.[102] Several of the splinter groups from Jaish, HuJI, and LeJ became more closely allied with al-Qaeda, which was being chased out of Pakistan by the U.S.-Pakistan counterterror operations. Currently, most of the splinter groups have joined the increasingly active TTP in order to open dual fronts against NATO-led troops in Afghanistan and against Pakistani state targets and its military in FATA.[103] Some Indian and U.S. analysts are currently projecting that the withdrawal of the U.S. and NATO from Afghanistan will encourage some of the Kashmir-centered groups such as LeT and HuJI to return full circle to their focus on the Kashmir front, thereby escalating tensions between India

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98 Christine Fair, "Militant Recruitment in Pakistan: Implications for Al Qaeda and Other Organizations," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 27, no. 6 (May 2004): 491; and see Praveen Swami, "The Jihad Online: Lashkar-e-Taiba on the Internet," *Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses*, May 2006, 56; and see Muhammad Amir Rana, "Changing Tactics of Jihad Organization in Pakistan," *Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses*, May 2006, 143.

99 Fair, "Militant Recruitment in Pakistan," 497.

100 Tankel, "Lashkar-e-Taiba in Perspective," 1–3.

101 K. Alan Kronstadt, "Pakistan-U.S. Relations," *Congressional Research Service, CRS Report*, January 11, 2008, 45, https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=482417.

102 Ibid., 34; and see James K. Wellman and Clark B. Lombardi, *Religion and Human Security: A Global Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 71.

103 Wellman and Lombardi, *Religion and Human Security.*

and Pakistan. Since 2012, an increase in incidents of cross-border firing and attacks along the LoC give some credence to such analysis.[104]

Conclusion

As the U.S.-led War against Terror and the Taliban in Afghanistan nears its end, al-Qaeda has responded with its own geopolitical strategy. Since 2010, a clear pattern has emerged whereby al-Qaeda operatives and their affiliates have tried to embed themselves and find a role in conflicts that are local in nature. Long-running local political disputes within the poorly governed border spaces of weak states such as Afghanistan and Pakistan (other examples include Yemen and Somalia) are providing opportunities for al-Qaeda and other groups to resurrect their weakening structures and operate through local partnerships.[105] There are certain similarities in the broad dynamics of how these organizations operate in these very diverse arenas. By aligning themselves with local political actors who are challenging weak states, they are able to find sanctuaries and space for the radicalization of local militants or insurgents into cells with transnational ambitions and goals. Crucially, al-Qaeda is finding space in these conflicts less as foot soldiers and more as "tech savvy" specialists bringing in specialized knowledge of new communication, explosives, and weapons technologies. The growing reliance on counterterrorism strategies by the U.S. is made evident by the sharp increase in the number of drone strikes from 2008 to 2012.[106] These strikes have inflamed popular resentment in Pakistan as well as in Yemen over issues of sovereignty, legality and human costs, and ultimately resulted in increased support for the militant groups.

[104] Sadika Hameed, "Kashmir Violence Strains India-Pakistan Dialogue," *World Politics Review*, September 4, 2013, http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/13191/kashmir-violence-strains-india-pakistan-dialogue; and see Sanjeev Miglani, "India Army Chief Threatens Pakistan over Kashmir Killings," *Reuters*, January 14, 2013, http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/01/14/us-india-pakistan-idUSBRE90D08T20130114.

[105] Katherine Zimmerman, "The Al Qaeda Network: A New Framework for Defining the Enemy," *American Enterprise Institute*, September 2013, 9, http://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/-the-al-qaeda-network-a-new-framework-for-defining-the-enemy_133443407958.pdf.

[106] Livingston and O'Hanlon, "Pakistan Index," 6–7.

Clearly, there are limits to what force-based strategies can achieve in containing the challenge of transborder militancy. In fact, the immoderate use of force by states in border zones has led to the metastasizing of militancy and extremism in South-Central Asia. As international engagement with the region is set to change with the U.S. and NATO military withdrawal from Afghanistan, it is imperative that the policies and practices of international actors and regional stakeholders take heed of the complex linkages between state policies, the geo-spatial features of borders, and transborder militants. There is a need for a fresh look at the problem and further exploration of ways in which conventional use of force may be coupled with other approaches to target root causes.

The two things that directly impact the presence of transborder actors are the local conditions that pertain in border regions, and state practices towards their conflicted borders. Only through a consistent recalibration of these two problem areas does it become possible to achieve long-term mitigation of the threat posed by militant actors. Economic marginalization and low development trends within border communities help sustain dynamics of militant transborder movements. There are no alternatives to painstaking but steady development within conflicted and marginalized spaces around border regions in order to sufficiently transform local conditions which breed and sustain transborder militant movements.

State practices towards militant actors in the region are linked in complex ways to enduring inter-state geopolitical issues. These intractable conflicts over territory, borders and resource issues have to be revisited whilst designing future responses. There are practical policy implications that emerge from this evaluation. The possible waning of the Global War on Terror does not mean that the challenges faced by regional states from these movements will dissipate. The presence of transborder actors will continue to pose complex problems for states in South and Central Asia that already suffer from varying degrees of governance and state capacity issues. For the regional states, however, the loosening of the "Global War on Terror" framework has meant greater possibilities of differentiation between groups. Increasingly, as trends suggest, the politics of militant groups and terrorism are likely to become a focus of national policies and practices. States in the region are making distinctions between groups who are using terrorism as a tactical tool for political ends and those who have more globalist and diffuse jihad agendas. Just as the U.S. and its allies are differentiating between Al

Nusra[107] and other radical groups fighting against the Assad regime in Syria, stakeholders in Afghanistan are beginning to differentiate the Afghan Taliban from al-Qaeda. Similarly, Pakistan continues to respond to the Afghan Taliban, the TTP, and Kashmiri militant groups focused on Kashmir differently from the Kashmiri groups aligned with al-Qaeda and attack the Pakistani state and its security forces.

Indeed, drawing distinctions between groups is a key to policies that can untie the linkages weaving together conflicts and confrontations in border spaces. Such policies are becoming all the more pertinent as also the Islamic State, which has developed in Syria and in Iraq, is gaining influence in the region. Regrettably, the present international emphasis on greater regional cooperation as a means to build security in the post-withdrawal situation in and around Afghanistan has largely stalled over the issue of transborder organization and its linkage to militant activity and jihadist causes. As a consequence, this extremely complex problem area is being left to mainly national policies.

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107 "U.S. Blacklists Syrian Rebel Group al-Nusra," *Al Jazeera*, December 11, 2012, http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/12/20121211170048117723.html; see also Ewen MacAskill, "U.S. Blacklists Syria's al-Nusra Front as Terrorist Group," *The Guardian*, December 11, 2012, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/dec/11/us-blacklists-syria-al-nusra-front-terrorist.