AN ANALYSIS OF PAKISTAN POLICY IN THE WAR AGAINST TERRORISM AND ITS IMPLICATIONS IN KPK PAKISTAN

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Abstract

This study seeks to understand those gaps in the interaction of the policies of Pakistan and the US which have negative ramifications for Pakistan in general, and the Pakhtuns of KPK in particular. How the war on terror has contributed to the trends of stereotyping Pakhtuns and the impacts of these trends are analyzed. It also examines the dents caused by the insurgency and counter-insurgency operations to the socio-economic milieu of Pakhtuns. A complete qualitative documentary analysis has been performed with the application of field data in the form of case studies. The interaction between US' and Pakistan's policies and the respective strategic compulsions of both the allies and its ramifications for Pakistan, and particularly for the Pakhtuns of the KPK, is the major theme of the paper. The second part of the paper argues against the flux of stereotyped arguments against Pakhtuns in the context of the war on terror. These arguments are unjustified and it is argued that these accounts of some of the writers may need correction. The third part highlights some major dents to the socialeconomic milieu of Pakhtuns. Finally, the paper concludes that the hidden objectives of US behind the war on terror, the involvement of the extra regional characters, Pakistan's strategic compulsions, lack of political will on the part of Pakistani leadership and the exploitation of the Pakhtuns' culture by the militants are the major factors causing damage to the socio-economic life of Pakhtuns in FATA and KPK.

Keywords: Terrorism, policy, socio-economic milieu, insurgency, militancy

Background of the Study

¹ Difficult to define and easy to use, the term 'terrorism' has no generally accepted definition (Cheema, 2009). There is no agreed definition of 'terrorism'. Writers have defined it according to their own context and perception. Terrorism is un-predictable, planned and deliberate use of violence (Callahan, Martin and Roach, 2007). It is the use of stealthy attacks against defenseless and innocent people (Fazl, 2001). Like war, terrorism is an offence in international law and all the states are expected to cooperate to fight this evil (Sattar, 2007). "Terrorism is not a philosophy or a movement, it is a method" (Vilkinson, 2007, p.87). It is a method for the achievement of objectives. Its demonstration is not restricted to a single tactic. The terrorists use different insidious strategies to achieve their objectives, which range from the strategies used in the wars of "third kind" (Rice, 1990) to what some writers call "post-modern terrorism". (Callahan, Martin and Roach, 2007).

The causes of terrorism vary but the most eminent are: religion and the conflict and the resultant violence because of ethnicity and nationalism, (Crenshaw, 1981 and Williams, 1994),social stratification and economic disparities(Murphy and Lichbach, 1989),the absence of democracy (Wilkinson, 1977),dehumanization and the promotion of terror through indoctrination (Midgley, 2002, Rathbone and Rowley, 2002), disgruntled and frustrated group of intelligentsia (Rubenstein, 1987). A careful analysis of these factors explains that terrorism is not restricted to a single cause. In different social settings variant factors stimulate violent mode of behaviors for the achievement of the objectives of governments or groups. As Callahan, Martin and Roach (2007) assert that terrorism can be employed by individuals or groups against a government. It can also be used by a government as an effective strategy against individuals and groups. The term 'terrorism' is employed to justify the use of force because terror cannot be an objective enemy which is also regarded as a major loophole in the policy of the war on terror (Callahan, Martin and Roach, 2007).

The Interaction of Pak-US policies:

Downbeat Ramifications for Pakistan and KPK:

The events of 9/11 and the subsequent declaration of the war on terror by George W Bush, the then president of US, gave him an opportunity to transform his foreign policy goals into global power projection and interventionism on a scale unprecedented since the end of cold war (Wilkinson, 2007).

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The memories of Afghan war (1979-88) are not that much old. The US government over-looked the development of good relations between OBL and ISI (Coll, 2004). It was the time when the head of ISI was regularly meeting OBL in Peshawar. Not only was this but also there was a time when ISI and OBL were dividing their shares of the taxes from the opium trade in Afghanistan (Posnner, 2003). The US policy makers also knew that a large chunk of the aid provided for the Afghan war was utilized in the development of Pakistan's nuclear capacity (Trento, 2005). But all this was of no significance in comparison to the US' goal of the Soviet containment. Because, as soon as the Afghan war ended the US aid was dramatically cut-down and Afghanistan was left in a chaotic situation of civil war that resulted in the development of Al-Qaida and other Mujahidin groups (Clark, 2004). Not only U.S withdrew but it also imposed sanctions on its frontline ally Pakistan, which undermined its capacity to play an effective role for bringing peace in its neighboring Afghanistan(Sattar,2007) which proved to be a real miss-calculation of the long term consequences that fired back in the shape of 9/11 (Berns, 2011). It is argued that the US policy makers decided to take action against Al-Qaida and Taliban even before the event of 9/11 (BBC, 9/18/2001) which indicates that the war on terror was not initiated only to fight terrorists but the goals of this project of the neo-conservatives were far more than the regime change and illuminating the sanctuaries of terrorists in Afghanistan (Wilkinson,2007, Vizarat, 2002, Zakaria, 2008 and Washington Post, 2007).

Irrespective of the question of the U.S objectives of the war on terror (out of the purview of this paper), Pakistan occupies a major position in the strategic calculations of the American policy makers (Kronstadt, 2010). This argument is validated by the fact that although the Bush administration was aware of the double dealing of the ISI, it still had to rely upon the ISI for intelligence (Rashid, 2008). One cannot wholly blame Pakistan for unfavorable policy implications because there is inequity in the policy actions of U.S as well. As some U.S officials tried to strike a deal with some Taliban for handing over OBL to avert the possibility of armed engagement but its offers were rejected (Tenet, 2007). The parable did not end here, it reportedly provided (on the request of Musharraf) airlift to the Pakistani Talibans and armed personnel fighting in the Taliban's stronghold Qundus (New Yorker, 2002). If America had adopted the policy of averting the armed engagement and gaining support of the locals for weakening Talibans, as CIA did before the attack, it would have been much more fruitful because Al-Qaida and Talibans are ideologically motivated people and the use of massive armed force was not suitable for such a war (Schirach, 2011). But the sole super power which "spends more on its military than the rest of the world put together" (Mearsheimer, 2011, p. 102) was caught in the illusion of victory.

Islamabad fully cooperated with America in its venture in Afghanistan, and this policy paid off immediate and short term benefits to Islamabad (Sattar, 2007,). The long term consequences of this decision for Pakistan will prove horrendous with significant ramifications for its domestic politics and foreign policy(Ahmed, 2010). It is rightly argued that Pakistan's foreign policy is based on adhocism and subjectivity (Amin, 2005) but if the decision of co-operating in the war on terror is vetted in the light of what Brooning (2007) calls "process oriented judgment" (p.5). It seems a prudent decision, because Pakistan had been involved in Afghanistan for gaining strategic depth, since long (Rare, 2006). Its decisions of playing a major front-line role in Afghan war from 1979 to 1989(Amin, 2005), support to the Pakhtuns factions in Afghan civil war (Khan and Ahmed, 2009), and all out support to Taliban government (Rana, 2009, Hussain, 2005 and Johari, 1995)were motivated by its interest of ensuring a friendly government on its western border(Amin, 2005)and to have an easy access to the energy rich CARS(Fair, 2008).

Beset with contradictions, it is difficult to understand Pakistan's counter-terrorism policy since 9/11, because it is not only committed to counter terrorism but it also employs militancy as a strategic asset (Sadiqa, 2011). Even after 9/11, Musharraf government in consort with Saudi government strived to spare Taliban regime from falling by neutralizing OBL (Intelligence Online, 2001). But the continuation of this policy was no longer possible when U.S officials adopted threatening tone. To quote Armitage, "Tell them to get out of the way. We have to eliminate the sanctuary" (Clarke, 2004, pp. 23-24). Musharraf, anticipated the consequences, made up his mind to cooperate before any formal contact by the Bush administration (Sattar, 2007). That is why he promised immediate unconditional support. Overnight, Musharraf went from a pariah to a valued friend (Gannon, 2005). Although reluctant, Islamabad assured U.S of full cooperation, but still the support for Taliban was continued to the extent that the then director of ISI General Akhtar Abdur Rahman provided them information about the U.S actions and the strategies to avoid the maximum damage (Ibid). It is true that the decision to side with America in this global project had many immediate benefits but the negative consequences of this decision are much more damaging.

In the hindsight, the decision to co-operate in the war on terror was not good because it caused severe setbacks to Pakistan's strategic and economic interests. It is argued that the war on terror is the cause of all of the sufferings in Pakistan (Alam, 2011) not because 1500 miles long border and some 300 passes link Pakistan with Afghanistan (Hilali, 2005), but for the fact that Pakistan is the part of the treacherous strategic game of America in this region(Nazir, 2011). Pakistan suffered heavy financial losses since 2003(Economic survey of Pakistan, 2010); trade decline due to fear and uncertainty (Mahmood, 2002); decrease in foreign direct investment and tourism (Cheema, 2009); increase fatalities due to terrorist violence for both civilians and military (SATP report, 2010; US CENTCOM, N.D and Sadiqa, 2011); diaspora problems (as a result of 9/11); and radicalization of different sections of society (Cheema, 2009).

The implications of the war on terror are more serious for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) in general and the Pakhtuns in particular due to the socio-cultural similarity, geographic proximity with Afghanistan and vulnerability of border security (Ahmed,2010). It was Peshawar, the capital of KPK (previously called NWFP) that was historically the largest overseas concentration camp of CIA during the Afghan war and a host to foreign military trainers and militants (Gilani, 2008). According to Hilali (2005)more than 1.6million Mujahideens were trained during the Afghan war. The rise of militancy in the region was a natural outcome of that reckless manufacturing of mujahideen.

The success of Taliban in Afghanistan inspired the remnants of fighters of Afghan war on the Pakistan's side and thus consequently Talibanization began to grow even before 9/11 in the tribal areas of Pakistan (Abbas, 2010). The militancy that was first confined to Afghanistan and Waziristan spilled-over after the U.S invasion of Afghanistan to the other agencies and then to the settled districts of KPK (Fair, 2009). This fact cannot be denied that there were many Jihadi organizations working in Pakistan but they did not attack the innocent civilian population in Pakistan (interview with a former trainer of Jaish-e-Mohammad, 2011). It was the fallout of the Sept, 11attacks, the US declaration of the war on terror and subsequent ban on these organizations by Musharraf regime that militant organizations rapidly grew in number and strength, particularly in FATA and KPK (Nawaz, 2009).

Islamabad under-estimated the implications of the sudden mushrooming of these militant organizations, rather many in Islamabad were not ready to believe that these militants pose any serious challenge to Pakistan. They viewed these groups as temporary inspiration from the Afghan Taliban(Rana, 2009). However, when these groups began to challenge the writ of the government and the military was compelled to move into the tribal areas for the first time since 1947 (Abbas, 2010).

The causes of simmering tension between military and the militants are many, which began originally from the handing over of foreigner militants, culminating in the full-fledge insurgency in FATA and some settled districts of KPK. It was in 2004(the second phase of deployment of troops) in FATA, when the army launched Kalusha operation near Wana (South Waziristan), the intensity of the overlooked threat was realized (Ibid, 2010).

From 2004 onward, army has conducted operations in FATA and some settled districts of KPK. The interesting thing is that most of the operations ended with a truce. These deals originally intended to curtail the influence of Talibans to the existing zone of conflict but far from achieving this objective these deals in the first place gave legitimacy to the militants (Nawaz, 2009), and from strategic point of view every deal helped the militants with an opportunity to consolidate their position (New York Times, March, 2009). Apart from the strategic advantages and disadvantages of the military operations and the following truces with militants, the Pakhtuns of KPK in particular have suffered the most, both from militancy and counter insurgency operations.

War on Terror: an Addition to the Misleading Discourses About Pakhtuns:

It is a fact that all the counter-insurgency operations are conducted in FATA and KPK, but this does not validate the argument that the Pakhtuns have a natural bent for violence. To expand this argument and invent new stereotypes for Pakhtuns, some controversial texts (Churchill, 1898) are revisited in this context. As argued earlier, an average Pakhtun suffered, both at the hands of military and militants, but still the ongoing unrest in FATA and different parts of KPK have generated new debates related to the social norms of the Pakhtuns under the ethnic impulses endorse their militants activities, then why majority of the Pakhtuns in Swat(and also other parts of KPK) co-operated with military (interview with Kabir Khan, 2011). Not only in Swat but also in FATA the Pakhtun tribes supported the armed forces (Nawaz, 2009).

It is rightly claimed that the Taliban ideology, which is detrimental to Pakhtun's culture, is imposed on Pakhtuns through violence and terror(Taj,2010). According to the estimates of US council of foreign relations, the total number of Taliban in Pakistan is not more than 30000 to 35000 (Nazir, 2011). In the light of this estimate, will it be rational to label "27million" Pakhtuns as Taliban terrorists, just because a few thousand surrogates belong to them and operate from the Pakhtun areas? The phenomenal raise of militancy on Pakistani side of Durand line is multi layered, and many factors contribute to this menace. For more than Ten years, US was engaged in arming the Afghan jihadi forces without any future arrangement, in case of the achievement of its objectives (Berns, 2011), and Pakistan offered the culture and people of tribal region as a present to US plans and jihadi forces (Taj, 2011). Pakistan used these militants as a tactical tool for realizing its strategic goals in the region (Sadiqa, 2011). The socio-culture similarities of the Pakhtuns were exploited not only by the state of Pakistan, but Taliban also manipulated them to their advantage, which multiplied the predicament of the Pakhtuns(Ahmed, 2010).Along with these strategic games, the failure of Islamabad to integrate these Pakhtuns in the national life added to the troubles of Pakhtuns.

This argument does not hold water that the Pakhtun is prone to extremism, and is ready to accept the membership of any militant organization, and the Pakhtuns in Waziristan, Bajaur and Swat support the militant leaders in an effort to preserve their identity (Aziz, 2011). It is also difficult to accept the widely projected notion that the people in FATA (Mazari, 2008) and other areas of KPK co-operate with militants on the ground that Pakistan Army is fighting the war of US (Mazari, 2008). Such analysts seem insensate to the sacrifices and difficulties of the Pakhtuns of KPK.

A simple and objective analysis of the general conditions of the people in FATA and KPK can dismiss most of these misperceptions about the Pakhtuns. The ineffective system of local governments; disappointing performance of police in the provision of security; the failure of the state to safeguard its own institutions; lack of access to speedy justice; and low level of literacy rate are some of the important causes of the growing militancy (Rana, 2009 and Nawaz, 2009). The indiscriminate bombing by military in some operations, the US drone strikes , the prolong insurgency and counter insurgency operations, poverty, lack of development and financial incentives by the government are the significant factors which help Militants in recruiting people(Harrison, 2008, Jahanzaib, 2008, Abbbas, 2010 and Sadiqa, 2011).

It is clear from the historical accounts that the Pakhtuns of this area strictly observe the religious obligations (Bellew, 1864) and their religious sentiments are often exploited for political gains(Lindholm, 1979). Viewed in this context, the insurgency in Swat made it clear that the Taliban movement is not purely an ideological struggle. The Taliban movement was a power struggle (Rana, 2009). The argument that the Pakhtuns strictly observe religious obligation, refers to the observance of rituals. It does not second the argument that the Pakhtuns adhere to the strict interpretation of code which is the cause of extremism. Talibans are imposing their Wahhabi ideology on the Pakhtuns through force and terror (Taj, 2010). It could be evidenced that militants' leaders did not enjoy popular support even in the areas under their control, where, according to Saddiqa(2011) the influence of state was diminished to the point of nonexistence. In the light of personal experiences of Swat and Malakand region, it is argued that Fazlullah did not enjoy the popular support. What the world saw, was the result of blatant force. The terror was so acute; those who co-operated with the military were warned on radio about the consequences. The next day, they either would have been lifted by Taliban or would have left for Peshawar or Islamabad along with their families.

Most analysts, local or foreigner, are suggested to correct their accounts of misgivings about the Pakhtuns. They are further suggested to take a tour of Swat and to see how peace has returned to the region after military operations, Because those, who are eye-witness to the rise of insurgency, counter insurgency and the post-Taliban swat have a different and better understanding of what actually happened, which the outside world cannot or rather do not present.

The dilemma of misinterpreting the Pakhtuns is more acute than fluctuating efforts of stereotyping in the media, first as domestic servants and after 9/11, as terrorists(Jan, 2010). Those who are indifferent to the sacrifices of the Pakhtuns in the struggle for Pakistan in general, and in the context of the war on terror in particular, question the potential of the Pakhtun nationalism, despite the fact, they admit that the Pakhtuns are better integrated in national life as compared to Balochis and Sindis (Harrison, 2008).

The discourse of nationalism takes a new turn when different ethnic groups express their sense of belonging to Pakistan, by developing a discourse of their own sacrifices for Pakistan. In this context, the Pakhtuns develop a distinct type of discourse which confirms that the sacrifices of the Pakhtuns are more consistent (Jan, 2010). It is also argued that the Punjabis are usurpers and they do not recognize the sacrifices of the Pakhtuns which is creating a sense of frustration in the general Pakhtun population (Ibid). During an interview with NawabAli (2011), he rationally argued that;

Why I would be dying in the war on terror with the tag of being a terrorist despite the fact that I have the same loyalty for Pakistan if not more than a Punjabi. Why will we be deprived of the fruits of development that our Punjabi brothers enjoy? Just because we are loyal to Pakistan? or just because we are the direct target of militancy? All this is just because I am Pakhtun.

As Lindholm (1979) says that the religious sentiments of the people are exploited for political gains. All the factors aside, the escalating insurgency in KPK is the result of the mullah-military alliance which brought MMA to power in KPK. It was part of the political plans of Musharraf, for maintaining the credibility of military operations in the eyes of the West.

Whatever may be the cause of the escalation of insurgency in FATA and KPK; the US strategic interests; the failures of Islamabad to integrate the Pakhtuns into the national life by providing social, economic and political opportunities or the propaganda against the Pakhtuns, the war on terror and the resultant Talibanization have added fuel to the fire by deteriorating the socio-economic conditions of the already unsatisfied Pakhtuns.

The Destruction of the Socio-economic Milieu of Pakhtuns:

In the proceeding sections, it was argued that how the US policies in the war on terror, Pakistan's co-operation with US and its strategic interests, the policies of military and civil administration and the resultantly growing Talibanization (militancy) have affected KPK and its Pakhtuns. There is hardly any aspect of life, in this region, that is not directly or indirectly affected by the scourge of terrorism.

This section explains the social setbacks which the Pakhtuns suffered due to Talibanization. The socio-economic dents include radicalization; intolerance towards other sects and minorities; suicide bombing and the resultant fear and frustration in the masses; target killing of professionals (considered to be un-Islamic), the Pakhtun elders, and members of political parties; the destruction of educational institutions and other government facilities; and damage to the Pakhtun culture.

The process in which, moderate individuals and groups become more and more extremists in their thinking and behavior towards others, is commonly termed as radicalization (Zaidi, 2011). As discussed that the Taliban movement in Pakistan was not purely ideological, but they used ideology and indoctrination to promote intolerance in the society. The intolerance was manifested in their attitude to the preachers and followers of other sects, which consequently led to sectarian violence (Sarwar, 2011).

Sectarian question aside, their violence was directed against minorities and the Muslim masses. As Qari Hussain, a deputy of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) justified the permissibility of robbing the banks because of their unislamic character, and harming the minorities because they do not practice Islam (Sajid, 2009). The most terrible instance of violence, which Taliban applied and are still applying is the suicide bombing, has taken away the lives of the thousands of people but the startling thing is the use of children in these attacks and the attraction of the educated youth to become fidaeens because of great bounties and indoctrination. (Rana, 2006 and Crises Group Report, 2007).

The wave of violence in KPK and FATA adopted a new course of target killing-viz-targeting barbers, singers, actors and the owners of video shops on the ground that their professions are un-Islamic (Ahmad, 2009). The progovernment elements and the Pakhtun' elders were killed. According to a rough estimate about 1200 elders have been killed by Talibans because of their support for the government (Ashraf, 2010). Moreover, the political parties' activists and leaders are on their hit list. Aftab Ahmed Khan Shairpao, the leader of the PPP Shairpao group and Asfandiar Wali, the leader of ANP were fortunate enough to escape the suicide attacks. Some members of the Provincial Assembly have also been killed. ANP claims that it has sacrificed the precious lives of some 2700 workers to these extremists (Saddiqui, 2010). As the Talibans were anti-US and against all those forces that were anti-Islamic. They considered the western education un-Islamic. It is because of this reason that in KPK and FATA they destroyed the buildings of educational institutions, particularly schools with I E D S. 246 Estimates show that 700 schools have been destroyed (Department of Education,2010). Speaking on the condition of anonymity, a former jihad instructor of Jaish-e-Mohammad, who later on joined Fazlullah, said that "Pakistan is a major ally in the war on terror and anything belonging to Pakistan is mal-e-ghanimat (booty)". Therefore, they destroyed bridges and roads, buildings of government offices, telephone lines and other facilities. The women of this area were among the worst sufferers of Talibanization. The Talibans were against any role of women outside their home. They were not allowed to go to the schools and colleges. The women of the working class were the special target of Taliban, because they wanted to keep women outside the social circle (Hashmi, 2006). The destruction of educational institutions and the marginalization of women were supplemented with demoralizing the urban mail intelligentsia. In this connection, the Vice Chancellors of the two universities in Peshawar have been abducted and Dr.Farooq (the Vice Chancellor of Swat University) was assassinated last year.

Among all the socio-economic costs, damage to the Pakhtun culture is a significant one. Shrines are greatly respected by Pakhtuns and are considered as a symbol of their culture. They are the prime targets of the militants since December 2007. This damage to the Pakhtun cultural heritage is not only the result of Wahhabi ideology as some argue but it is the backlash of Islamabad's policy to promote Sufism as a counter part to the Taliban's radical ideology (Rahman, 2010and Sadiqa, 2011).

Conclusion

The dichotomy in the USA stated and actual objectives of its war in Afghanistan are making the matter worse for the last Ten years, instead of pointing towards any solution. The so called war on terror seems to be the war of West versus the rest. The geo-strategic location of Afghanistan made it a theater for the American drama with the script of fighting Al-Qaida and Talibans to achieve the real American objectives: containment of Russia, disturbing China, deterring Iran, destabilizing Pakistan and controlling the energy richCARS (Lian, 2010). It is argued that peace in the region requires the efforts of extra regional characters involved because US instead of rewarding Pakistan for its role in the war on terror has punished it by pushing the war deep into it, under AFPAK policy (Masood and Roomy, 2011). The Talibans in Pakistan are backed by many foreign forces because the interests of US, India, China and Iran pass through the Tribal frontiers of Pakistan (Kapila, 2006). In the light of these facts and the growing US-Indian cooperation, it is difficult for Pakistan to give up its strategic conception of militancy because Islamabad cannot overlook the possibility of negotiation with Taliban in case of US withdrawal (Sadiqa, 2011 and Nawaz, 2010).

The "conceptual confusion" in Military strategy (Ibd), the furtherance of the Musharraf's policy by the present corrupt and weak government with more zeal (Masood and Roomy, 2011) and the lack of political will replicated the sufferings of the people of Pakistan in general and that of the Pakhtuns of KPK in particular. It is so because some mainstream political parties did not regard the rise of insurgency a real threat when it was limited to the Pakhtun areas.

The conflict between military and militants posed a dual challenge to the ordinary Pakhtuns in the form of difficulties they face at the hands of militants and administration which caused the disruption of social and economic life due to insecurity, displacement and the constant fear of eruption of violence (Khan, 2008). Instead of acknowledging the difficulties which the Pakhtuns have been facing because of counter insurgency operations and their aftermaths, they are generally regarded as people having a natural bent for violence. This line of argument is very weak in the light of the sacrifices which the Pakhtuns have made by co-operating with military and civil administration, specifically in successive operations in Swat and Malakand region.

The socio-economic dents caused by the war on terror to the Pakhtuns of KPK and FATA will take a long time to be compensated. It is true that most of the insurgency was in Pakhtun belt but these militants and their ideology did not represent even the minority of Pakhtuns. On the contrary, these militants used Pakhtun culture and its codes to their advantage which not only damaged the image of the Pakhtuns but also created a sense of aggravation in the Pakhtun society to the religious organizations.

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Nawab Ali, Lecturer in Zoology, Government Degree College Thana, 03/08/2011.

Kabir Khan, general secretary of P.p.p for the region, 07/08/2011.

The name of the interviewee is kept concealed because of the security reasons (because after working for Jaish-e-Mohammad for 12 years he has defected from the organization. The interview was conducted on 11/08/2011.