

# Exposing the Karachi-Afghanistan link

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## ■ Executive summary

Karachi, with its large businesses, moneyed residents and huge Pashtun population, has been fertile ground not only for the Pakistani Taliban, but also the Afghan Taliban and al-Qaeda. Karachi's religious leadership and Islamic seminaries played a leading role in resistance against the Soviets, later fighting the Northern Alliance and then supporting the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Pakistani jihadi groups, which have a strong influence in Karachi, have also sent a significant number of fighters to Afghanistan to participate in the Afghan war. When the Taliban controlled Afghanistan, these groups enjoyed the complete support of the organisation.

The arrests of high-profile Afghan Taliban leaders in Karachi indicate that the organisation is using the city as an organisational hub, a hideout, and for rest and recuperation. Prior to the terrorist attacks of September 11th 2001 the Afghan Taliban relied heavily on funding from Middle Eastern Islamic states and private donors, but after this date it greatly diversified its funding to generate income and allegedly established businesses in Pakistan, especially in Karachi and the United Arab Emirates, including construction and transportation firms.

It is feared that after the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan, Pakistani militant groups, which also have a strong presence and organisational structures in Karachi, will again start to send fighters to Afghanistan to support the Afghan Taliban's insurgency there.

## Strategic importance of Karachi as a link to Afghanistan

Karachi is Pakistan's financial hub and its most populated city, with an estimated population of 23.5 million as of April 2012 (Khan, 2012). It is a key port city strategically located on the shores of the Indian Ocean. While Islamabad is Pakistan's political capital, Karachi is its commercial and financial capital. The city accounts for the lion's share of Pakistan's gross domestic product and generates at least 60% of national revenue (*The Nation*, 2010). It is also home to the central bank or State Bank of Pakistan, the Stock Exchange, and the head offices of national and multinational companies, including banks, financial institutions and real-estate companies.

Being the country's only deep-sea port – at least until the Gwadar port in Baluchistan province becomes operational

– Karachi serves as the shipping and maritime hub for both Pakistan and landlocked Afghanistan. It is the primary entry-point for U.S. and NATO supplies for Afghanistan. Three-quarters of NATO supplies – everything from weapons to spare parts and petrol – are offloaded at Karachi and trucked through two entry points – Torkham and Chaman – from Pakistan to Afghanistan. The remaining NATO supplies arrive in Afghanistan by air and other routes.

## Karachi: the Pashtuns' largest city

Although Karachi had a Pashtun community – the ethnic group to which most members of the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban belong – since before the creation of Pakistan in 1947, a major influx began in the 1960s when the rapid industrialisation of the city created new employment opportunities, especially in the construction, textile and

transport sectors (Mujeeb, 2013). After the Afghan war of 1979, Pakistani military operations in recent years in its Federally Administrated Tribal Areas (FATA), which is an ungoverned area on the border with Afghanistan, have forced more and more Pashtun refugees to migrate to Karachi. As a result there are more Pashtuns in Karachi today than in Peshawar, Kandahar or Kabul (Bansal, 2013). Today, Karachi's Pashtun population is approximately five million, which is some 25% of the city's entire population (Saleem, 2010). According to UN High Commissioner for Refugees statistics, there are still some 71,000 Afghan refugees in the city (Khattak, 2012), but experts working with Afghan refugees estimate that the actual number is around 700,000.

### **Role of Karachi-based religious leadership and *madrassas* in Afghanistan's past insurgencies**

The 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan provided the initial momentum for Pakistan's call for jihad against the Soviet army. Karachi religious leadership and Islamic seminaries (*madrassas*) played a leading role in resistance to the Russians and later in fighting against the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan. Initially the *madrassas* in Pakistan were traditional, but the new Islamic leaning nurtured a new generation of students who had been given the opportunity to fight against the Soviets. These students became teachers in the *madrassas* and turned the seminaries from seats of Islamic learning to centres of Islamic jihadi militancy (Shahzad, 2011).

The Jamia Uloom al-Islamia in Karachi's Binori Town, commonly known as the Binori Town *madrassa*, is the key seminary that has always been at the forefront of jihad in Afghanistan and is perceived to be one of the most influential centres of hard-line Deobandi Sunni Muslim ideology in the world (*Daily Times*, 2004). During anti-Soviet resistance in the 1980s jihadist leaders from Afghanistan and Pakistan and some from Arab countries commonly visited the Binori Town seminary for religious guidance. A number of the seminary's students went to Afghanistan to participate in the anti-Soviet war; 35 of them were killed between 1987 and 1989 (Rana, 2009).

In the 1990s the seminary became associated with radical Islamic thought because some of its students had gone to fight against the Soviet forces in Afghanistan and came under the influence of students from more radical seminaries fighting there. Many of these students later became teachers in the Binori Town seminary and as a result influenced their students. Mufti Nizamuddin Shamzai, who was killed in Karachi in 2004, was one these students who joined the Binori Town seminary as a teacher and changed the dynamics of the seminary (Shahzad, 2011). Shamzai, who came from the Swat district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa,

enjoyed close relations with the leadership of the Afghan Taliban and al-Qaeda, including Mullah Omar and Osama bin Laden. Shamzai was a member of the clerical delegation that went to Kandahar in September 2001, along with Lt Gen. Mahmood Ahmed, the then-director general of Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI), Pakistan's main intelligence service, for discussions with Omar on the issue of handing over Bin Laden (*Daily Times*, 2004).

The Binori Town seminary has also educated some of the top leaders of Pakistani jihadi groups such as Harakat ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HJI), Jaish-e-Muhammed (JeM), Harakat ul-Mujahideen (HM), Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), and Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) (ICG, 2007). The seminary's teachers, especially Shamzai, Maulana Abdul Rasheed (deceased) and Maulana Yusuf Ludhianvi (deceased), played a major role in helping to establish and organise these jihadi groups.

Jamiatul Rasheed Ehsanabad, Jamia Ashraful Madaris, Jamia Ehsanul Uloom, Jamia Anwarul Quran, Madrassa Khalid bin Walid and Darul Uloom Rehmania are some other prominent seminaries in Karachi that are suspected of having links to the Afghan Taliban and Pakistani jihadi groups (Rana, 2009).

Most of the students and teachers in Karachi's Deobandi seminaries are Pashtuns, both Pakistani and Afghan. By 1996 Afghan students in Pakistani seminaries, especially in Karachi, had organised a movement and raised the flag of the Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan against Afghan warlords. Because Pakistan's military establishment declared Afghanistan to be its "strategic depth" zone, ISI started to build links between Islamic seminaries and jihadi groups and assigned special cells to control and streamline their activities for the Afghan project (ICG, 2007).

During the 1990s Karachi's seminaries also attracted thousands of foreign students. According to government reports in 2003, 10,905 foreign students were studying at seminaries in Karachi. A large number of these students come from Arab or African countries. However, teachers at religious seminaries in Karachi said that the number of foreign students at seminaries has decreased substantially because of the government's strict policies in recent years.<sup>1</sup> The exact number of foreign students currently in Karachi *madrassas* is not known.

When the Taliban ruled Afghanistan the Taliban consul in Karachi, Moulvi Rahamatullah Kakazada, also financially supported the seminaries in Karachi and encouraged students from religious seminaries to join the Afghan Taliban.<sup>2</sup>

1 Author interview with a teacher at a religious seminary in Karachi who wished to remain anonymous, October 12th 2013.

2 Author interview with Haji Malik Khan, an Afghan tribal elder living in Karachi, October 5th 2013.

## Afghan Taliban in Karachi: presence, links and activities

Karachi, with its large businesses, moneyed residents and huge Pashtun population, has proved fertile ground not only for the Pakistani Taliban, but also for the Afghan Taliban and al-Qaeda. In recent years international media have regularly reported that a significant number of Afghan Taliban, including its key leaders, are in Karachi. Afghan tribal elders who arrived in Karachi as part of the refugee flows and now often try to resolve issues concerning Afghan refugees living in the megalopolis also believe that after the start of the NATO operation and the ousting of the Afghan Taliban regime in 2001, a large number of Afghan Taliban and al-Qaeda leaders moved to Pakistan's North Waziristan agency, a lawless tribal area bordering on Afghanistan. However, U.S. drone attacks in Pakistani tribal areas became a major threat to Pakistani militants, the Afghan Taliban and al-Qaeda, resulting in their activities in North Waziristan being limited, while many of them have shifted to safer locations such as Karachi, Quetta and other urban areas.

The arrests of high-profile Afghan Taliban leaders in Karachi corroborate the reports that the Afghan Taliban is using Karachi as an organisational hub, and for hideouts and rest and recuperation. Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, the second-in-command to Taliban leader Mullah Omar, was arrested in Karachi in February 2010 in a joint raid by Pakistani and U.S. intelligence agencies (Yusuf, 2010). In the same month Pakistani authorities arrested Akhonzada Popalzai, also known as Mohammad Younis, a one-time Taliban shadow governor in Zabul province and former police chief in Kabul during the Taliban's rule; Ameer Muawiya, the Afghan Taliban's liaison officer for al-Qaeda militants based in Pakistan's tribal areas; and Abu Hamza, who served as a former Afghan army commander in Helmand province (Fox News, 2010). In addition, Mustaqim Agha Jan, the Afghan Taliban's finance minister when it controlled Afghanistan and head of the Afghan Taliban's political committee, was injured in an attack in Karachi in August 2011 and moved to Turkey with his family in January 2012 (Yousafzai & Moreau, 2012). Mullah Jalil, former Afghan deputy foreign minister and a lieutenant of Taliban leader Mullah Omar, along with two of his close Afghan associates, was also arrested somewhere in Karachi in 2004 (Shahzad, 2004). Afghan tribal elders in Karachi said that Mullah Obaidullah Akhund, the former defence minister during Taliban rule and a key leader of the Afghan Taliban, visited Karachi to meet his relatives a week before his arrest in Quetta in March 2007.<sup>3</sup> Akhund died of cardiac arrest in a Karachi jail on March 5th 2010. According to a journalist who covered Afghan militants in Karachi, at least 30 key Afghan Taliban leaders have been arrested in Karachi since 2004.<sup>4</sup>

Several al-Qaeda leaders who fled from Afghanistan were also arrested in the city in the past decades. Abu Yahya Mujahdeen al-Adam, an American associated with the operations division of al-Qaeda and who commanded fighters in Afghanistan, was arrested in March 2010 in Karachi (Perlez & Schmitt, 2010). Other al-Qaeda leaders who have been arrested in Karachi include, among others, Ramzi bin al Shibh, Abdu Ali Sharqawi, Ammar al-Balochi, Walid Muhammad Salih bin Attash, Jack Thomas, Majid Khan, Abdul Rabbani Abdul Rehman and Ahmed Ghulam Rabbani (Imtiaz, 2011).

Karachi police officials said that law enforcement agencies have arrested a number of militants belonging to the Afghan Taliban, including their leaders. However, they believe that the Afghan Taliban has not been involved in subversive activities in the city. Some experts also believe that Karachi has long been a safe haven for the organisation, but is not an operational command centre. Members of the group commonly travel to Karachi in winter to escape the harsh conditions that slow down militant action in Afghanistan. They keep a low profile, obtain treatment for their injuries and ailments in local hospitals, seek new recruits and collect donations (Siddiqi, 2010).

According to Afghan tribal elders, all three key factions of the Afghan Taliban – the Quetta Shura, led by Mullah Omar; the Haqqani Network, led by Jalaluddin Haqqani; and Hizb-i-Islami, led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar – operate in Karachi. However, Quetta Shura-linked Afghan militants have the largest presence in the city.

Afghan elders living in Karachi said that the lower cadres of the Afghan Taliban live in the Pashtun-populated areas of Karachi, which include Sohrab Goth, Afghan Basti, Ittehad Town, Quaidabad, Metroville, Kemari, Qasba Colony and Kati Pahari,<sup>5</sup> while the leadership of the Afghan Taliban stay in the city's wealthy areas of the Defence Housing Authority and Clifton and can freely move in and out of the city (Perlez & Shah, 2010). An Afghan militant told a reporter that since the fall of the Taliban in Afghanistan, 7,000 to 8,000 Taliban fighters have been residing in suburban and Pashtun-majority areas of Karachi. Most of the Taliban fighters in Karachi were either born or raised in Pakistan during the 1980s Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and are now Pakistani citizens. Their role as fighters is purely voluntary, and most of them travel to Afghanistan once a year or every two years to join the Taliban insurgency for a few months (Hussain, 2011). In November 2011, when the Pakistani government released several Afghan Taliban prisoners as a goodwill gesture towards the Karzai government, media reports suggested that there were celebrations in the Kati Pahari area of Karachi (Zaman & Nazisha-Syed-Ali, 2013).

3 Author interview with Haji Malik Khan.

4 Author interview with Ahmed Wali Mujeeb, a journalist working for the BBC in Karachi, October 14th 2013.

5 Author interview with Haji Malik Khan.

The Haqqani Network depends largely on residents of Afghanistan's Khost province, but in Pakistan it recruits fighters from among Wazir and Mehsud tribesmen of North and South Waziristan. A number of people belonging to these tribes live in Karachi's suburbs and some of them are linked with the Haqqani Network.<sup>6</sup>

Hizb-i-Islami has tried and failed to establish sanctuaries and find support in Pashtun-populated areas of Karachi (Hussain, 2011). Most of its supporters are mainly from the Kharoti sub-branch of the Ghilzai Pashtuns of Afghanistan's Kunduz province. In the beginning, Hizb-i-Islami was supported by Jammāt-e-Islami, a Pakistani religio-political party, in Karachi. Al-Badr Mujahideen, a breakaway faction of jihadi group Hizbul Mujahideen and previously associated with Jammāt-e-Islami, supports Hizb-i-Islami militants in Afghanistan and participates along with the latter's fighters in attacks against U.S. forces in Afghanistan (Rana, 2003).

## The Quetta Shura in Karachi

The Quetta Shura assigns and replaces field commanders in Afghanistan, oversees the Taliban's parallel government in Afghanistan, and fields complaints from Taliban members (Anand, 2010).

Over the past few years members of the Quetta Shura have been reported to be relocating to Karachi to avoid potential U.S. airstrikes. In September 2009 the U.S. told Pakistan that it may start launching drone attacks against the Taliban leadership in Quetta in a major escalation of its operations in the country (Farmer & Siddiq, 2009). In February 2010 a senior U.S. general told a Senate committee that Afghan Taliban militants were relocating from Quetta to Karachi, making it more difficult to apprehend them (*Dawn*, 2010). The governor of Kunduz, Muhammad Omar, also claimed that members of the Quetta Shura have been shifted to Karachi, with the consent of Pakistani intelligence officials (Scott, 2010). The capture of some Quetta Shura leaders in Karachi corroborated the U.S. claims.

There were also reports in the international press that the Quetta Shura's head, Mullah Omar, was hiding in Karachi. A media report citing U.S. intelligence and CIA officials said that Omar travelled to Karachi in September 2009 to inaugurate a new senior leadership council in Karachi (*Washington Times*, 2009). In January 2011 another report citing an U.S. intelligence firm, the Eclipse Group, suggests that Mullah Omar had had a heart attack and was treated for several days in a Karachi hospital with the help of ISI (Stein, 2011). However, Pakistani officials denied this report.

## Recruitment

Since the Afghan war against the Soviets, Karachi has served as a recruitment and training ground for the Afghan Taliban. Although the group has repeatedly said that there was no need to recruit Pakistanis for the fight in Afghanistan, Afghan government officials accuse the Afghan Taliban of recruiting fighters and suicide bombers from Pakistan (Gall, 2006).

### Links with local jihadi groups

Since the early 1990s dozens of local Deobandi jihadi have operated in Karachi, but only a few are militarily active. Among them are banned organisations such as HJI, led by Qari Saifullah Akhtar; HM, led by Maulana Fazlur Rehman Khalil, a co-signer of Osama bin Laden's 1998 edict ordering attacks against the U.S.; and JeM, led by Maulana Masood Azhar. All these groups have headquarters in South Punjab, but have strong organisational structures and support in Karachi. Throughout the late 1990s HJI and HM collaborated closely with the Afghan Taliban and al-Qaeda, sharing training camps and sending Pakistani fighters to Afghanistan (PIPS, 2009). Drawing especially from their religious seminaries in Karachi, these groups have sent a significant number of fighters to Afghanistan, initially to participate in the fight against the Soviets and now to engage with the International Security Assistance Force and Afghan military forces in Afghanistan.

The Taliban regime in Afghanistan was a high point for the Deobandi jihadi groups, who at the time enjoyed complete support from the Taliban and expanded their camps to train not only Pakistani militants, but also Afghan Taliban members fighting the Northern Alliance.

After the fall of the Taliban regime, these jihadi groups lost their organisational support bases in Afghanistan, in addition to their human resource losses. Several militant groups lost command and control over their members and their organisational structure was dispersed. JeM, which vowed to send its fighters to help the Taliban in Afghanistan after the U.S. attack, suffered a split in October 2011 when its Sindh chief, Maulana Abdullah Shah Mazhar, broke away and formed Tehrik-e-Furqan. Before joining JeM, Mazhar was Karachi chief of HJI (Rana, 2013).

In 2002 Pakistan's Home Ministry imposed a ban on militant groups, including HJI, JeM and HM. However, these organisations found a way around such gagging measures. Many cosmetically changed the name of their organisations and are now operating under new ones. Along with changing their names, some are also operating as a political, charity, or religious wing of a political or religious party. For example, HM is now working under the new name Ansar-ul-Umma, while Khuddam-ul-Islam is reportedly a restructuring of JeM. However, these banned militant organisations made a noisy comeback at a massive

<sup>6</sup> Author interview with Ahmed Wali Mujeeb.

public gathering in February 2012 on the platform of the Difa-e-Pakistan Council (Defence of Pakistan Council, or DPC), an alliance of over 40 religious parties and jihadi groups that has been vocally demanding that the government keep NATO supply routes closed.

Al-Badr Mujahideen, a breakaway faction of the jihadi group Hizbul Mujahideen and previously associated with Jammat-e-Islami, has links with Hekmatyar's Hizb-e-Islami and generally sends university and college students to join the latter's ranks.<sup>7</sup> Al-Badr Mujahideen participated fully in the fighting against the Soviet Union, but after the emergence of the Taliban in Afghanistan, it was forced to close its training camps in Khost, Afghanistan, and hand them over to HM. The Afghan Taliban allowed Al-Badr Mujahideen only to take away its weapons from those camps (Rana, 2003). The rift between the two groups was caused by ideological differences. Al-Badr Mujahideen is in fact a non-Deobandi group linked to Jammat-e-Islami Pakistan, which supported Hizb-e-Islami during the civil war in Afghanistan.

Security officials believe that it is the Afghan Taliban's strategy to operate in Karachi in smaller cells within Pakistani jihadi groups and find recruits. They also believe that these militant groups are preparing for war in Afghanistan after the foreign withdrawal in 2014. Pakistani intelligence agencies do not consider the banned jihadi groups as a serious threat to the country's security and therefore have not come down hard on any of them. Some are instead considered a useful foreign policy tool to deploy in Afghanistan or Indian-controlled Kashmir.<sup>8</sup>

### Religious seminaries and public universities

Karachi's religious seminaries have played a leading role in training and dispatching young fighters to Afghanistan. According to a recent Sindh government survey there are 12,545 religious seminaries in Sindh province, of which 2,161 are dangerous; 74% of these seminaries are in urban Sindh, including Karachi (Chishti, 2013). Most of these red-flagged seminaries are linked with banned militant organisations, and extremely poor children go there to study. The militant groups are materially rich, and their relative magnificence deceives youngsters into believing that they can transform themselves from a state of dispossession to one of exaltation only through jihad.

In 2005 the Sindh government promulgated the Societies Registration (Sindh Amendment) Ordinance 2005 under which no seminary can be established or operated in the province without being registered under the Act. The Act makes it compulsory for all seminaries to submit annual reports of their performance and expenses, as well as audits of their accounts, and also prohibits the teaching or publication of "any literature which promotes militancy and

spreads religious hatred" (*Daily Times*, 2005). But police officials said that the network of religious seminaries remain a major cause of concern and they are still recruiting students to fight in Afghanistan and tribal areas.

While the recruitment pool in the tribal areas consists largely of uneducated young men and the students of religious seminaries, Karachi offer a very different dynamic. Law enforcement agencies have discovered several small cells of militants linked with al-Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban in Karachi's universities and colleges. The cells are so small and scattered that they are only discovered when law enforcement agencies arrest their members.<sup>9</sup>

Recruitment from Karachi universities was highlighted after the arrest of two Pakistani brothers, Dr Akmal Waheed and Dr Arshad Waheed, in April 2004. The men were accused of having links with al-Qaeda and aiding the militant groups financially (Rehman, 2012). A militant group called the Punjabi Taliban was formed at the University of Karachi in 2007 by former operatives of Islami Jamiat Talaba, a sister organisation of Jamaat-e-Islami, after a disagreement with the latter's leadership over jihad. According to university teachers, the men were inspired by the Waheed brothers and were consequently expelled from Islami Jamiat Talaba (Perwaiz, 2011). In March 2008 Arshad Waheed was killed by a U.S. drone in Wana, South Waziristan Agency, while Akmal Waheed was sentenced to three years in prison in the UAE in 2011 for running an al-Qaeda-linked jihadist group (Siddiqui, 2011).

There is no information about the number of militants operating on university campuses. Taliban groups distribute jihadi literature among college and university students in Karachi in an effort to recruit them for militant organisations (Mahmood, 2010a) and also disseminate guidelines for making bombs and thwarting explosive detection equipment to potential recruits (Mahmood, 2010b).

### TTP militants' move from the FATA to Karachi and its impact on Afghanistan

The recent arrival in Karachi of tribal militants of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) from South Waziristan, Swat, and Mohmand and their nexus and working relationship with local jihadi groups have made the situation in the city worse. They are largely involved in fund-raising campaigns to support militancy in the tribal areas of South and North Waziristan, and also in sending fighters across the border to fight against U.S. and Afghan forces.<sup>10</sup> The Afghan Taliban has formed a council to help maintain peace between the TTP and other Afghan and Pakistani Taliban factions. A spokesman for the Pakistani Taliban, Insanullah Ihsan, told CNN that the council's creation was

7 Author interview with Ahmed Wali Mujeeb.

8 Lashkar-Tayyaba (the new name is Jammat-u-Dawwa) has a clear Kashmir agenda, while HM and JeM send their fighters to Afghanistan and Kashmir.

9 Author interview with Chaudary Aslam, a senior police official in Karachi, October 4th 2013.

10 Ibid.

encouraged by the leader of the Afghan Taliban, Mullah Omar, who urged groups based in Pakistan to join the battle against the U.S.-led alliance from across the border (Lister, 2012).

According to police documents, the Afghan Taliban and TTP are planning to abduct foreigners, especially diplomats and aid workers, in Karachi in order to pressurise the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan to free their leaders (*News Tribe*, 2013).

### Fund raising

Karachi, with its wealthy residents and large businesses, is important to the both Pakistani and Afghan Taliban for fund raising.

In January 2013 the Pakistani daily *The News* published a report describing the shifts in Taliban funding over time, saying that prior to September 11th 2001 Afghan and Pakistani Taliban militants relied heavily on funding from Middle Eastern Islamic states and private donors. Taliban militants allegedly acquired around \$6 billion during the 1990s from these sources (Hasan, 2013).

After the events of September 2001 state funding and private donations were allegedly reduced because Western countries took measures to repress Afghan and Pakistani militant groups. In response the Taliban greatly diversified its funding schemes to generate income. It allegedly established businesses in Pakistan – especially in Karachi – and the UAE, including construction and transportation firms, which were used to launder money and generate funds for the insurgency. After the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, Mustaqim Agha Jan fled to Karachi and was put in charge of dealing with large donors in the Gulf region and Pakistan.

The UN Security Council and the U.S. Treasury listed two Afghan brothers – Haji Faizullah Noorzai and Haji Malik Noorzai – living in Karachi as Taliban financiers. Faizullah has collected more than \$100,000 for the Taliban from donors in the Gulf and in 2009 gave a portion of his own money to the organisation. He also financially supported a Taliban commander in Afghanistan's Kandahar province and provided funding to assist with training Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters. In late 2008 Taliban representatives approached Malik to invest Taliban funds. According to the reports, Malik collected money from private donors in the Gulf region and Pakistan and opened a *hawala* account<sup>11</sup> in Pakistan that received tens of thousands of dollars from the Gulf every few months to support the Afghan Taliban (U.S. Department of the Treasury, 2011).

The city's trucking industry, which is dominated by Pashtun businessmen, carries almost all the supplies the NATO forces use in Afghanistan – weapons, vehicles, fuel, food

and water. A huge amount of money involved in this transportation leaks back to the Afghan Taliban. Truck drivers who transport NATO supplies from Karachi to Afghanistan regularly pay protection money to the Afghan Taliban to prevent attacks on their convoys. Moreover, Afghan militants who are also involved in trucking carry drugs from Kandahar to Karachi and return with weapons (Perlez & Shah, 2010). Many of Karachi's rich Pashtun businessmen voluntarily donate to the Afghan Taliban.

Several militant charities based in Karachi, for example the banned Al-Akhter Trust and Rasheed Trust, have also played a key role in financing militancy in Afghanistan. Sources in Karachi religious circles say Taliban fighters are still receiving financial support from these banned organisations, which worked in Afghanistan during the Taliban regime, and other welfare organisations, besides collecting huge donations from wealthy and influential traders in Karachi. Many of these traders donate to the Taliban on a monthly basis (Baldouf & Tohid, 2003). Following the ban on these charities by the Pakistani government, the militant groups quickly created fictitious foundations to solicit funds. Prominent among them are the Maymar Trust, a front for the banned Al-Rasheed Trust; the Al-Rehmat Trust, a front for JeM; and the Pakistan Relief Foundation, a front for the banned Al-Akhter Trust (Rehman, 2011).

It has also become apparent that the Afghan Taliban is supporting the TTP financially and providing sanctuary for it in Afghanistan. The TTP's spokesperson, Shahidullah Shahid, said that the organisation initially helped the Afghan Taliban financially, but now the roles are reversed (*Express Tribune*, 2013)

### Propaganda campaign

When the Afghan Taliban ruled Afghanistan between 1996 and 2001, almost all electronic products were banned and declared un-Islamic. But now it is fighting its war through online social media, employing various strategies and using social media and hard-copy publications to attract recruits and bolster fund-raising efforts.

Afghan journalists claim that the Afghan Taliban regularly and clandestinely publishes its magazines and newspapers in Pashto from Karachi. They also believe that Mullah Amir Khan Muttaqi, a member of the Taliban's Shura Council and the official in charge of its media committee, has hired a technical team in Karachi to run the Afghan Taliban's media cell. A report also suggest that the Afghan Taliban is spending huge amounts of money on its media cell, which has a dedicated staff of more than 100 technical people who operate a website, currently at "al-Emarah" and "Shahamat", that is available in five languages – Pashto, Dari, Arabic, Urdu and English – and manage high-tech

<sup>11</sup> *Hawala*, also known as *hundi*, is an alternative remittance channel that exists outside or parallel to the traditional banking systems, financial channels and remittance systems.

studios with editing facilities (Hasan, 2013). Some analysts believe that sympathisers or paid staff of the Afghan Taliban in Karachi run the website. Afghan intelligence officials allege that the Afghan Taliban's technology experts are based in Pakistan (Dawn, 2011).

The militant newspapers and magazines that were published from Pakistan during the Soviet-Afghan war, the period when the Taliban ruled Afghanistan and after the U.S. attack on Afghanistan were not as colourful and attractive as other contemporary magazines and newspapers being published from Arab or Western countries (PIPS, 2010). Jihadi newspapers and publications owned by the Afghan Taliban, including *Nawa-e-Afghan* and *Shahadat*, are not only distributed free in the border provinces of Afghanistan and town and cities of Pakistan, but also available in PDF format on an Afghan Taliban website.<sup>12</sup>

## Conclusion and future scenarios

President Barack Obama is seriously considering withdrawing all U.S. troops from Afghanistan in 2014. Whether or not the U.S. withdrawal and a possible deal with the Afghan Taliban end the conflict, it is certain that the consequences of the withdrawal will have a major impact on both Afghanistan and Pakistan. It is generally believed in Pakistan that after the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan the Pakistani Taliban will have no excuse to continue fighting in Pakistan and instead all of the Taliban faction will work on gaining influence in post-war Afghanistan, and as a result violence will decrease in Pakistan.

Pakistani militant groups, which also have a strong presence and organisational structures in Karachi, are preparing for what they expect will be a civil war in Afghanistan after U.S. forces withdraw. It is generally believed in Pakistan that these militant groups are considered to be "good Taliban" because they do not attack Pakistani security forces and instead focus their efforts on the Afghan Taliban-led anti-U.S. insurgency in Afghanistan and have played a leading role in Afghan insurgencies in the past. If this is indeed the case, Karachi would be an ideal place for these jihadi organisations to find and recruit foot soldiers to support the Afghan Taliban because of the number of radical Islamic seminaries functioning in the city.

Pakistani jihadi organisations have already begun actively organising their supporters in the city since the formation of the DPC in November 2011. Sectarian and jihadi slogans, flags and posters depicting outlawed militant groups are visible on walls across the city, indicating the re-emergence of the banned organisations. In addition, in October 2013 Mufti Taqi Usmani, the head of Jamaia Darul Uloom, another key Deobandi seminary in Karachi, issued a *fatwa*

that the assistance being provided to foreigners in order to subdue and occupy Afghanistan is against sharia and the Pakistani government should absolutely refrain from providing such assistance (*Ummat*, 2013). Karachi's role as a shelter for the Afghan Taliban is clear. Yet the extent of the Afghan Taliban's support network in the city, and its attempts to recruit not only poor students from religious seminaries but also students belonging to well-off families and those studying at the city's main universities are more widespread than commonly reported.

Some analysts believe that even if a peace deal is signed in Afghanistan between the Afghan government and the Taliban, Pakistani militants are most likely to resist the settlement and they will continue to follow the Pakistani military's policies of strategic interference in the neighbouring country. For Pakistan, the Afghan Taliban remains a card to be played after the expected withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan, and it is monitoring affairs in Afghanistan very closely. The Pakistani military establishment has not yet given up on its so-called "strategic depth" policy towards Afghanistan. A part of this policy was to secretly support the Afghan Taliban for years and provide sanctuaries to its key leaders.

Pakistan fears losing influence as a result of the alleged peace overtures between the U.S. and the Afghan Taliban. Therefore, following the capture of key Afghan leaders in Pakistan, especially in Karachi, some analysts believe that the Pakistani military has reversed its policy of supporting the Afghan Taliban. Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, for instance, whom Pakistan said had been released on September 20th, is still kept in a safe house and is closely watched by his Pakistani handlers. Reports suggest that this arrangement is likely to undermine his role as peace-maker.

The government is still in a position to reverse the reorganisation of the banned militant groups linked with Afghanistan, but the Pakistani police privately confirm that it is state policy not to annoy militant organisations that do not carry out subversive activities in Pakistan and focus on Afghanistan.

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