

JIHAD IN THE MODERN ERA: IMAGE AND REALITY

Dr. Iffat Malik
Farzana Noshab
Sadaf Abdullah

Introduction

In the post-Cold War world, with the threat of communism over, more and more attention is being given in the West to the supposed threat posed by Islam, and specifically the phenomenon of jihad. A lot of academic and journalistic literature has been devoted to this topic. In this, jihad tends to be projected in a very negative manner - Muslims are portrayed as fanatics and terrorists, the whole Western civilisation is considered to be at risk, jihad is being waged as part of an international movement masterminded by Osama bin Laden, and so forth.

Unfortunately, serious objective study of the jihad phenomenon has been negligible. This is what this monograph proposes to do: find the reality behind the projected image.

It will begin by briefly examining: (1) the way jihad is portrayed in the non-Muslim world, especially in Western literature, and (2) the concept of jihad in Islam (i.e. according to the Qur'an). Five case studies will be examined: Afghanistan, where the modern-day phenomenon is believed to have originated; Bosnia-Kosovo, both involving Muslims fighting Serbs; Chechnya; and the two long-standing struggles currently dominant in the Muslim world, Kashmir and Palestine. In each case a brief history of the conflict will be given, the reasons why the parties are fighting (especially the Muslims), who they are fighting against, who is actually fighting, what their goals are, and whether the fighters involved see themselves as involved in a jihad.

Having examined all the cases individually and comparatively, they will be assessed to see if they conform to the image portrayed in the West, of all these Islamic 'militant' groups being part of some 'international jihad force', or whether in each case Muslims were left with no choice but to take up arms in self defence.

The monograph will then examine whether the negative myths regarding jihad are deliberately pedalled and their motivations. For example, India now attempts to gain international sympathy by presenting the Kashmir conflict as part of a wider jihad movement; this makes the West turn a blind eye to the real reason why Kashmiris are fighting, namely for their right of self-determination and against Indian oppression.

Finally, the monograph will make suggestions as to how Muslims should respond to the negative portrayal of jihad in the West, where the number of Muslim populations is on the rise.

Portrayal of Jihad

How is jihad portrayed and seen in the West/non-Muslim world? A brief review of references to jihad in contemporary literature (academic journals, newspapers, magazines, etc.) gives an idea of this. Om Nagpal, in an article on 'The Global Jihad' in the Indian Defence Journal, refutes Huntington's 'clash of civilisations' theory:

It is not the clash of civilisations. It is the clash of the dedicated and determined minority of one civilisation against all other civilisations. This determined, dedicated militant Muslim minority of the entire Sunah (sic) has hoisted the flag of Global Jihad. Terror is their main weapon. Killing, looting, burning, raping, hijacking, bombing has become their right.¹

Nagpal succinctly summarises the main perceptions of jihad outside the Muslim world: it is being waged by a small number of people, but these are 'international' both in composition and area of activity. It is directed against all non-Muslims, and it is indiscriminate in the means it employs. Numerous other articles and papers echo these supposed characteristics.

The Times, describing the Bosnian War, writes of Travnik as being 'packed with young men in combat fatigues wearing green scarves, a badge of the Islamic fervour that has gripped the fighters. They carry the Koran into battle, and many take inspiration from Tehran.'² This description highlights another portrayal of jihad found in Western coverage: the notion of some sort of an international mastermind or sponsor. The most frequently cited sponsor is Revolutionary Iran, though in recent times the name of Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden has overtaken it. The Times again asserts:

Tentacles (of Islamic fundamentalism) are spreading through the Middle East and beyond. Fundamentalists are well entrenched in Sudan, where Iranian money and advisers have set up terrorist training camps and propaganda centres to export the anti-Western revolution ... In Gaza and the West Bank the Hamas movement, financed and inspired by Iran, is intimidating the Palestinian leadership and staging killings in an open bid to sabotage the Arab-Israeli peace talks.³

The various conflicts involving Muslims - in Chechnya, Kosovo, Kashmir, Palestine, etc. - are all depicted as elements of a larger conflict between Islam and the 'kuffar' (unbelievers).

In each case a regional power struggle is taking place on the overtones of a religious conflict between a revitalised Islam struggling against an enemy perceived as Christian, secular, Jewish, Hindu or otherwise inimical to Muslim self-determination. (E)ach ... conflict ... has acquired the character of a jihad or holy struggle.⁴

Numerous writers take up the theme of warning; the West should beware of the new post-communist menace posed by militant Islam - 'Islam's militant strain is on the verge of replacing communism as the principal opponent of Western liberal democracy and the values it enshrines'.⁵ Similarly:

The post-Cold War era does not amount to a new world order, but rather a world full of radical and secessionist nationalists ... -Western world cannot permit the replacement of one form of totalitarianism with another; the Soviet model with an Islamic one.⁶

Finally, the study considers the Western coverage of the 'jihadis' - those actually engaged in jihad. The general image conveyed of these is that many are veterans of the Afghan jihad who, having 'finished their work there', have moved onto - and are in constant search of - new arenas of jihad. Of those fighting the Russians in Chechnya, a significant number are said to be Afghans, Arabs and others, trained in Afghanistan. Similarly, India claims most of the freedom fighters it is facing in Kashmir are actually non-Kashmiris - Pakistani, Afghan, Arab.

Concept of Jihad in Islam

The term jihad has been used so frequently and extensively in the sense of 'holy war' that most people believe this is what it means. An examination of Islamic references to jihad in the Qur'an and Sunnah, however, reveal that it is actually a much wider concept. The word jihad literally means 'striving', 'struggle', but it is not a striving just in war situations. Jihad can take many forms. At its most basic level, jihad is a struggle with one's self, to overcome un-Islamic thoughts and desires and live in accordance with Allah's will.⁷ In this sense activities like praying, fasting, and refraining from un-Islamic activities like drinking alcohol and gambling, all count as jihad.

Secondly, jihad is striving to spread and establish Islam. The Qur'an instructs all Muslims to 'Enjoin good and forbid evil.'⁸ This too can take many forms, ranging from telling non-Muslims about the message of the Qur'an, to differentiating between good and bad in family situations, to forming Islamic political parties and contesting in elections with the aim of setting up an Islamic government. But Muslims are not allowed to use force to convert people to Islam. The Qur'an stresses: 'There is no compulsion in religion, for the truth has been made manifest from the false.'⁹ Furthermore, it enjoins respect for Christians and Jews as 'People of the Book' and lays down guidelines for treatment of non-Muslims. In this larger context, 'to enjoin good and forbid evil' is a message for all humanity.

Thirdly, jihad is a struggle against aggression and oppression. Wherever there is oppression, injustice, or Muslims are denied the freedom to worship, struggling to liberate them is jihad:

(M)ake peace between them (the two fighting groups), but if one of the two persists in aggression against the other, fight the aggressors until they revert to God's commandment.¹⁰

Whoever transgresses against you, retaliate likewise against him, and fear Allah, and know that Allah is with those who fear him.¹¹

And what is wrong with you that you do not fight in the cause of Allah, and for those weak, ill treated and oppressed among men, women, and children, whose cry is: Our Lord! Rescue us from this town whose people are oppressors.¹²

To those against whom war is made, permission is given (to fight) because they are wronged.12b

Again since those who are 'weak, ill treated and oppressed' may also include non-Muslims, this jihad is to be done on their behalf as well.

The means employed for such jihad can vary widely. Economic pressure, politics, diplomacy, etc. are all tools that can be used to wage jihad. Military weapons are in fact only to be used as a last resort, when all other avenues have been exhausted. Furthermore, there are strict guidelines for the use of force. This cannot be indiscriminate. Muslims can only fight those committing aggression or oppression; women, children, the sick and elderly cannot be attacked; once the aggressors have been defeated or they give up their aggression, fighting must stop:

And fight in the path of God with those who are fighting with you and do not transgress, God loves not those who transgress ... But if they cease let there be no transgression except against the wrong-doers ... 13

And if they incline to peace, then you incline to it, and trust in God.14

And fight them on until there is no more persecution and the religion becomes Allah's, but if they cease, let there be no hostility except to those who practise oppression.14b

From the above very brief description of the concept of jihad in Islam, it should be clear that this encompasses far more than 'waging holy war'. Furthermore, the circumstances in which Muslims are allowed to resort to force are limited and well defined. Islam certainly does not urge its followers to wage indiscriminate war against all non-Muslims. In brief, contrary to popular Western beliefs, Islam is not a religion of war but strongly advocates peace:

Peace is better.15

O you who have found faith, enter peace wholly.16

CASE STUDIES

Having described the way in which jihad is portrayed in Western, Indian, and other non-Muslim literature and media, and having explained jihad 'in theory', consider now jihad 'in practice'. As seen, the theory is very different from the image. Is the practice also different? In order to answer this question several different examples of contemporary 'jihad' are analysed.

A. AFGHANISTAN

[The Afghan jihad refers to the period of resistance to communist rule, particularly the Soviet forces, from 1979 to the early 1990s. It does not refer to the in-fighting that has been going on since the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan.]

Afghanistan had been under communist rule since 1973, with the stronger Khalq party taking over in 1978. Prior to the take-over by the communists, the country had been ruled by a central regime heavily dependent on local power holders - loyalty was bought with patronage. Afghan society has traditionally been very religious but also very divided. Religion and culture have been closely interwoven. Divisions have been along ethnic, tribal and sectarian lines. On to this decentralised and conservative society, the Russian-backed communists tried to impose centralisation and 'modernity'.

Major changes were introduced in the marriage laws, education system and land ownership. Education was made mandatory, challenging the traditional decision-making authority of the family heads. The national school system was revised along the lines of the Soviet system. Russian replaced English as the official language. Land was redistributed in a manner that left everyone confused; further, those allotted land would not take it because it ran counter to the Islamic injunction not to take other's property and because in many cases it had been in the other's family for generations. Again the traditional set-up was being challenged. Add to this the great powers handed to state officials, and the arbitrary manner in which they exercised them. The Soviet control of Afghanistan was to a large extent formalised when the national flag was changed, and modelled on that of the Soviet republics.

No surprise then that the Afghans resented the changes being imposed on them, and the increasing influence the Soviet Union had on their land and their lives. They resisted the changes, even with violence. By 1979, the level of resistance and anti-government feeling was such that the Khalq regime was on the verge of collapse. It was saved temporarily by the entry of Soviet troops into Afghanistan in December 1979.

The Soviet intervention clearly marked an attempt to bring the Muslim state under the control of an avowedly atheist power. As such resistance to it was inevitable. This first emerged as a spontaneous uprising which, though mass-based, was fragmented and lacked a unified national leadership. The resistance took many forms: local revolts under traditional social leadership, mutinies within the armed forces, urban uprisings involving Islamists, etc. The most forceful resistance came from the countryside. The people there were the most resistant to change, especially one imposed from above and that interfered with the age-old structure of society. Communist reforms were seen as interfering with something as fundamental and intimate as family structures: this could not have been tolerated.

The Soviets responded to this resistance with brute force. Traditional religious leaders were killed; civilian population centres were indiscriminately bombed for allegedly harbouring enemies of the regime. More than two million Afghans fled their homes, becoming refugees. Despite this harsh treatment, Afghan opposition to the Soviets and communists did not diminish. For them it was a bid to restore their territorial integrity, their political independence and to overthrow an imposition unnatural to their society, religion and culture.

The shared opposition to the Soviets unified Afghan society: all Afghans had the same goal before them of driving out the Soviets. A major factor in achieving this unity of purpose was the Islamic jihad element in the resistance. From very early on, the resistance was seen not simply as a nationalist liberation struggle, but as one between the forces of Islam and those of the ungodly, between oppressed and oppressor. It was this jihad element more than anything else which mobilised the Afghan people.

The Afghan mujahideen, as the resistance fighters referred to themselves, received substantial support from outside sources, notably the United States and Saudi Arabia, as well as of course the shelter of Pakistan which became the front-line state in the war against the Soviets. The US backed the mujahideen despite their waging an overtly Islamic war, the reason being its greater hostility to the communist superpower. Saudi Arabia was motivated partly by self-preservation and partly by a sense of Muslim brotherhood.

US aid to Afghanistan swelled from \$30 million in 1980, to more than \$600 million/year from 1986-89. Saudi aid matched or slightly exceeded this amount. Many resistance organisations established their headquarters in Pakistan, from where foreign aid was channelled into Afghanistan. Approximately \$5 billion worth of weapons were sent to the mujahideen between 1986-90. Many different parties collaborated in getting arms to the Afghans. The arms pipeline, for example, involved the CIA, Pakistan's ISI and the mujahideen groups. Weapons themselves were acquired from China, Egypt, Israel and elsewhere.

The Afghans also received aid of another kind: manpower. People from other parts of the Muslim world were drawn to fight with the Afghan mujahideen. What drew them was not the fact that the Afghans had been occupied and were trying to liberate themselves, but that they were engaged in a jihad. As well as from neighbouring Pakistan, Muslims from the Arab countries, North Africa, even Europe, made their way to the country. However, it is important to stress that the Afghan jihad remained essentially a struggle fought and waged by Afghans themselves: the foreign element was always a minority.

Resistance groups were under considerable pressure to unite, and to some extent they did. The pressure, the aid, and the greatest motive to drive the hated Soviets out of the country coupled with the sense of waging jihad, eventually paid off. Soviet forces withdrew from Afghanistan in 1991.

The Afghan jihad was a development simultaneous with the unfolding of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979. Both were highly significant for the wider Muslim world. While the latter inspired other Muslims to make Islamic government their goal, the former showed them the path of armed struggle - jihad - as a viable means to achieve such goals. It seemed to show that a war fought in the name of Allah would succeed, even in the face of apparently impossible odds. The Afghan mujahideen's defeat of one of the world's superpowers was very much seen as a consequence of their fighting as Muslims rather than as Afghans.

After the defeat of the Soviet Union and communism, the Afghans reverted to their traditional divisiveness and fractiousness. What followed was a long period of civil war in which former mujahideen groups struggled for dominance over each other. For this reason this period cannot be described as jihad. What it showed, however, was how vital the Islamic element was during the anti-communist struggle in unifying the Afghans. Today, though the Taliban control over 95 percent of the country, civil war continues in the North-West as they try to overcome the last pockets of resistance. It is important to stress that Afghanistan's post-jihad problems are not due to Islam or Islamic fundamentalism, but to the shameful way in which those on whose behalf they fought a proxy war - the Soviet Union and even more the United States - abandoned them to their fate.

B. KASHMIR

Since 1989, the Kashmir Valley has been the site of a militant movement by Kashmiri Muslims to obtain freedom from Indian rule. It is denoted as jihad by Kashmiris and other Muslims; Indians also refer to it as jihad, though more frequently as a secessionist or separatist movement. While the former call it a jihad in the true Islamic sense - a struggle against oppression - the latter mean the kind of jihad portrayed in the Western media: a struggle by fanatical Muslims from all over the Muslim world bent on spreading Islamic rule by force. Other elements are woven into this Indian propaganda, e.g. accusing Pakistan of sponsoring and waging the anti-India movement. Which is correct? In order to answer this question it is necessary to address the following issues: why is an armed struggle underway in the Valley, who is fighting, against whom and for what?

Reasons for the present Kashmiri struggle

The origins of the Kashmiri struggle date back to the Partition of the Indian Subcontinent in 1947. Jammu and Kashmir, a Muslim-majority state but ruled by a Hindu Maharaja, was contiguous to the two new states of India and Pakistan, and as such could join either under the terms of the Partition plan. Maharaja Hari Singh wished his State to be independent, and briefly negotiated a Standstill Agreement which Pakistan agreed but India did not. The Muslim population was divided between those wishing to accede to Pakistan, and followers of charismatic leader Sheikh Abdullah who - like Hari Singh - also wanted independence.

In 1947, the future of the State had still not been decided when, in response to anti-Muslim attacks in Jammu by Hindu RSS, Kashmiri freedom fighters, tribals from newly formed Pakistan's North Western Frontier Province crossed into the State from the west.¹⁷ The Maharaja responded by appealing to New Delhi for help, which was provided after he signed an Instrument of Accession to India. [There is controversy about whether an agreement was ever signed.] The influx of Indian armed forces eventually led Pakistan's regular army to also enter the State.¹⁸ The war that followed ended in a UN-brokered cease-fire, with India in control of Jammu, portions of Poonch, Ladakh and most of the Valley, and Pakistan in control of the rest of the former State (overall India had two-thirds, Pakistan one third).

The Indian Governor-General Mountbatten's acceptance of Hari Singh's accession was made conditional on this being ratified by the people of Jammu and Kashmir. This was reiterated in UN resolutions, passed by the Security Council after India referred the dispute over Jammu and Kashmir to that body: 'the question of the accession of the State of Jammu and Kashmir to India or Pakistan will be decided through the democratic method of a free and impartial plebiscite.' No such plebiscite or referendum has ever been carried out. Two further wars between India and Pakistan in 1965 and 1971 led to minor alterations in the cease-fire line which later became the Line of Control under the 1972 Simla Agreement, but essentially two thirds of the State has remained under Indian control, the rest under Pakistani control.

The Kashmiri freedom struggle is first and foremost aimed at giving Kashmiris the right of self-determination promised to them by both India and the United Nations and agreed to by Pakistan. However, it would be incorrect to say that this is the sole reason. A number of factors since India gained control of part of Jammu and Kashmir caused its inhabitants, particularly the Muslims, to become disillusioned with and hostile to India.

The first of these was lack of autonomy. As mentioned the Indian Constitution supposedly guaranteed the State a high degree of autonomy, with only defence, foreign affairs and communications under federal control. In practice, though, successive Indian governments eroded that autonomy until it was just nominal. A major way they were able to do this was by manipulating the political process. Elections in Jammu and Kashmir, (with the exception of those held in 1977) were always heavily rigged and manipulated to ensure New Delhi's chosen candidate won office. Political opposition was suppressed, freedom of expression denied. Kashmiri Muslims finally gave up on the ballot box after the 1987 elections. In those, the National Conference (NC), the party that had traditionally stood for Kashmiris' rights, allied itself with Congress. This led many Kashmiris to vote for an alliance of parties, including some religious elements, the Muslim United Front (MUF). However, contrary to expectations and pre-ballot indicators, the MUF was defeated by the NC-Congress alliance. It was widely believed that the poll had been rigged to achieve that result.

The denial of political rights and autonomy took place against the backdrop of a social revolution. Access to schools, colleges and universities as well as to sources of information like TV and satellite dishes, produced a new generation of educated, politically aware Kashmiris. They also had higher socio-economic expectations than their forefathers: having gained university degrees they wanted good jobs. But Indian economic exploitation of the State, and a deliberate Indian policy of discouraging self-sufficiency and encouraging dependence on New Delhi, meant that these were not to be had.

All these factors meant that, by the end of the 1990s Kashmiris were highly frustrated with Indian rule. At around the same time a number of international developments made them aware of mass resistance and armed struggle as a way to achieve freedom from Indian rule. Kashmiris witnessed one, the collapse of communist rule in Europe as a result of mass action, and two, the success of the Afghan mujahideen, who forced the Soviet Union to withdraw from Afghanistan. There were sporadic incidents of violence after the rigged 1987 elections, but the militant freedom struggle really took off in 1989. The appointment of Jagmohan as Governor that year,

and the harsh policy he implemented to assert Indian authority in the State, spurred the shift to militancy.

The Indian government's response to the militancy has, for the most part, been to apply greater and greater force in an attempt to crush the movement. This has entailed drafting huge numbers of paramilitary and regular forces into the state. There has also been human rights abuse on a massive scale. Practices such as torture, rape, summary execution, razing whole villages to the ground are commonplace in Indian Occupied Kashmir, inciting greater hatred in the Kashmiris, and hence more indigenous support for the armed struggle.

Nature of Movement

Who is fighting in Kashmir? There are numerous armed groups operating in Indian Occupied Kashmir, varying in strength from a handful of men to a considerable force, under an umbrella organisation, the United Jihad Council (UJC), which provides a joint platform as well as allows them to operate individually.

The freedom fighters are waging a guerrilla struggle, carrying out ambushes on army patrols, planting bombs, carrying out grenade or mortar attacks, etc. The freedom fighters are limited by their divisions and by their lack of large, sophisticated weapons. The confined geographical territory of the Valley - the main site of conflict - also necessitates these kinds of covert attacks.

With regard to the nationality of the freedom fighters operating in Kashmir, the majority are either locals from the Valley or Kashmiris from across the border in Azad Kashmir. There is a foreign element - Pakistanis (mostly from religious organisations), Afghans, Arabs, etc. - but this is relatively small. Foreign support for the struggle is more substantial, especially from Pakistan. The precise nature and extent varies, but periodically supporting organisations in Pakistan have provided funds, arms and other supplies to the Kashmiris who have also set up training camps in Azad Kashmir. Without such outside support it would be very difficult for the Kashmiris to sustain their struggle.

The activities of the freedom fighters are targeted first and foremost against the Indian authorities and security forces. The Pandit community, Hindus native to the Valley, fled their homes at the beginning of the conflict. The Indian government has been accused of engineering their departure for its own propaganda purposes: they did not really face a threat from the Muslims. The freedom fighters have repeatedly stated that they have no enmity with the Pandits or other non-Muslim inhabitants of the State. Their quarrel is with those perpetuating Indian rule and brutality. This is borne out by the fact that abandoned Pandit property has not been ransacked or destroyed. There have been isolated attacks against Hindus and Westerners in the Valley. But these are, one, believed to be the work of non-Kashmiri freedom fighters, and two, have been strongly condemned by the Muslims of the Valley, including the freedom fighters. The Amarnath massacre of Hindu pilgrims in late 2000, was also attributed to Kashmiri freedom fighters. However, a subsequent investigation showed it to be the act of Indian Armed forces. The Mukherjee report which made this finding, is still a secret document.

Goals of the Movement

The armed groups operating in Indian Kashmir are divided over whether they should opt for an independent Jammu and Kashmir or accede to Pakistan. However, all are united in their desire to get rid of Indian occupation. Both the armed and political wings of the Kashmir freedom movement, the UJC and All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) respectively, have focussed on the right of self-determination of the Kashmiri people as their immediate goal. That is what they are struggling for. Decisions about the State's permanent future have been deferred to after this primary goal is achieved.

The Kashmiri freedom movement has acquired an Islamic character and is viewed by most of those participating in it, as well as by the wider Muslim world, as a jihad. 'Islamisation' of the freedom struggle was prompted by a number of factors. Firstly, the growing Islamic consciousness among Kashmiri Muslims. For many years now religious parties, in particular Jama'at-i-Islami, have been running religious educational institutions in Indian-held Kashmir. These have produced a whole generation of Kashmiri Muslims who see Islam not simply as a personal faith, but as something to be implemented on a societal and governmental level. Secondly, the Afghan jihad, which provided inspiration for the militant struggle in Kashmir, was based on Islam. Kashmiris hoped to gain the same boost from fighting in the name of Allah. Third, the Kashmiris' fight to liberate themselves from Indian oppression conforms to the definition of jihad in the Quran and Sunnah. Fourth, opposition to Indian rule was confined to the Muslim section of the State's population: neither its Hindu or Buddhist communities showed a desire to rid themselves of Indian rule. Had there been a significant non-Muslim anti-India faction, it would have been harder to denote the movement as a jihad.

C. PALESTINE

Palestinian anger towards Israel and the Jews has been present for many decades, along with resistance to their rule, but it is only since the mid-1980s that this acquired an Islamic character. Prior to that the Palestinian freedom struggle was waged as a secular, nationalist liberation movement. Only after 1987, when jihad was very much on everyone's lips, could it be described as such. The focus here will be on the 'Islamic' period of Palestinian resistance, one that is on-going.

Reasons for Palestinian Anger

The first and obvious reason is of course the Israeli occupation of Palestine, and particularly of the West Bank and Gaza. The Palestinians have always resented Israeli occupation of their land. Their resentment arose not just from occupation, but also from the policies pursued by the Israelis in the Occupied Territories. Just a few of these will be described here.

Land confiscation: since 1967 the Israeli government, through various guises, expanded control of land that was owned by Palestinians. Usually this occurred without due compensation, and sometimes with forged documents. Palestinians appealed against the confiscation of their land in Israeli courts, but the law was written in such a way that they seldom prevailed. Over 52

percent of land in the West Bank and close to 40 percent of land in Gaza has come under Israeli control since 1967. This has seriously affected the Palestinians' ability to earn a living since farmland that used to be theirs is now gone.

The active policy of Jewish settlement in the confiscated lands pursued by Israel, really took off after the election of Menachim Begin as Israeli Prime Minister in 1977. Begin was committed to holding onto the Occupied Territories permanently, and to settling them with Jewish populations. He felt that the land belonged to the Jewish people and always referred to it as Eretz Israel. In co-operation with Ariel Sharon and various religious freedom fighters, he began an aggressive settlement campaign that by 1990 had taken over half of the land of the West Bank, one third of Gaza, and had settled 129,000 Jews in and around East Jerusalem, in traditional Palestinian land. Jews also returned to old Jewish neighbourhoods in old Jerusalem and Hebron. The new Jewish settlements were deliberately positioned in such a way as to surround Palestinian population centres. As former head of the Israeli military, Raphael Eitan said, Palestinians would be like 'cockroaches in a bottle'.

Palestinians have also suffered in other ways under Israeli occupation. Palestinian merchants were restricted and had to contend with unfair competition from their Israeli counterparts, who enjoyed differential treatment from their government. The frequent curfews imposed by the Israeli authorities, lasting sometimes for days at a time, made life additionally difficult for the Palestinians. Those with jobs could not get to their jobs, those with farm animals could not feed them, those with crops could not care for or harvest them. Education suffered as schools and colleges were constantly forced to close. The Palestinians and the rest of the world community protested against such 'collective punishments' and the other deeds mentioned above as all forbidden by international law. But the Israeli position was that, while they supported the Geneva Convention, it did not apply to their occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.

Emergence of the Palestinian Intifada (Uprising)

The element of jihad only became significant in the Palestinian struggle towards the end of the 1980s for a number of reasons. Yasser Arafat's PLO, which had initially enjoyed huge popular support among Palestinians, saw its popularity decline around the mid-1980s because of its failure to deliver on its promises. Its armed struggle was reduced to an empty slogan, when the PLO's armed wing was forced to evacuate from Lebanon, thus exposing the lack of military muscle. Splits and factionalism in the PLO exacerbated this organisational weakness even further.

In the Arab arena, the Palestine problem sank to a position of secondary importance. There were a number of reasons for this including the weakness of the PLO itself, the war in Lebanon, the Iran-Iraq War and a variety of particular problems facing each Arab state internally. The Amman Summit Conference of November 1987 reflected the growing Arab negligence of Palestinian issues. The conference was called primarily to address the Iran-Iraq War. Although the Palestinian question was later added to the agenda no major resolutions regarding Palestine were issued. This made the Palestinians realise help would not come from outside: if they wished to be free they would have to win it by themselves.

All of the above led to disillusionment with the 'traditional' resistance movement, the PLO. Decline in popular support for the PLO created a vacuum that was filled by 'Islamist' groups. However, aside from the PLO's weakness there were a number of other factors involved in their rise.

The Islamic revival in Palestine was influenced in part by the region-wide Islamic resistance and political events, including the Iranian revolution. It was also a response to the effects of the secularisation of Palestinian lifestyles and a general move away from the mosque to the cinema. As such the ideology of some of the new Islamist groups was not always expressed in terms of a political agenda. Rather it was based on a notion of encouraging a religio-cultural revival of Islam typified by a return to Islamic dress and Islamic social codes of behaviour. The activities of organisations, like the Muslim Brotherhood, conform to this; the organisation also gave practical help to the Palestinians, setting up clinics and schools, for example, which in turn increased its own popularity.¹⁹

Some credit for the growth of political Islam goes, highly ironically, to the Israeli government. For a long time after its popularity had started to decline, the Israelis continued to see the PLO as the main opposition force against the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land. As such they were keen for new rival groups to emerge among the Palestinians who could challenge and erode the popular support base of the PLO. Basically, the Israelis were trying to copy the British Empire's 'divide and rule' policy. Islamist groups represented just such an alternative divisive force.

The third contributory factor in the emergence of militant jihadi Islam, in the Palestinian resistance was the Afghan resistance and the early successes which the Palestinian 'mujahideen' achieved, coupled with the sense that nothing would be achieved through talking with Israel. For example, the 1982 Fez Peace Plan spoke of Arab willingness to recognise Israel as part of a comprehensive peace plan in the region. And the Palestinian-Jordanian Accord of February 1985, while speaking of Palestinian self-determination, made no unequivocal reference to an independent Palestinian state. As such Palestinians saw it as highly conciliatory. Israel's refusal to recognise any change in the Arab/Palestinian position, even after these concessions, convinced Palestinians that Israel was not serious about finding a meaningful peaceful settlement to the conflict.

This, and the successful example of Islamic militancy set by the Afghans, inspired the Palestinians to change their secular nationalist struggle into a jihad.

Nature and Goals of Palestinian Jihad

One of the first Islamic organisations to be formed, in the early 1980s, was the Islamic Jihad. It was actually not one but a collection of groups, united by their commitment to achieving Islamic government through militancy. Thus, its number one priority was to end Israeli rule. It established a small military organisation - probably not more than a hundred hard-core activists -

with a cell-based structure. By the mid-1980s it was engaged in a campaign of violence against the Israeli authorities, which won it widespread support among Palestinians.

But the organisation at the forefront of the Palestinian jihad was without doubt Hamas. Hamas emerged in the mass Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation that started in 1987. Growing Palestinian frustration with the PLO and the Israelis reached breaking-point that year. Just prior to the uprising a bloody confrontation between Israeli security forces and Islamic Jihad members resulted in the death of four Palestinians and one Israeli intelligence officer. This provoked huge demonstrations on the streets. One day before the uprising an Israeli citizen was stabbed to death in Gaza. Immediately after the stabbing Israeli Foreign Minister, Shimon Peres suggested that Israel consider the idea of demilitarising the Gaza Strip. The people of Gaza interpreted the suggestion as a consequence of their actions. It indicated to them that Israel could be forced to yield.

The intifada 'officially' started on December 8, 1987, when the killing of four Palestinians by an Israeli driver triggered off mass protests. What did the intifada actually consist of? Basically all forms of civil protest, and corresponding measures by the authorities to combat these. On the Palestinian side, the youth there engaged in regular stone and petrol bomb throwing against Israeli forces. Public demonstrations denouncing Israeli rule were commonplace. The Palestinian flag, nationalist graffiti and Islamic slogans could be seen everywhere. There were in addition more planned attacks by militant groups, e.g. attacks on Israeli patrols, bombings.

The driving force behind the intifada was not the PLO, but Islamic groups notably Hamas. They managed to mobilise the entire Palestinian population against Israel, so that the intifada was truly a mass uprising. Secondly, the Islamists changed the goals of the resistance. Not for them the piecemeal measures demanded by the PLO: an end to collective punishments, lifting of curfews, etc. No, the Islamists were waging an all-out jihad against non-Muslim oppression. They wanted nothing less than the end of Israeli rule and complete liberation for the Palestinians. Some were prepared to settle for acceptance of Israel within its pre-1967 borders, but others wanted to see the end of Israel itself. Sheikh Ibrahim al-Quqa, a Hamas leader, described the goals of the intifada as follows:

The intifada is not aimed at toying with the Palestinian issue in the circles of politics, or raising and discussing this issue in conferences or organisations, but is aimed at liberating the land, and the honour and creed. It is aimed at the comprehensive and extensive liberation of Palestine from the hands of the imperialist oppressors and at restoring the cause to its free and independent Islamic framework.²⁰

The final and most important factor distinguishing this period of Palestinian resistance from the earlier one was the Islamic element. The Palestinian youth throwing stones against the Israeli armed forces did so not just as Palestinians against Israelis, but as Muslims against non-Muslim oppressors. One consequence of this 'Islamisation' of the resistance was that Palestinians were far more willing to go to extreme measures, including sacrificing their lives. They firmly believed that if they were killed they would be martyrs, guaranteed a place in heaven. A new tool of resistance, largely pioneered by Hamas, was the suicide bomber. Comparison of casualties in the

'secular' and Islamic phases of the Palestinian resistance makes clear the way Islam made the Palestinians more willing to die for their cause. According to Palestinian sources 115 Palestinians were killed between 1985 and 1987, and 828 were injured whilst resisting Israeli occupation. From the beginning of the intifada to 1992 the numbers killed were put at 1,119.

The Israeli authorities responded to the intifada with force. At one time there were more Israeli soldiers in the Occupied Territories than it took to conquer them in 1967. These soldiers did not hesitate to use their weapons to counteract the Palestinians - as attested to by the large numbers killed or injured. Mass curfews were imposed for days at a time. The Israelis also stepped up their traditional methods of controlling disruptive elements in the population: those suspected of involvement in fomenting the intifada were either arrested without charge, or expelled from the Territories. The families of those involved were also targeted. It was and still is standard Israeli practise to punish families as well the individuals directly involved, most commonly by bulldozing the family home. Such retaliatory measures and oppression only increased Palestinian anger against Israel.

The fact that Palestinian anger hit home resulted in the Israelis resorting to 'peace' overtures, by sitting down at the negotiating table with their former bitter foe, the PLO. In the face of Islamic militant opposition the Israelis also realised the nationalist organisation could actually be useful to them. The US interest in achieving a Middle East peace deal, particularly high after Bill Clinton became President, was an important factor in this. Progress in the peace process led to decline in popular support for the Islamic freedom fighters. For a while it seemed as if Yasser Arafat would be able to reach a deal with the Israelis, which would give the Palestinians their long-desired independent state. This prospect diminished the appetite for armed struggle among large sections of the Palestinian population. In addition the new Palestinian Authority, granted varying degrees of autonomy in the Occupied Territories, clamped down on Hamas and other Islamist activists, imprisoning many of them in Palestinian jails.

Israel's failure to compromise on fundamental Palestinian demands for sovereignty over East Jerusalem, return of Palestinian refugees, dismantling of Jewish settlements in Palestinian territory, etc., led the peace process to finally collapse at Camp David in July 2000. Most Palestinians seem to have concluded that there is nothing to be gained from talks with Israel: if anything is to be achieved it will only be through armed struggle, jihad.

Likud leader Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount on September 28, 2000, accompanied by a heavily armed force, sparked off another intifada. At the start of 2001, this showed no sign of abating, despite a death toll well above 300. Most of those killed have been youths or children, shot by Israeli security forces when throwing stones at them. There have also been a number of suicide attacks. The Islamic element is very much present in this second intifada. Those killed see themselves and are regarded by other Palestinians as martyrs. Furthermore, the killings - far from deterring others - seem to be having the opposite effect of increasing anti-Israel hatred and inspiring others to wage jihad. The rising death toll is increasing the spirit of resistance among the Palestinians. As this study goes to print, there appears to be no abatement either in Israel's hardline 'security' policy, or the Palestinian resistance.

D. CHECHNYA

Historical Chechen Grievances

Chechnya has been home to the Chechens since the beginning of recorded history. The Chechens did not come to the North Caucasus as settlers, nor did they come as conquerors. Furthermore, they never made a move to expand beyond their own land. By the mid-16th century Islam had already become a dominant force in the North Caucasus including Chechnya. The North Caucasians, because of the distinct nature of their culture, have always resisted being brought into an imperialist fold and have always strived to maintain their independence and identity.

From the late 16th century onwards the Russian empire embarked upon a steady drive to engulf the North Caucasus. As the Russians inched forward, people of the affected areas prepared to defend their homeland. The first Chechen armed resistance was born in reaction to Imperial Russia's onslaught. From early on this had an Islamic tinge: in 1785 a Chechen holy man, Mansur, declared a holy war against the encroaching Russians. As the Russians pushed deeper into the plains of the North Caucasus, their approach spelled disaster for the local inhabitants. The Russians burnt grain, razed whole villages, slaughtered the inhabitants.

The relatively aloof highlanders were completely unwilling to accept the Russian yolk. But, although predominantly Muslim, they were stratified along tribal, cultural and class distinctions. Such divisions prevented them uniting in resistance. But as Russian forces wreaked more and more havoc in the territories they invaded, they provided the Chechens the required incentive to unite. Imam Shamil managed to hold this resistance of unbroken warfare for three decades. In the 1860s with the capture of Shamil resistance in the West Caucasus too became weaker. Russia was able to subdue the Caucasians by the virtue of sheer strength of numbers.

Once military resistance had been completely suppressed the Russians ventured to ethnically cleanse the Caucasus. Local populations were uprooted and about 1.2 million people were driven from their land in mass exodus to be replaced by Russians and Cossacks. It was then that the Russians could formally claim the North Caucasus as part of their empire. Many of those who fled died of starvation and disease; many of the rest ended up in Turkey.

When the Bolshevik revolution came in 1917 people of the Northern Caucasus decided to fight alongside the Red Army. In return the Bolsheviks promised them autonomy and religious freedom. The independence movements of the Northern Caucasus, comprising today's Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia, North Ossetia and Karbardino-Balkaria joined hands with the Red Army.

However, as soon as the White Army was completely defeated in 1920, the Communists quickly set about occupying the entire Caucasus. Rebellion from Chechnya and Dagestan rose again in 1920-21 as their hopes for independence were dashed. The rebellion was strangled valley by valley by massacring and deporting the civilian populations.

North Caucasians - Chechens, Ingush, Karachai and Balkars - fought alongside the Russians when World War II came. In 1943 Stalin with no evidence accused four North Caucasian nations of collaborating with the Nazis and sentenced them to liquidation. These people were herded together by the secret police, loaded into cattle trains and dumped in the wastelands of Central Asia. Thousands perished on their way in this genocide. The number of deportees reached 618,000 of which 408,000 were Chechens. These punished people were not allowed to return to their land until a generation later in 1956. When they came back they found their mosques demolished. Their weddings, burials and council of elders were condemned as primitive. Schooling in their mother tongue was abolished and Russification of language initiated. National literature was crammed with propaganda that only fomented further anti-Russian, anti-communist hatred among the Chechens. This state of affairs continued right from 1950 into 1980s.

Contemporary Chechen Wars

For Chechens the dream of independence never really died. With unforgivable atrocities of the past and cultural distortion that continued in the Soviet years it was only natural that these people held on to their dream. Not surprisingly, then, when the Soviet Union finally disintegrated Chechnya declared itself independent in 1991 under the leadership of Dzhokhar Dudayev. But the Russian federation was no more willing than its predecessor, the Soviet Union, to relinquish control of Chechnya.

Several internal attempts during 1993-94, supported by Russia, failed to overthrow Dudayev. The Russian government intensified its charges against Dudayev accusing him of repressing political dissent, corruption and involvement in international criminal activities. By December 1994, the Russian military was actively working to overthrow Dudayev. Direct intervention by the Russian forces sparked the first Chechnya war which lasted from 1994-1996.

The focus of this study does not give space for a complete account of what befell the Chechens. The least that can be said is that Russian forces used indiscriminate and disproportionate amount of force in attacks on Chechen towns and villages. By April 1995, 25,000 civilians had been killed already. Russian forces, not as odd exceptions but as a matter of policy, violated international humanitarian law and human rights. They not only used excessive force but prevented civilians from evacuating areas of imminent danger and reaching safety. Furthermore, humanitarian organisations were kept from assisting civilians in need.

Despite this harsh repression, the Chechen guerrillas fought on and Russia was eventually forced to enter into a peace agreement with Chechnya. This peace deal, which represented a humiliating defeat for the Russian forces at the hands of Chechen fighters, was signed in May 1997 between President Yeltsin and President Aslan Maskhadov. It was decided to settle the

dispute through peaceful means and to resolve Chechnya's political status prior to 2001. The fundamental positions of the two sides remained unchanged: Chechnya ultimately wanted independence while Russia insisted that Chechnya would remain part of the federation.

In August and September 1999, three bomb explosions in Moscow left 260 dead. The Russian authorities, without plausible evidence, linked the blasts to Islamic freedom fighters from Chechnya and Dagestan. They used the need to eradicate 'Islamic terrorism' emanating from Chechnya as the excuse to launch a new offensive against the wayward republic. The second Russian incursion in Chechnya began in October 1999. Observers see this war as Russia's attempt to wipe out the humiliation it had suffered at the hands of the Chechen fighters in the first Chechen war. For their part, the Russian authorities insisted there was no war in Chechnya, just an anti-terrorist operation.

In a continuation of their policies of the past, Russian forces attacked civilian targets. By February 2000, the number of internally displaced persons had already reached 230,000. Thousands of civilians have been killed, thousands are being detained and subjected to torture and extortion for their alleged collaboration with the 'terrorists'. And as before, the Russians refused to create safety corridors for civilians. Even where these were declared, civilians were still killed while passing through them. Russian forces prevented, and are still preventing, refugees from fleeing Chechnya. In addition it is preventing humanitarian organisations from operating in Chechnya.

The presence of radical Islamist elements cannot be denied. But it would be a huge misrepresentation to suppose that Chechnya is importing guerrillas from Afghanistan and elsewhere. The Chechens are engaged in a struggle the origins of which go back to hundreds of years. They have always fought their own battles and there is no reason to suppose that they are not doing the same now. Religion has been used to channelise a resistance which is natural considering the treatment meted out to the Chechens to date. The Islamic freedom fighters chose to call their fight jihad because it fits well within the Islamic context: a struggle against oppression.

E. BOSNIA-KOSOVO

Both the Bosnian and Kosovan conflicts have their origin in the rise to power in Yugoslavia of Slobodan Milosevic. A former communist, Milosevic abandoned this ideology in the 1980s and took up the cause of Serbian nationalism. The tactic proved immensely effective, winning him the Presidency. The cornerstone of his nationalist programme was 'Greater Serbia', a land incorporating all the Serb people and all the territory historically significant for them (not necessarily the same).

After elections in 1990, the communist era Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) gradually divided up into its constituent republics. Three declared independence between 1991 and 1992: Croatia, Slovenia and Bosnia. The remaining three - Serbia, Kosovo and Montenegro - formed a new rump Yugoslavia. Slobodan Milosevic was determined to achieve his dream of a

'Greater Serbia' and hold on to the Serb populated lands that had broken away. This led to conflict.

Bosnia

Bosnia, an ethnically, culturally and religiously diverse republic, became part of the SFRY after World War II. Of its 4.5 million population, 32 percent were Serbs, 17 percent Croats and 44 percent Muslim.²¹ The Muslim community in Bosnia was highly integrated with the Serb and other non-Muslim peoples. Attempts by them to assert their distinct identity were strongly repressed by the communist Tito regime. But as this weakened, consciousness of their Muslim identity became greater. In 1969 the Islamic Declaration was published.

The post-Tito Bosnia had a Muslim leader, Alija Izetbegovic. He had been involved in the movement to assert Muslim identity, and had been imprisoned in the 1980s. After the collapse of the SFRY, Bosnia was initially part of the new Yugoslav republic. But the aggressive Serbian nationalism being propounded by Slobodan Milosevic made the Bosnian Muslims think again. In February 1992, Izetbegovic followed the examples of Croatia and Slovenia and declared Bosnian independence.

This was followed by an internal war between the different ethnic groups within Bosnia, supported by outside parties. On one front, there was a conflict between Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats, the latter backed by neighbouring Croatia. A confederal arrangement between Bosnia and Croatia eventually stopped that. More serious was the fighting between Bosnian Serbs and Muslims. The Serb population in Bosnia reacted angrily to the declaration of independence. For example, soon after they attacked local Muslims in the town of Foca. With strong backing from Serbia, Bosnian Serbs fought hard to stay within Yugoslavia and build Milosevic's Greater Serbia. They started a process of 'ethnic cleansing'. As the name suggests this entailed driving Muslims (and other non-Serb groups) out of their homes in carefully planned operations. Bosnian Muslims were persecuted on a massive scale. Killing, torture and rape were used to frighten people into fleeing; the homes and villages they left were burnt to ensure that they did not return.

By 1993, the Bosnian Muslim government was besieged in the capital Sarajevo, surrounded by Bosnian Serb forces who controlled around 70 percent of the republic. At that stage the Muslim army was also fighting a separate war with Bosnian Croats - determined to be part of a 'Greater Croatia'. The presence of UN peacekeepers proved ineffectual. Overall during the conflict some 300,000 Muslims were killed, 200,000 injured. Numerous atrocities were committed - the massacres at Srebrenica and Zepa being among the most notorious. Civilian areas were indiscriminately shelled.

The international community, especially the West, was very slow to respond to the ethnic cleansing of Muslims going on in Bosnia. When eventually they did apply pressure on the Serbs, US-mediated negotiations produced the Dayton Accord of November 1995. A draft agreement was signed in Dayton, Ohio; the final version in Paris a month later. It provided for the

deployment of a 600,000-strong NATO dominated Implementation Force (I-FOR), to ensure the other parts of the agreement were implemented peacefully and the various forces were separated.

The Dayton Agreement created two self-governing entities within Bosnia: the Bosnian Serb Republic and the Muslim (Bosniak)-Croat Federation. Each would have its own government, parliament and army. While the aims of Dayton were to bring about the re-integration of Bosnia, it has been criticised for failing to reverse the results of ethnic cleansing. As well as its validity, grave doubts have been expressed about the viability of the Accords, in particular their ability to secure long-term peace. Such doubts have been aggravated by the collapse of the Muslim-Croat Federation.

'Jihad' in Bosnia

As seen in these developments Bosnian Muslims faced attacks on two fronts - from Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats. While both these groups had larger co-ethnic republics to back and sustain their fight, the Bosnian Muslims were totally isolated. They did fight back and try to resist the ethnic cleansing being perpetrated against them, but they were hampered by their lack of arms and funds, and by the scale of the opposition confronting them. Western powers, far from helping them, imposed an arms embargo on the entire conflict area through the UN. The aim, no doubt, was to reduce the level of violence, but in practice all the embargo did was give a further advantage to the Croats and Serbs. It was military weakness, more than anything else, which forced Izetbegovic and the rest of the Bosnian Muslim leadership to accept the flawed Dayton-Paris Accords.

One reason why it took the West so long to respond to the suppression of Muslims in Bosnia, was the effectiveness with which Milosevic and Tudjman, leaders of Serbia and Croatia respectively, were able to convince them that they were facing an Islamic fundamentalist challenge. A challenge that - if not curbed - could overwhelm the whole of Europe. The Bosnian independence struggle was portrayed as the springboard for a greater Islamist expansion into Europe. As such they claimed that the Bosnian struggle was receiving manpower, military, financial and other support from other parts of the Muslim world, notable Iran and Sudan. Some 10,000 foreign mujahideen were reported to be fighting for Izetbegovic in Bosnia. Such views were echoed by the Director of the US Congressional Committee on Terrorism:

It is the global strategic interests far beyond the immediate European scene which make it imperative for the Islamists - from Tehran's Islamic bloc to the Sarajevo leadership - to escalate the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, as well as increasingly give it a distinctively Islamic character. Indeed, the primary military modernisation and build-up programmes in Bosnia-Herzegovina currently underway are Islamist, and the key to foreign reinforcements and weapons supplies is in the Muslim world. Important segments of this build-up take place in the context of world wide Islamic activities largely associated with international terrorism.

Proponents of the 'Islam capturing Europe' theory, even claim that reports of abuse against Muslims were manufactured or grossly exaggerated, in order to get American sympathy and support. They do not accept that Bosnian Muslims were being ethnically cleansed.

Kosovo

In Bosnia, Muslims formed one of several communities, but in Kosovo they were in a clear majority. 90 percent of Kosovo's population were Albanian Muslims. In Kosovo's case Milosevic wanted to hang on to the province because it was historically important to the Serbs. In the 1385 battle of Kosovo Polje, the Ottoman Turks defeated the Serbian hero Lazar.

In the SFRY, Kosovo had been an autonomous province. In 1989, President Milosevic revoked its autonomy and began a campaign to suppress the Albanians' distinct identity, e.g. by denying them education in their own language. Milosevic's policies were strongly opposed by the Kosovar Albanians. They initially resisted with a non-violent movement led by Ibrahim Rugova of the Democratic League of Kosovo. Increased suppression, including violence against Kosovar Albanians, however, led to the emergence of an armed separatist movement.

The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA or Ushtria Clirimtare e Kosovoes) was probably formed in the mid-1990s, but came out in the open in 1998. In that year, Slobodan Milosevic started the same kind of aggressive ethnic cleansing in Kosovo that he had earlier carried out in Bosnia. Kosovar Albanians suffered severe repression and maltreatment at the hands of the Serb police and security forces; many were killed, even more tortured and raped. Not surprisingly, this led to a mass exodus from the province. Some 700,000 Albanians were driven from their homes, which the Serbs systematically burned.

The huge number of refugees and the scale of human rights abuse forced the international community to take notice. In March 1998, the US and five European countries announced sanctions against Yugoslavia in order to get it to stop the genocide of Albanians in Kosovo. The threat of NATO air strikes led to the conflict being suspended and a cease-fire negotiated. But Milosevic failed to reduce the number of Serb troops in Kosovo, as required by the cease-fire agreement. Fighting broke out again in January 1999, after Serbian police killed 45 civilians in the southern town of Racak. The UN and NATO condemned the incident as a crime against humanity.

On February 23, 1999, ethnic Albanian military and political groups and the Serbian government reached the 'Rambouillet Agreement' which in principle ended the year-long conflict. The Western-backed peace accord granted autonomy to Albanians, with NATO forces to be deployed in Kosovo for three years. The Albanians had wanted full independence, but they accepted the autonomy agreement. The Serbs, however, rejected it seeing it as a prelude to Kosovan independence. The Serbian refusal to sign led to NATO air strikes against Yugoslavia from March 24, 1999. The air strikes continued for eleven weeks, and focussed primarily on military targets in Kosovo and Serbia, as well as a wide range of facilities, e.g. bridges, oil refineries, power supplies, communications. The strikes increased the exodus of Kosovar Albanian refugees from the province, in all more than one million were displaced. Many brought tales of terrible atrocities committed by the Serbian forces.

After eleven weeks the Yugoslav government signed a pact with NATO generals, agreeing to completely withdraw Serb forces from Kosovo. However, this did not end the crisis. With Serb

forces pulling out, the minority Kosovar Serb population felt threatened. The presence of NATO forces did not reassure them: Serbs regard NATO as the aggressor. Hence many of them also fled the province. The current situation is that the two populations are largely divided. Tension persists in the buffer zone between Serbia and Kosovo.

There is much dissatisfaction among Kosovar Albanians with the current arrangement. This allows Kosovo autonomy, but rules out independence and even a future referendum - something which had been promised in the original Rambouillet agreement. KLA cooperation has been taken for granted. Furthermore, the KLA Prime Minister of Kosovo, Hashim Thaci, has expressed his dissatisfaction that the laws of Yugoslavia would continue to apply in Kosovo.

Kosovo Liberation Army

The KLA formed sometime in the mid-1990s but shot into prominence after 1998. Its members were drawn from the local population. The KLA gained a major boost following the collapse into chaos of neighbouring Albania in 1997. This afforded unlimited opportunities for the introduction of arms into Kosovo from adjoining areas of northern Albania. From its inception the KLA targeted Serbian security forces.

Rogova initially enjoyed great popularity among Kosovar Albanians, but by the late 1990s this had given way to criticism of his compromising behaviour towards Milosevic. Thereafter, the KLA represented popular sentiment. The Serbs, and some Western media, have described the KLA as less an Albanian freedom group, and more an Islamic fundamentalist/terrorist organisation. Its aim is the creation of a Greater Albania. The 'mastermind' or sponsor behind its activities is supposed to be Iran.

The 1994 Jeddah Islamic Conference decided to help Muslims in the Balkans. The decision was seen in the West as the beginning of an organised penetration of Islam into Europe. Tehran, in particular, was seen as having a direct influence on the operating structure of the KLA.

In March 1998, the US State Department described the KLA as an 'internationally recognised terrorist group'. It was even associated with a major drug smuggling ring, supposedly running from Turkey into Europe via the Balkans. In 1999, however, the US did abandon its 'terrorist' perspective, and offered the KLA various incentives in order to secure a peace deal. The KLA itself has strongly refuted all charges of terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism, arguing that it is engaged in a freedom struggle.

ANALYSIS

Image versus Reality

Do the five examples of contemporary jihad, conform to the portrayal of jihad in the Western and non-Muslim media and literature? A number of common factors emerge from the above case studies. The first is the obvious oppression of or aggression against Muslims. In each case - Kashmir, Palestine, Chechnya, Afghanistan - the Muslim populations of those countries turned to

armed struggle after their land was invaded and/or they were subjected to brutal oppression: denial of political rights, denial of basic freedoms, human rights abuse on a massive scale, even genocide. Thus, in each case the resort to militancy was a defensive exercise, to ensure survival. In no case did Muslims take up arms with offensive intentions.

Secondly, the use of physical force was in many cases a last resort. The Kashmiris in particular endured decades of intensified Indian oppression before launching their freedom movement. Similarly, the Palestinians took up mass armed resistance in the 1980s, but abandoned this when it appeared as if Israel was serious about talks and they would be able to achieve their goals through that peaceful route. It was only the continued Israeli intransigence and refusal to grant the Palestinians rights guaranteed to them in international law, that pushed the Palestinians into taking up arms again. In Chechnya too, after the first Chechen War the Chechens were prepared to reach some arrangement with Russia through talks. Russian aggression in 1999 was what forced them to return to the battlefield.

Thirdly, in some 'jihad' there is undoubtedly an element of foreign support either as policy or through humanitarian organisations. There can also be militant support from like-minded sympathisers, independent of official policies, but the overwhelming majority of those fighting are locals. This is a natural consequence of the brutal oppression that pushes the local population into armed conflicts in the first place: it is the local population that are being brutalised, it is they who feel the greatest anger and hatred towards their oppressors, and hence it is they who are fighting them. In no case is conflict being waged predominantly by foreigners in the name of the locals.

Fourthly, armed resistance by the Muslims is always targeted specifically against those oppressing them. In most cases attacks are directed solely against the security forces or government personnel; not against civilians. There is no indiscriminate use of force, and certainly no general campaign against all non-Muslims. The Kashmiri freedom fighters, for example, have openly declared that they regard the Kashmiri Pandits as their brothers and have no enmity with them. Their quarrel is with the Indian government and armed forces. Having said that, it cannot be denied that attacks against 'innocents' (e.g. civilians) have also taken place. Suicide bomb attacks by Palestinians have led to deaths of Jewish settlers, schoolchildren, and other civilians. The point to stress, though, is that these attacks form a minority, and that they run counter to the aims of the various armed movements.

What are these aims? Quite simply, freedom. An end to occupation, an end to oppression. Kashmiri Muslims are fighting to free themselves from Indian rule; the Palestinians for the return of their land seized by the Jews; the Chechens for freedom from Russian brutality; and so on. Nowhere does one see Muslims fighting to take territory belonging to others, or to spread Islam by force. In other words, nowhere are Muslims fighting with any aggressive intent.

Islam is a common element in all the conflicts Muslims are engaged in: they do see themselves as waging holy war, or jihad. This perception is based on the Quranic concept of jihad outlined at the beginning, i.e. a fight against oppression and injustice. Furthermore, a point that needs to be stressed is that Muslims are not fighting because they are Muslim and their

opponents are non-Muslim, or because they wish to convert others to Islam. They are fighting because their land has been invaded and/or they are being subjected to great brutality. Their struggle happens to conform to Islam's concept of war against oppression and hence is called jihad. But Islam is not the primary factor pushing them to take up arms.

There is another reason - in addition to the fact that freedom struggles conform to the Islamic definition of jihad - for Islam to feature so prominently. If people feel they are engaged in a holy war, as opposed to a purely nationalist struggle, their enthusiasm and their willingness to sacrifice their lives is much greater. They believe that even if they are killed they will be martyred and go to heaven. In current times, the Afghan jihad has shown what an immense motivating force Islam can be, and it is a lesson that has been picked up by the rest of the Muslim world.

Portraying a freedom struggle as Islamic has yet another advantage of attracting sympathy and support from other Muslim countries, by tapping into the Islamic concept of ummah, that all Muslims irrespective of race or nationality, form a single community. As such, when one section of that community is being oppressed, the others see their freedom struggle as the entire community's freedom struggle. The Friday sermons in mosques anywhere in the Muslim world and regularly offer prayers for 'brothers and sisters' in Kashmir, Palestine, Chechnya, and so forth.

In conclusion, the portrayal of jihad in Western and other media is quite removed from reality. It is never, as popularly represented, a religiously-motivated aggressive war against 'innocent' non-Muslims, with the aim of spreading Islam by force. Jihad in reality, wherever it is found, is a struggle for freedom, against aggression and oppression, and for human rights.

Reasons for Distorted Propaganda

As discussed, the militant image of jihad is quite different to the reality. The difference between image and reality is too great, and too persistently repeated, to be put down to innocent error. Jihad is distorted with deliberate intent. What is this?

The reasons for distorting representations of jihad should become clear by again examining individual case studies. Take Kashmir: India likes to present the freedom fighters there as either Pakistanis or 'Islamic fundamentalists'. By using the latter terminology, it hopes to draw international sympathy away from the Kashmiris and towards itself, rather than have the outside world sympathise with Kashmiris for the oppression they are enduring. Through this tactic, India is tapping into a growing fear and distrust of Islam prevalent in the West, and particularly in the United States since the end of the Cold War. Islam has replaced communism as the threat perception to global security. Hence, with US and other Western public opinion already sensitive about extremist Islam, and prone to see it as a fundamentalist threat, India hopes to engage the captive audience for its own portrayal of the Kashmir conflict as one of 'liberal values versus Islamic extremism' rather than the freedom struggle it is.

All the other countries facing so-called 'jihad' use the same argument and for the same reason. In order to cover up their own oppression and violations of human rights, they paint their opponents as Islamic freedom fighters; they make their individual conflicts fit in with the global 'Islam versus non-Islam' conflict. The Serbs pedalled the line that they were a front-line state, holding back a wave of Islamic fundamentalism, which would otherwise spread through Europe. That is why they had to suppress the Bosnian Muslims. Russia pedals the line that it is engaged in a similar 'protection of free world values' in its conflict with the Chechens. Israel justifies all manner of state abuse, even terrorism, with the all-embracing excuse that it faces a threat from Islamic extremists and the imperative of countering this justifies the means used.

Response by the Muslim World

Russia, Israel, India, are some of the states that are seemingly successful in their attempts to enlist global support to the conflicts they are engaged in, because it is their respective versions that generally appear in Western media. How should the Muslim world respond to this challenge?

It should be stressed that it is very important to counter this distortion, as it is doing great harm to individual causes and to the collective image of the Muslim world and Islam. Muslim freedom struggles not only lose international sympathy, but Muslims end up being seen as the 'bad guys' - so their enemies get help. Secondly, a negative stereotype of Islam and Muslims is being perpetrated which will be very difficult to dislodge and reverse.

So what can be done? Basically Muslims must learn to be better players at the same game. They must be more pro-active in getting their factual position across to the international media and public opinion.

Muslims must also curb the activities and statements of those among them who are known to be extremists. Their hard-line activities and statements merely provide ammunition to those seeking to portray Islam and jihad in a negative light. Few outsiders would be aware of their lack of a large following. All they will register are their vitriolic anti-West, anti-India, pro-jihad calls. Hence the importance of organising a counter-propaganda to portray the progressive spirit and revolutionary message of Islam, in its true peaceable light.

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5. Mortimer Zuckerman, editor-in-chief of US News and World Report.
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7. According to a hadith, the Holy Prophet on returning from a battle, said: 'We have returned from the lesser jihad (al-jihad-al-asghar) to the greater jihad (al-jihad-al-akbar).' When asked, 'What is the greater jihad?' he replied, 'It is the struggle against oneself.' Cited in Streusand, Douglas, 'What does Jihad Mean?', Middle East Quarterly, September 1997.
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12. Surah an-Nisa, v. 75.
- 12b. Surah 22, v. 39.
13. Surah al-Baqarah, v. 190-3.
14. Surah 8, v. 61.
- 14b. Surah al-Baqarah, v. 193.
15. Surah al-Nisa, v. 128.
16. Surah al-Baqarah, v. 208.
17. There was also an internal movement underway in some parts of the State.
18. Once the Indian forces had entered Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan's Governor-General Jinnah wanted to send his country's regular troops in as well. But such a move was blocked by the Pakistan Army's acting Commander-in-Chief, General Sir Douglas Gracey, who feared that would spark off a war between the two new states (the armies were still under the same supreme command). In May 1948 Gracey reversed his earlier decision and Pakistan officially sent its troops into Jammu and Kashmir.
19. The Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood, founded in the 1970s, was essentially a cultural and social organisation whose primary goal was the 'founding of the Islamic personality' [Beinin: 340] - it was not a political organisation. The Brotherhood ran mosques, study circles, health clinics and schools, in order to practically help the Palestinian people. By the mid-1980s, helped by Saudi financial backing, the Muslim Brotherhood had built an impressive social infrastructure, especially in Gaza. In 1986, for example, they controlled 40 percent of Gaza's mosques.
20. Abu Amr, p. 62.
21. Figures according to the 1991 census.