

# Political Islam in Pakistan: ‘Hizb-ut-Tahrir and the National Security Dilemma’

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## Abstract

*This paper explores Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HT), the transnational Islamist political party which aims to resume the Islamic way of life through the establishment of the Caliphate. Focusing on the Pakistan chapter of HT, this paper highlights why HT should not be categorised as just another Islamic party in Pakistan; it presents thorough political systems, a defined culture, a distinct methodology, and a political discourse which has attracted some of the brightest minds in Pakistan. Furthermore, the paper will investigate the organisational capacity of HT and the level to which it has been able to penetrate society, in particular critical institutions such as education and the military. This will allow an overall assessment to be made on the level and extent of HT’s security threat to Pakistan.*

## Introduction

There is much literature which has emerged on Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HT) after 9/11, with numerous policy papers, PhD and MA theses focusing on the party. These include the paper by Khamidov titled *Countering the Call: Hizb-ut-Tahrir and Religious Extremism in Central Asia*,<sup>1</sup> Whine’s *Is Hizb-ut-Tahrir Changing Strategy or Tactics?*<sup>2</sup>, and the MA thesis by Burgio, *Hizb-ut-Tahrir in Central Asia- Messengers of a Coming Revolution?*<sup>3</sup>. This literature has provided extensive coverage of the movement in the Middle East, Central Asia and the Far East, providing detailed information on HT ideology, operations and organisation. However, the extant literature on HT Pakistan is limited, and in many cases one finds newspaper articles which make much assertions and claims, but do not ground these in any evidence. This paper aims to break away from this trend and provide a fresh insight into HT Pakistan, in particular through primary data gathered through exclusive interviews with HT activists in and outside of Pakistan.

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## Hypothesis and Methodology

The paper's hypothesis is that HT is unlike other Islamic parties that exist in Pakistan and have gone through numerous processes of pragmatism, adaptation and compromise, such as the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI). One just needs to look at its methodology pre- and post-Partition to see the level of pragmatism and adaptation at the heart of JI. HT is distinguishable from the likes of JI, as it appears to be much more committed to ideology, is well-organised, efficient, and transnational<sup>4</sup>. This hypothesis is supported by years of interaction with HT in the West, through attendance of meetings and conferences, and interactions with activists. The assertion also rests on a series of interviews conducted with leading HT Pakistan members in Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi, which gave much insight into the ideological set-up, organisational and practical activities of HT in Pakistan.

The methodological approach used is a mix of critical analysis of HT texts in English, Urdu and Arabic, which gives a thorough insight into the thoughts and culture of HT, and this is supplemented by interviews which were conducted in Pakistan. Also, the paper refers to the works of Suha Taji Farouki<sup>5</sup> and Mohammed Osman Nawab<sup>6</sup> on HT, which are some of the most thorough academic outputs on HT, and are embedded in primary data through the use of personal contacts and interviews. In the aforementioned interviews, the emphasis was placed on questions pertaining to HT ideology, methodology, and practical work in society. Moreover, the paper focuses on the penetration of HT Pakistan into educational institutions and the military, which has been a source of much concern to the Pakistani political elites, who have tried to minimise and block the influence and penetration of HT into such strategic components of the state. For security reasons, arranging interviews with HT activists in Pakistan was no easy feat, but contact was finally made through the organisation's media office, which required convincing that the purpose of these conversations was academic, and that these interviews would serve the purpose of informing this paper on HT Pakistan. Some researchers on HT in the West, such as Sinclair, while carrying out interviews for her PhD thesis titled *The Caliphate as Homeland: Hizb-ut-Tahrir in Denmark and Britain*<sup>7</sup>, spoke of interview restrictions and impediments. This was not my experience with HT Pakistan, as it gave time to the questions presented without any blockage or impediments. The activists being interviewed were happy to be spoken with, as they believed it was a means of clarifying misinformation and inaccuracies which have been published regarding HT Pakistan, in particular over the last few years, since the arrest of Brigadier Ali Khan for having links with HT.

## **The Strength of Political Islam in Pakistan**

In the Muslim world, many drivers, personalities and ideologues can be presented to explain the rise of Political Islam in the region. For example, personalities and ideologues such as Hassan al Banna<sup>8</sup> (founder of the Muslim Brotherhood), the Iraqi scholar Mohammed Baqir al Sadr<sup>9</sup> (founder of Hizb al Dawa), the writings of Sayyid Qutb such as *Milestones*<sup>10</sup> and his brother Mohammed Qutb, are viewed as some of the key personalities and ideologues that gave an intellectual argument and foundation to the wave of Political Islam in the Muslim world post-Ottoman Caliphate<sup>11</sup>. Along with these personalities and ideologues, a number of drivers can be presented that help explain the waves of Political Islam in the Muslim world, such as:

- The 1967 war, in which the Arab armies lost Gaza, East Jerusalem, Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights within 6 days.
- The 1979 Iranian revolution, with the rise of Ayatollah Khomeini and his Islamic governance model<sup>12</sup>.
- The Afghan Jihad against the Soviets (1979-1989).
- The 'War on Terror', resulting in the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq.
- The 'Arab Spring', which witnessed the rise of Islamic parties in the region.

These factors have been instrumental in the upward wave of Political Islam in the Muslim world, and there is no doubt that they have had a knock-on effect in Pakistan, giving rise to growing levels of globalisation, inter-linkages, cultural transference, the translation of literature from Arabic to Urdu, and passing of shared experiences between the societies. To be more particular, one can go back as far as the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries to analyse drivers, personalities and ideologues that have had considerable impacts on levels of Political Islam in Pakistan. These would include Muslim intellectuals such as Shah Waliullah, Shibli Nomani, Abul Hassan Nadwi; and events such as the Indian Mutiny of 1857, the establishment of Deobandi institutions, and the Ali-brother-led Caliphate movement<sup>13</sup>. Also, in the pre-Partition era, the works of Allama Mohammad Iqbal and Maulana Mawdudi, the founder of JI, can be interpreted as intellectualising the argument for Political Islam through their consistent and provoking criticism of capitalism, democracy, nationalism; and apathy to the *umma*, Islamic law and Islamic state<sup>14</sup>.

In post-Partition Pakistan, the level of Political Islam has been impacted one way or another through the use of Islamic ideology by most Pakistani politicians

to some extent. For example, Ayub Khan included a clause in the 1962 constitution saying that no law should conflict with Islamic law, and Zulfikar Bhutto in the 1973 constitution included the clause that Pakistan is an Islamic state.<sup>15</sup> But it is generally understood that the real explosion of Political Islam in Pakistan can be traced to the 1980's, with the rise of Zia ul Haq (1977-1988) and his Islamisation processes. It is important to note that leading up to the takeover of Zia ul Haq, the main Islamic movement at that time, JI, had established itself in Pakistani society through the creation of social groups, educational programmes, schools and student associations, and had penetrated the Pakistani military, with evidence indicating a close association of Zia ul Haq and other military leaders with the JI. It can be argued that Zia ul Haq's enthusiasm for an Islamisation process was not born in a vacuum, but was the inevitable outcome of his links with the JI and his receptiveness to the thoughts of Maulana Mawdudi. Mawdudi believed in a gradualist methodology for change, which resembled the Islamisation processes that were introduced by Zia ul Haq. He introduced a number of Islamic ordinances regarding family laws, education, *zakat*, *hudood*, *ushr*, and interest-free banking<sup>16</sup>.

This process spearheaded by Zia ul Haq was supplemented by existential drivers such as the Iranian revolution of 1979 and the Soviet-Afghani war (1979-1989), that raised the sceptre of Political Islam further in Pakistan, with concepts such as *loyalty to God*, *Jihad*, *sacrifice*, and *umma* all becoming ingrained into the psychology of the Pakistani society. With the death of Zia ul Haq in August 1988, and with the Soviet-Afghani war coming to an end, it seemed that Political Islam would lose two central drivers in Pakistan and that it would no longer be able to sustain itself. However, successive civilian governments would form alliances with an array of different Islamic movements, ranging from Jamat Ulema-e-Islam to the Deobandi movement, hoping to benefit from the religious card when needed. These pragmatic alliances proved problematic with a number of Islamic movements, such as the JI, leading to internal fragmentation, with members breaking away and establishing the Tehreek-ul-Islam, with the aim to re-configure JI on the lines of what Maulana Mawdudi had proposed pre-Partition, and away from being a politics-centric party which JI had evolved into.

Post-9/11, the US invasion of Afghanistan, rendition programmes, CIA operations in Pakistan, and the initiation of drone attacks all culminated in a heightened anti-US public opinion in Pakistan and the rise of the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), which opposed the US invasion of Afghanistan and was united on a charter that emphasised the implementation of Islamic law in Pakistan. The MMA was successful in taking control of the provisional assembly in the KPK region and Baluchistan, and establishing itself as a key Islamist

determinant in Pakistan<sup>17</sup>. However, this success of the MMA was short lived; with internal disputes emerging from lack of agreement on future direction, lack of pragmatism and the failure to achieve charter goals, some broke away from the MMA, leaving it toothless. By the end of 2008, the MMA was a defunct political entity, which had risen on the wave of anti-Americanism, only to sink because of poor politicking and ideological compromise from its leadership.

Overall, the strength of Political Islam in Pakistan has fluctuated, but historical experiences have left a deep impact on the psyche of the Pakistani population, with a political role for Islam receiving significant public support. According to a poll conducted by Pew Research in 2012, it was found that most citizens of Pakistan believe that laws should be consistent with Islam, and that Islam should play a bigger role in the government<sup>18</sup>. Polling data released in 2007 in a rigorously conducted face-to-face University of Maryland interview survey of 4384 Muslims, conducted between December 9, 2006 and February 15, 2007- which incorporated the views of 1000 Moroccans, 1000 Egyptians, 1243 Pakistanis, and 1141 Indonesians- reveals that 65.2 per cent or approximately two-thirds of those interviewed were warm to the concept of an Islamic state and Islamic law<sup>19</sup>. In the 2013 Pew Research Centre survey of Muslims around the globe, findings suggest that most adherents (including Pakistanis) of the world's second-largest religion are deeply committed to their faith and want its teachings to shape not only their personal lives, but also their societies and politics. The Pew survey concludes, "Support for making Shar'iah the official law of the land tends to be higher in countries like Pakistan (84 per cent) and Morocco (83 per cent)"<sup>20</sup>. The empirical evidence provides support to the existence of Political Islam in Pakistan and its strength, and this has allowed the opportunity for Islamist movements to emerge, grow and expand.

### **Hizb-ut-Tahrir- History, Emergence and Expansion**

HT is the largest Islamic movement that is operating in the Muslim world today under a single leadership with organisational discipline and coherence. Osman states that the failure of secularism and Islamic parties led to the Muslims turning to the intellectually focused HT<sup>21</sup>. The failure of Islamic parties in countries such as Egypt and Pakistan has created fertile ground for HT, which has been able to take advantage by presenting its Islamic discourse, systems and solutions. HT operates in over 45 countries including the West, and has grown into a significant strategic concern for political elites in the Muslim world and for the Western policy-makers, as highlighted by Baran in her work *Hizb-ut-Tahrir-Islamic political insurgency*<sup>22</sup>, Schneider in his MA thesis *Hizb-ut-Tahrir: A threat behind a legal facade?*<sup>23</sup> submitted to the Naval Postgraduate School,

California, and Cohen in his paper *Hizb-ut-Tahrir: An emerging threat to US interests in Central Asia*<sup>24</sup>, published at the Heritage Foundation in the US.

HT was founded in Jerusalem in 1953 by Shaykh Taqiuddin al Nabhani, who was of a Palestinian origin. He himself was a Shar'iah graduate from the famous Al-Azhar University, Egypt, where he had studied with numerous Islamic scholars, such as the then-head of Al-Azhar, Shaykh Mohammed Khidr Hussein, who had given *ijazats* (religious licenses) to Nabhani to teach Islamic sciences<sup>25</sup>. Nabhani mentions that there were two “political earthquakes” that shook him into undergoing a process of deep sensation and thinking. The first political earthquake was the termination of the Ottoman Caliphate by Mustapha Kamal in 1924, which to Nabhani resulted in the *umma* falling off a cliff, and experiencing rapid degeneration and stagnation. The second political earthquake was the overtaking of Palestine by the Zionist movement, resulting in the creation of Israel in 1947. To Nabhani, this “dagger in the Muslim heart” was because of the termination of the Caliphate, the washing away of Islamic concepts and neglect of the *umma* to organise herself and solve her problems within the framework provided by Islam<sup>26</sup>. Thus, to Nabhani, it was critical that the Islamic way of life was resumed so that the *umma* lives by Islamic concepts, organises her relationships in accordance with Islam, and acts from the premises of Islam to solve her problems. Nabhani proposed that the practical mechanism to achieve this would be the Caliphate that would have the political power to implement the Islamic systems, culture the *umma* on Islamic concepts, organise her relationships and solve her problems from within the Islamic framework. Nabhani began to write extensive literature to register his thoughts on these critical issues, such as the reasons behind the decline of the Muslim world, his methodology to establish the Islamic state, and a series of books that presented the systems of Islam. All of this would become the bedrock of HT internal and external culturing, which will be elaborated upon later in the paper.

Under Nabhani's leadership, HT spread in a short period of time in the Arab world, with branches emerging in Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon and Jordan. HT was able to make a direct impact in these societies by recruiting, influencing public opinion, and engaging in a number of coup attempts in Jordan (1968), Syria (1969) and Egypt (1974). It is important to note that in all these coup attempts, HT was able to recruit members of the military to support its political project, only for the attempts to be thwarted by the multiple rigorous spying agencies which had been created by Arab leaderships to spoil potential security threats to their existence<sup>27</sup>.

The death of Nabhani in 1977 resulted in the HT leadership being assumed by another Palestinian and Al-Azhar Shar'iah graduate, Shaykh Abdul Qadeem Zalloom, who was able to extend the reach of HT to the wider Muslim world (Central Asia, South Asia, Africa and the Far East) and the West, with prominent branches in Britain, America, Germany, Australia, Holland and Denmark<sup>28</sup>. The expansion of HT into the wider Muslim world was a natural process of students coming into contact with HT activists in the West, carrying HT thoughts, and establishing branches linked to the global HT leadership. Also, thousands of students travelled regularly to study at Islamic universities, institutes and centres in places such as Egypt, Jordan and Syria- this created natural opportunities for HT activists to mix with students and to convince them of HT's agenda. These natural processes led to an expansion of HT's reach into the wider Muslim world, and would position HT at critical strategic positions in the Muslim world.

After the death of Shaykh Abdul Qadeem Zalloom in 2003, the HT leadership was taken up by Shaykh Ata Ibn Khaleel Abu Rashta, also a Palestinian, who is an engineer by profession but trained in Islamic scholarship, and was the spokesman of the HT branch in Jordan. Under his leadership, one could witness a more global profile of HT, with large scale events taking places, such as the 100,000 Caliphate Conference in Indonesia in 2007 and 2013 that filled a football stadium, and the 10,000 scholar conference on the Caliphate again in Indonesia in 2011<sup>29</sup>. Also, what has characterised his leadership more so than the previous leaders, has been his directness in motivating HT branches in the Muslim world to call on power brokers to support HT in removing existing secular political systems and implementing the Caliphate. Such frankness is reflective of the HT leadership's belief that the Muslim world is ready for transformation, and all that is needed is key power brokers, such as the armies to support and engineer it. The Arab Spring has proved further to the HT leadership that people want real change, and it has provided political space for HT to present its thoughts, to interact, organise demonstrations and large conferences like the one in Tunisia, where HT has evolved into a significant political actor, with its spokesman Ridah Bel-Hadj regularly appearing on TV debates and discussions concerning Tunisia and the Muslim world<sup>30</sup>. This is a massive change from before, when HT was banned by President Ben Ali, who governed with an iron fist and through the use of multiple security actors that terminated the political opposition. New opportunities have arisen in other Arab nations as well, such as in Jordan, Syria and Egypt, with the HT making fast progress in Egypt with its first ever Caliphate conference in Cairo in 2012.

## **Studying Hizb-ut-Tahrir in Pakistan**

To understand HT in Pakistan, it is important to develop an insight into its core issues such as its ideology, discourse, methodology, and organisation. By the help of this process, one can develop a comprehensive and compact understanding of HT, in particular how such issues relate, affect and impact its work in Pakistan. Also, one will be able to detect the differences between HT and other Islamic parties in Pakistan, which is important when trying to assess the level of its security threat.

### **Hizb-ut-Tahrir Pakistan- Emergence and Development**

As for Pakistan, HT undertook the task to establish a call for the Caliphate within it as early as the 1960's. The party sent a delegation to Ayub Khan and engaged in extensive communication. Also, in this era, Nabhani communicated with Maulana Mawdudi by correspondence. The subject of this correspondence was the obligation of the Caliphate and the invalidity of democracy from the viewpoint of Islam. Later on, HT also conducted meetings with Dr Israr Ahmed and called upon him to adopt a call for the Caliphate. However, throughout this time, HT did not establish a local chapter within Pakistan<sup>31</sup>.

It was in the 1980's that HT began to actively incorporate local Pakistanis into the party organisation. Some of the HT activists migrated from the Arab world to study in Pakistan's universities. These young men actively called upon Muslims from Pakistan to work within the party for the sake of the Caliphate. Those who accepted studied Islam within HT-led study circles. HT Pakistan grew consistently throughout the 90's, until it had garnered sufficient local strength to become noticeable in the public domain. At this point in time, towards the end of 2000, it had substantial representation within the major cities of Pakistan, including Peshawar, Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore and Karachi. From then onwards, Pakistani society perceived an escalation in political activity from HT activists. Its press releases appeared in the media, leaflets were distributed in the public places in large numbers, and activists were seen publicly addressing people in the major cities<sup>32</sup>.

Within a relatively short span of time, HT was able to mount a strong challenge to the Musharraf regime's alliance with America after 9/11. On 22 September 2001, as significant arrests of HT activists began, the official spokesman of HT in Pakistan, Naveed Butt, said, "'Pakistan First' type slogans have been used to provide assistance to America, in the name of national interest... establish the Khilafah that will unify Afghanistan and other countries



so that the Muslims are practically one Ummah... This strong Khilafah will not only defy the enemy kuffar, it will bring them under Islam”<sup>33</sup>. HT was able to exert rapid influence, resulting in the banning of HT by the military regime under General Musharraf- not because it was involved in terrorist or sabotage activities, but because it was trying to influence senior military officers<sup>34</sup>.

### Hizb-ut-Tahrir Pakistan-Ideology

In their books, HT Pakistan clearly mentions what it believes are the fundamental reasons for the socioeconomic and political problems that exist in Pakistan. It argues that Pakistan, like the wider Muslim world, has been in a process of steep intellectual and political degeneration, exacerbated by the fall of the Ottoman Caliphate- resulting in foreign political structures being imposed, and foreign ideologies and concepts rooting themselves in Pakistan society through the media and educational programmes. According to their stance, no one has been spared this degeneration, from the average man on the street to the intelligentsia and the religious hierarchy, who are all affected by foreign ideologies and concepts. This results in them welcoming capitalism, secularism and democracy, but at the same time they have little comprehension of Islamic ideology, its concepts and related political structures<sup>35</sup>. According to HT Pakistan, this intellectual and political crisis along with the foreign political structures can only be overturned by HT, that makes the *mabda* (Ideology) its life and carries out intellectual and political work, instead of charity work, education or raising arms, which are viewed as counterproductive<sup>36</sup>.

However, unlike conventional Pakistani political parties, it does not participate in the regular political process, as HT views it as a contradiction to Islamic beliefs and an antithesis of the method of change advocated by Islam<sup>37</sup>. This is a distinctive marking point from other Islamic parties functioning in Pakistan such as JI, which participate in the political process and have made it integral to their methodology of change. The other Islamic movement which adopts the HT position of non-participation is Dr Israr Ahmed's Tanzeem-ul-Islam, which does not itself participate in the electoral process, but its members have been known to encourage people to vote for what they perceive as the 'lesser of two evils', and in the last Pakistani elections they assumed that to be Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party.

Such non-participation in the Pakistani political process rests on HT's political comprehension of democracy as a “system of kufr”<sup>38</sup> as here man is sovereign, and is allowed to decide on normative issues such as making rules, laws, and deciding between right and wrong. Such authority is seen by the HT as

being at odds with the Islamic belief system, where God is sovereign, not man, and HT provides theological proof to support its argument. However, HT does not reject voting and elections entirely, as it views them to be *asleeb* (styles) that are used in execution of the processes of such humanly systems, but conditions their use in what is permissible, such as electing a leader to rule by Islamic law and not secular law. This is another separation of HT from other Islamic parties in Pakistan, such as JI and Jamat Ulema-e-Islam, which have tried to bridge the gap between Islam and democracy from the *shura* angle, and rely heavily on Maulana Mawdudi's theo-democracy writings in legitimising this endeavour. This stance is disputed by HT, as it views the theo-democracy concept to be an oxymoron which contradicts Islam. Instead, HT asserts that *shura* in Islam is marked with distinct boundaries and it cannot step into normative issues, such as deciding on what is permissible or not, and what is right or wrong.

HT believes that Pakistan, since its inception, has had a *kufir* system implemented, in that its structures, rules, laws, institutions and constitution have not been derived from Islam but from foreign ideologies- whether that is capitalism or Socialism. Even the Islamisation process of Zia ul Haq is not consented upon by HT, as it does not believe a *kufir* system can be Islamised, but that a radical change is needed that would replace comprehensively the socioeconomic and political structures in Pakistan. This is in contrast to JI, which has been in favour of an Islamisation process, and fully backed Zia ul Haq in its orchestration. Therefore Pakistan, despite having some Islamic law reign in the judicial, economic and social realms, is regarded by HT as "*Dar ul kufir*" and not "*Dar ul Islam*"<sup>39</sup> - similar to its judgment on countries such as Sudan, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. HT provides a classical juristic definition of *Dar ul Islam* as being a "land that is governed by the laws of Islam and whose security (*aman*) is maintained by the security of Islam, even if the majority of its inhabitants are non- Muslims"<sup>40</sup>. Based on this definition, HT did not classify the Taliban-ruled Afghanistan as *Dar ul Islam*, as the Taliban did not have complete authority over the land, and did not possess the capacity to defend Afghanistan from externalities such as foreign aggression, as evinced by the US invasion.

HT Pakistan provides a detailed understanding of its idea of *Dar ul Islam* through a number of publications, which is characterised by 'public institutions of the state', the 'Islamic economic system', 'the Islamic social system', the 'Islamic punishment system' and 'Islamic educational system'. Each of these books is quite comprehensive, giving Islamic theological evidence to support the positions adopted. In contrast to this, JI does not present much of an in-depth coverage of these Islamic systems. Maulana Mawdudi did write a detailed insight into the Islamic economic and social systems, but did not present a detailed

insight into the ruling structure, apart from basic principles scattered throughout his works. Moreover, where HT Pakistan distinguishes itself from other Islamic parties is its presentation of an Islamic constitution, which outlines in detail the fundamental rulings of its proposed Caliphate and its Islamic systems.

### Hizb-ut-Tahrir Pakistan's Constitution for a Caliphate

HT Pakistan's constitution for an Islamic state is premised on an *ijtihad* (juristic endeavour) of Nabhani, who evaluated and assessed the juristic *ijtihads* of past classical scholars, and came to a conclusion on what he viewed as the strongest rulings to be documented in the finalised constitution, which he would present. It contains 191 articles about the general rules, political system, social system, economic system, policing system, educational policies, and foreign policy of the Caliphate<sup>41</sup>. It is not possible to give a detailed exposition of the constitution within this space; however, this paper shall provide an overview of the general rules, political system, economic system and foreign policy, which will give an insight into HT Pakistan's discourse. The general rules of the constitution emphasise the importance of sovereignty to God, authority to the *umma*, and the existence of one Caliphate in whom are vested the powers to adopt and implement Islamic law. HT Pakistan argues that if one was to measure the extant state structure of Pakistan on these criteria, Pakistan would fail on every one, as in Pakistan man is sovereign vis-à-vis the parliament, election rigging and manipulation has taken real authority from the *umma* to choose her leaders, there is no one leader but multiple, all embedded in a cabinet government where secular law is adopted and implemented.

The *political system* component of the constitution confirms that the Caliphate leadership is central and not decentralised or federal, as is the case in Pakistan. The *umma* has the right to elect a Caliphate, highlighting HT Pakistan's acceptance of elections. The Caliphate can stay in office as long as he does not breach his *baya*- a contractual agreement akin to a social contract. The Caliphate is not above rule and law, and can be removed by the *mahkamat al mazalim*, the Court of Unjust Acts, that is solely responsible for overlooking the Caliphate and state officials. This distinguishes HT from Shia Imamate doctrine, which proposes that the leader is divinely appointed and cannot be removed whatsoever. The *umma* is allowed to establish political parties that are in agreement with the Islamic belief, leaving no room for secular parties to exist, and closing the door on existing secular political parties in Pakistan in a potential HT Caliphate. HT argues this on two premises- first, that the preservation of the *aqeedah* is a function of the state which would be undermined if secular parties were to exist, and second, that secular parties are set up to compete for power, whereas in the

Caliphate, Islamic parties will be tasked with keeping an eye on the state to prevent transgression, and not to compete for power.

HT Pakistan are critical of the capitalistic structures which form the bedrock of Pakistan's economy, and the system provided by it outlines an alternative economic discourse to that of privatisation, interest based transactions, fiat paper currency and monopolies. For example, HT Pakistan is critical of the Ministry of Privatisation which is tasked with supervising privatisation processes in Pakistan, as water, gas, coal, mineral or anything of public benefit is classed as public property and cannot be privatised, but must be taken care of by the state, and the funds raised from sales re-invested into the public<sup>42</sup>. HT Pakistan is also critical of the land ownership structures in Pakistan, with acres of land going unused and left unproductive. HT Pakistan in its economic system proposes that unused land is taken and re-distributed to those who will use it productively to raise agricultural output. Also, funds for the state are raised through means such as trade, industry, *zakat*, *ushr* and *jizya* (tax on non-Muslims). HT Pakistan proposes redistribution of wealth, which would end monopolisation by the elites, and instigate the circulation of wealth through numerous mechanisms such as *zakat*, removal of interest, existence of small medium enterprises and social safety nets.

As for HT Pakistan's 'foreign policy', it centres on the carrying of Islam to the world through a fixed method of *dawah*, *jizyah*, and *jihad*. This foreign policy does not prevent the Caliphate from entering economic, trade or cultural agreements, but there is an underlying objective of *dawah*. However, HT Pakistan distinguishes between states that are 'belligerent' and 'non-belligerent', with no foreign relations or agreements to be established with what it determines belligerent states- these include America, Russia, UK and France- given their acts of aggression in Muslim lands. HT Pakistan is critical of the current Pakistani foreign policy of putting national interests before Islam, and forming relationships with belligerent states such as America and supporting her in the War on Terror. The military operations in North Waziristan are also criticised by HT, as they argue that these are being carried forth for US strategic interests, and are actually not in the best interest of Pakistan.

### How to establish the Caliphate?

In its booklet *Methodology for Change*, HT Pakistan states that by following the example of the Prophet and resuming the Islamic way of life, the Muslim lands can be changed into *Dar ul Islam*, and Islam can then be spread to the rest of the world. According to HT, the Prophet changed the *kufir* and *jahiliyya* in

Meccan society by the exact same method which is divine, derived from Islamic texts, and cannot be ignored or abandoned<sup>43</sup>. HT does not agree with JI in its method for change- political participation- as it views such involvement as a contradiction to the prophetic methodology for change, and also criticises the *jihadi* methodology as being inconsistent with the actions of the Prophet in Mecca.

In order to establish *Dar ul Islam*, HT Pakistan suggests a three-stage programme for change. The first step is considered a stage of building for the Islamic party and its culturing, known in HT literature as the "*Binna wa Tathqeef*" i.e. building and culturing. This stage is important for HT Pakistan, as it is in this stage that an ideological party will be established and versed in the thought and method of HT. The second stage, known as "*Taful*" i.e. interaction, involves a process of intellectual and political struggle against what HT Pakistan terms *kufri* concepts, such as secularism, freedom, democracy and capitalism, and the presentation of Islamic ideology to create a public opinion for Islamic change in Pakistani society. This is a critical stage for HT Pakistan, as "Islam would [then] be the inner sensation of the Umma, and the party would be expressive of this sensation... [T]he Umma would quickly understand the ideology and would interact with the party; hence the whole Umma would be considered as the party"<sup>44</sup>. In this stage HT Pakistan is open to using various styles of dissemination, such as lessons in mosques, leaflets, magazines, public meetings, seminars and conferences. The third stage is known as "*Istislam al Hukm*" i.e. the taking of rule. Here, the Islamic ideology will be put in place, and the message of Islam will be carried worldwide. A decisive step in this last stage is what HT Pakistan calls *Talab al Nusrah* i.e. the seeking of material power from well-endowed factions in Pakistani society, to translate public opinion for the Islamic ideology into practical change through comprehensive socioeconomic and political transformation of the existing system and institutions<sup>45</sup>.

### Structure and Recruitment

HT Pakistan operates under the single and centralised leadership of its present head Shaykh Ata Abu Rashta. HT Pakistan is an administrative unit of the global HT and is bound by operational and ideological guidance to the central party leadership. Here also, HT Pakistan differs from other Islamic movements. Despite different local chapters in different countries, which can be identified by their names used in official HT party leaflets like HT Syria, HT Bangladesh and HT Indonesia, HT is classed as being functionally, administratively and ideologically unified throughout the globe. This is different from the Muslim Brotherhood, which has completely separate chapters without any overarching

leadership. HT defies nationalistic borders and advocates a pan-Islamic state, and it has established a pan-Islamic political structure of which HT Pakistan is a part, moving in line with the strategy adopted by HT's global leadership.

HT Pakistan accepts Muslim men and women as its members whether or not they are Pakistanis, since it is a party for all Muslims, and all members are obliged to study and to be convinced of its thoughts. In Pakistan, HT attracts people from the educated middle class. Many lawyers, doctors, and other professionals have become followers of HT Pakistan.

In general, HT Pakistan adopts a recruiting policy of addressing all Muslims in the society through various distributive print media, its internet presence, and meetings and conferences. As these require a budget, they are funded by donations made by the party members. Through these mechanisms, HT Pakistan is able to diffuse its ideology among the public, and create the necessary drive for such an Islamic ideology to take off in Pakistan. HT Pakistan makes full use of the internet by posting videos, messages, interviews with its spokesman, and making its thoughts available online. For instance, HT Pakistan has uploaded its manifesto for change in Pakistan titled *Pakistan, Khilafah and Unification of the Muslim World* online, as well as policy papers such as *Energy Policy of the Khilafah*, *Taxation Policy of the Khilafah* and *Policy Regarding the Balochistan Turmoil*<sup>46</sup>, which are brief but concise in presenting HT Pakistan's thoughts on critical problems, and the Islamic solutions that they propose. Also, it has a monthly *Nusrah* magazine which caters to the influential pockets of Pakistani society.

#### Extent of Hizb-ut-Tahrir Pakistan's Penetration and Threat

From its emergence until now, HT was perceived by society to be in confrontation with the establishment. HT Pakistan's contribution to growing Islamic sentiments and conceptions as well as anti-Americanism in Pakistan appears to be significant. These changes are pervasive in society and also influence the urban elite, including those pursuing higher education in prestigious universities. These changes are perceived within the mosques as well as the university campuses and hostels. In particular, HT has been able to penetrate universities and recruit students for its objectives, with the presence of HT clearly felt on many university campuses around the country during the course of the 1990's and 2000's, when it regularly carried out Islamic study circles<sup>47</sup>. After it was banned, HT was not able to establish its presence as overtly as earlier, but it did not curb its work and continued making inroads into university campuses and recruiting amongst the student population in the country. It is difficult to

know of the exact universities and level of activity existent on their campuses, but it is apparent through interviews that HT is confident of its work within this sector and of the progress it has been able to make, with its intellectual discourse being highly attractive to curious minds. According to Imran Yousafzai, the former deputy spokesman of HT in Pakistan, HT is gaining influence despite the government ban. "The majority of Pakistanis," argues Yousafzai, "want a form of religious law, as survey after survey shows, and that is despite the brutal form to which the militants introduced Shar'iah in Swat"<sup>48</sup>.

The arrest and imprisonment of Brigadier Ali Khan in 2011 and other military officers on account of linkages with HT led to much curiosity concerning the penetration and influence of HT in the military. These questions have been pertinent, as it is fully recognised that the armed forces are not isolated from a potential change in the popular sentiment amongst Pakistani society, rather, they are a party to it. The Americans, who regard the armed forces as a key strategic ally, are fully conscious of this, and have been particularly alarmed by what they perceive as growing radicalism and HT influence within the armed forces. In an interview with the *Washington Times*, Army Maj. Gen. John M. Custer, commander of the U.S. Army Intelligence Centre at Fort Huachuca, Arizona, announced with regret: "The older military leaders love us, they understand American culture, and they know we are not the enemy, but they are aging out of the force"<sup>49</sup>. In the *Washington Post*, David Kilcullen, who advised the former CENTCOM commander general David H. Petraeus on America's war, said: "Pakistan has 173 million people, 100 nuclear weapons, an army bigger than the US Army ... We're now reaching the point where within one to six months we could see the collapse of the Pakistani state ... an extremist takeover - - that would dwarf everything we've seen in the war on terror today"<sup>50</sup>. On a Geo TV broadcast, the US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton voiced concern about the work for the Caliphate in Pakistan. An article published in the *New Yorker* stated, "The principal fear is mutiny—that extremists inside the Pakistani military might stage a coup... A senior Obama administration official brought up Hizb-ut-Tahrir...whose goal is to establish the Caliphate"<sup>51</sup>. The journalist Seymour Hersch mentioned that a senior Obama official said, "They've penetrated the Pakistani military and now have cells in the army"<sup>52</sup>.

This American concern has been exacerbated by HT's direct calls on the military officers on numerous occasions, such as in 2011, when in a long leaflet it stated: "We address you in your capacity as the actual rulers of Pakistan. It is an open secret that not only do you command the largest Muslim armed forces in the world, you also through the ISI, exert a commanding influence over the civilian institutions, the parliament and the judiciary. Being the real rulers of this country,

only through you can the Ummah be liberated from the current crises, hardship and calamities that that she faces at the hands of the Western capitalist states, or you can lead her to further destruction”<sup>53</sup>. And it added, “It is in this context that we call upon you, the silent majority, to break your silence and rise to the occasion. For if you remained silent and subservient, not only will you face the wrath of Allah on the day of Judgement, the very institution of which you take pride in will be further turned against its own people and weakened as America wants its war to be taken beyond tribal areas into the major cities of Karachi and Multan. Furthermore, the very country which you are there to protect will be immersed into even more chaos and strife in front of your eyes in accordance with the US plan for this region as part of its Broader Middle East initiatives, initiated by US President Bush and continuing under President Obama”<sup>54</sup>. According to Valentine, the military personnel and those who are presently serving in the Pakistan Army express concern at the level of sympathy for HT among high-ranking officers<sup>55</sup>. Shahzad Sheikh, HT’s spokesman in Pakistan and based in Karachi, openly admits that HT seeks to topple the incumbent regime and system with the help of the military, as HT regards the armed forces as the people of power and the *ansar* of today- referring to the military force that gave the material support to the Prophet Mohammed to establish the Islamic state in Medina. However, he insists that HT’s work in the armed forces is a prerogative of HT’s global leadership, which directly oversees the work among the people of power. While inviting the officers in the armed forces to support the project of establishing a Caliphate through his writings, it seems that Shahzad Sheikh and local members of HT Pakistan are focused on making a case for the armed forces intellectually and politically, to play their role in supporting HT’s call. Such a strong conviction and determination to win over the *Nusrat*, i.e. the people of power as a method of change is indicative of HT Pakistan’s desire to win the armed forces to its call, and in this manner HT poses security dilemmas to the Pakistani elite and the US<sup>56</sup>.

Given such confidence, determination and penetration, it is accurate to say that HT Pakistan poses a high-level security threat to the existing political system in Pakistan, as it is anti-democracy, anti-capitalist and anti-nationalist, a fact that is clearly registered in its books and leaflets. HT Pakistan does not hide away from this, and makes it clear that this is its position. At the same time, HT Pakistan does present another dilemma in that it is a peaceful movement, as documented by Schneider, Karagiannis<sup>57</sup> and the International Crisis Group in its report *Radical Islam in Central Asia: Responding to Hizb-ut-Tahrir*<sup>58</sup>. A policy of banning the public activities of HT was adopted by the German government in 2003, but there is no evidence to prove that this policy has been effective. Speaking with HT activists in Europe, it becomes manifest that HT Germany has



been able to continue with its work and increase recruitment in Germany. Also, the UK counter-terrorism watchdog recommended that the UK government back down on a manifesto promise to ban HT. In a report submitted to the parliament, David Anderson QC, the independent reviewer of terrorism legislation, said he “does not recommend changes to the system for proscription that would allow the non-violent organisation HT to be banned”<sup>59</sup>. Lord Carlile, the previous counter-terrorism reviewer, holds a similar opinion and believes public debate should be initiated to combat HT. He told the Guardian “I think the general view is that Hizb-ut-Tahrir are best dealt with in public debate rather than by proscription”<sup>60</sup>. As one paper titled *Government Strategy Towards Extremism* stated, “We do not believe that it is accurate to regard radicalisation in this country as a linear ‘conveyor belt’ moving from grievance, through radicalisation, to violence ...”<sup>61</sup>. Given this conclusion, there is a need to possibly review present strategy and policy towards HT Pakistan, as it seems not to be achieving the results intended such as minimising HT influence and penetration. There is a need for public debate on HT Pakistan’s discourse, as Nye mentions in his Foreign Policy article *Think Again: Soft Power* that soft power can be more effective than hard power, and this is an option that needs to be taken into consideration when responding to HT Pakistan<sup>62</sup>. This innovativeness in approach can be seen, according to Khamidov in Central Asia, where some organisations such as the International Crisis Group, The Office of Kyrgyzstan’s Ombudsman, and the Coalition of Non-Governmental Organisations of Kyrgyzstan called on Central Asian governments to legalise HT and engage in debate and discussion with it<sup>63</sup>. He also mentions that most Central Asian governments jumped to the simplistic policy of lumping HT with *jihadi* organisations and banning it, rather than entertaining a more robust policy of engagement, debate and discussion. As mentioned at the beginning of the paper, HT Pakistan is different from existing Islamic movements, as it is not pragmatic or violent, meaning a new distinct approach based on debate and discussion will be needed to overcome the security threat which HT Pakistan poses. This would yield better results than the present policy of proscription, as this policy does not seem to be working. Taking a leaf from Nye’s *Battle of Ideas*, the Pakistani state should know that this war cannot be won through force, but with engagement.

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- <sup>6</sup> He is a research fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore and has carried out extensive research on HT in Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore.
- <sup>7</sup> Kristine Sinclair, "The Caliphate as Homeland: Hizb-ut-Tahrir in Denmark and Britain" (PhD Thesis, University of Denmark, 2010).
- <sup>8</sup> Al Banna established the MB in 1928 and centralized two objectives for this movement 1) the removal of the British from Egypt 2) The establishment of the Caliphate.
- <sup>9</sup> There was close contact between Al Sadr and Nabhani, the founder of HT.
- <sup>10</sup> This book had another part which was confiscated in prison and another book that would present his methodology more clearly was also confiscated.
- <sup>11</sup> Many Islamic revivalists believe that the Ottoman Caliphate was ended in 1924, resulting in a secularization process in Turkey.
- <sup>12</sup> HT met Khomeini to present its Caliphate model to him and an HT delegation would advise the Iranian constitutional board and would write a book titled 'Naqd Dustoor Irani' i.e. Refutation of the Iranian Constitution
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jurists mention technical differences.
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