

FLETCHER SECURITY REVIEW

Security Challenges &
Opportunities in the
Next American Century:
A Conversation with
David H. Petraeus

Ukraine: Europe's New
Proxy War?
Geraint Hughes

Proxy Wars in Cyberspace
Michael N. Schmitt & Liis Vihul

Purveyors of Terror
Thomas Dempsey

MASTHEAD

EDITOR IN CHIEF

Haider Mullick

MANAGING EDITOR

Sarah Detzner

POLICY

Mollie Zapata, *Senior Editor*

Mark Duarte, *Staff Editor*

Jonathan Brands, *Staff Editor*

Katie Baczewski, *Staff Editor*

CURRENT AFFAIRS

Travis Wheeler, *Senior Editor*

Ahsen Utku, *Staff Editor*

David Slungaard, *Staff Editor*

Leon Whyte, *Staff Editor*

Stephanie Brown, *Staff Editor*

HISTORY

Greg Mendoza, *Senior Editor*

Barbara Chai, *Senior Editor*

Xiaodon Liang, *Senior Editor*

Matt Bruzzese, *Staff Editor*

Brian Wanlass, *Staff Editor*

BOOK REVIEWS & INTERVIEWS

Pat Devane, *Senior Editor*

Deepti Jayakrishnan, *Senior Editor*

MARKETING DIRECTOR

Elliot Creem

BUDGET DIRECTOR

Mike Airosus

WEB EDITOR

Kiely Bernard-Webster

ADVISORY BOARD

James Stavridis

Richard H. Shultz

Robert L. Pfaltzgraff

ONLINE & TWITTER

www.fletchersecurity.org

@fletchersecrev



The *Fletcher Security Review* builds on the Fletcher School's strong traditions of combining scholarship with practice, fostering close interdisciplinary collaboration, and acting as a vehicle for groundbreaking discussion of international security. We believe that by leveraging these strengths – seeking input from established and up-and-coming scholars, practitioners, and analysts from around the world on topics deserving of greater attention – we can promote genuinely unique ways of looking at the future of security.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Address letters to:

Editor in Chief, Fletcher Security Review
editor@fletchersecurity.org

Or by mail:

Suite 609 Cabot, Fletcher School
160 Packard Avenue, Medford, MA 02155

INFORMATION FOR AUTHORS

Please send submissions to:
editor@fletchersecurity.org

All submissions should be sent as a Microsoft Word file. Short articles should be 1,500 to 2,000 words and long articles should be 3,000 to 5,500 words.

LISTINGS:

Columbia International Affairs Online
HeinOnline

Design by Ben Kurland, www.bkurland.com

Copyright, 2013-2014. Fletcher Security Review.
All Rights Reserved

A Temporary Marriage of Convenience: Transnational Jihadists in Proxy Warfare

I Daveed Gartenstein-Ross

Cecily G. Brewer of the US Department of State defines proxy wars as “inter-state conflicts fought via intra-state means.”¹ She notes that traditionally in such conflicts, “the intra-state symptoms of the conflict draw attention,” while the inter-state driver – the support an actor receives from outside the country – “is ignored.” A prototypical example, albeit one where outside support given to the non-state actors at the heart of the conflict has received copious attention, is the Afghan-Soviet war. Not only did the Afghan mujahedin force the powerful Soviet Union to withdraw from Afghanistan following a costly and humiliating defeat, but the conflict also gave birth to the preeminent transnational jihadist group, Al Qaeda. This article examines how proxy warfare functions in the context of jihadist groups that share Al Qaeda’s transnational outlook, arguing that they create more difficulties for the state attempting to exploit them than do traditional proxies. Pakistan’s policies, and the resulting costs inflicted upon the Pakistani state, provide a powerful case study in the dangers involved in relying on jihadist proxies.

The Afghan-Soviet war was a key event in shaping Pakistan’s self-destructive use of proxies. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 quickly became notorious throughout the Muslim world. The invasion triggered stiff resistance from Afghan mujahedin, and

encouraged both state and non-state actors to support the various mujahedin factions. In the Cold War context, the United States perceived the Soviet invasion as an opportunity to give the USSR its own Vietnam War, according to President Carter’s national security advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski.² The mujahedin thus became a proxy of the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan, each with their own somewhat divergent interests in supporting these factions. The largest US covert aid program since Vietnam, with American support (totaling around \$3 billion) matched dollar for dollar by Saudi Arabia, flowed to the anti-Soviet fighters. American and Saudi aid was routed through Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence directorate (ISI).

Despite the strong presence of Islamic fundamentalists among the mujahedin factions – and Pakistan’s well-known preference for aiding Islamists – the United States perceived the Afghan-Soviet war as a traditional proxy conflict. The Afghan mujahedin were seen as primarily nationalist in orientation, even if their outlook had a distinctly religious flavor; and the US refrained from backing foreign fighters from the Arab world who flocked to South Asia to join the fight, such as Osama bin Laden.³

1 Cecily G. Brewer, “Peril by Proxy: Negotiating Conflicts in East Africa,” *International Negotiation* 16 (2011): 138.

2 “Les Révélations d’un Ancien Conseiller de Carter: ‘Oui, la CIA est Entrée en Afghanistan avant les Russes,’” *Le Nouvel Observateur* (Paris), January 15-21, 1998.

3 Richard Minter, *Disinformation: 22 Media Myths That Undermine the War on Terror*

In the war's final days, bin Laden and Abdullah Azzam, the former's mentor, agreed that the organization they had built up during the course of the conflict shouldn't disband post-Soviet withdrawal.⁴ They thus established Al Qaeda, which would propel transnational jihadism to new heights, and in doing so, would change fundamentally the calculus for states attempting to utilize jihadist violent non-state actors (VNSAs) as proxies.

TRANSNATIONAL JIHADISTS: A UNIQUE KIND OF PROXY

There are three major distinctions between how proxies traditionally function and the way they operate in the context of contemporary transnational jihadism. The first distinction relates to these groups' outlook: They are interested in a far broader geographic scope, and have different ambitions than traditional proxies. These groups possess a transnational orientation, and seek to overturn completely the existing international system. While a number of Marxist rebel groups that served as Soviet proxies during the Cold War were also transnational in outlook, they nonetheless had natural state allies, as they believed the USSR exemplified the ideals for which they fought. Transnation-

al jihadists, in contrast, do not have any natural state allies because all states fall short of their extreme and uncompromising ideals. Indeed, it is virtually impossible for a state to truly act in accordance with jihadist doctrine if it is part of the state system, which involves inevitable compromises to advance national interests. Thus, any relationships they establish with states are at best temporary marriages of convenience that will inevitably give way to renewed hostility.

The outlook of jihadist groups fundamentally relates to the second distinction: they are more likely to bite the hand that feeds them, and turn on their erstwhile sponsors. Illustrating this point, despite Saudi Arabia's extremely conservative interpretation of Islamic law, and its decades-long sponsorship of jihadist proxies, bin Laden condemned the monarchy after it invited American troops onto its soil in the early 1990s to protect it from Saddam Hussein's Iraq.⁵ Since then, Al Qaeda-affiliated jihadists have repeatedly targeted Saudi Arabia's biggest source of strength – its oil resources – in terrorist attacks, and have become a major source of concern for the monarchy.⁶ Like Saudi Arabia, most states that have decided to support jihadist proxies have experienced some kind of blowback. The danger of blow-

(Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2005).

⁴ Indictment, *United States v. Arnaout*, 02 CR 892 (N.D. Ill., 2002), 2; 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004), 56.

⁵ Bruce Lawrence, *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama bin Laden* (London: Verso, 2005).

⁶ Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, "Osama's Oil Obsession," *Foreign Policy*, May 23, 2011.

back limits jihadists' potential pool of state allies, but has not yet completely stopped a small number of states from sponsoring these groups.

A third distinction between transnational jihadist proxies and others relates to states' rationales for sponsorship. While the Cold War involved a clash of two differing worldviews, American and Soviet decisions to aid proxies were generally (though not always) driven by the strategic competition between the two, with ideological affinity playing a lesser role. The rapidly shifting alliances during the Cold War are testament to the priority given to strategic concerns. In contrast, nation-states' current proxy relationships with transnational jihadist groups are frequently more difficult to explain if one refuses to consider ideological factors, particularly religious ideas. However, in Pakistan's case, the state does not function as a unified actor, so the ideological drivers of support for jihadist groups are not shared equally throughout the government.

This article now turns to a case study in how the use of jihadist groups differs from past proxy warfare, exploring Pakistan's attempts to use jihadist proxies. During the course of Pakistan's efforts, both Pakistan and the United States have made significant errors in failing to understand how proxy warfare is different when jihadists are the proxies in question.

THE AFGHANISTAN-PAKISTAN RELATIONSHIP: THE ORIGINS OF PAKISTAN'S SUPPORT FOR JIHADIST VNSAs

Pakistan's policies demonstrate the bridge from more traditional proxies to those that possess a transnational jihadist outlook. Pakistan supported Islamist proxies in Afghanistan prior to the Soviet invasion, prompted largely by Afghanistan's attempts to stir up separatist unrest in Pakistan.

Afghanistan's own proxy war against Pakistan was rooted in its objection to the border that the two states shared. Afghanistan's eastern border was settled in 1893; known as the Durand Line, the border's name was an homage to its British architect, Sir Henry Mortimer Durand. Afghanistan's Amir, Abdur Rahman, opposed Britain's proposal for the Afghan-British India border because it would force him to relinquish "his nominal sovereignty over the Pash-tun tribes" outside the border.⁷ James Spain, a former cultural affairs officer at the American embassy in Karachi, notes that the Durand Line left "half of a people intimately related by culture, history, and blood on either side."⁸ In addition to dividing the Pashtuns, the Durand Line deprived Afghanistan of access to the Arabian Sea, rendering it

⁷ Thomas Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 154.

⁸ James W. Spain, "Pakistan's North West Frontier," *Middle East Journal* 8:1 (1954), 30.

landlocked. Abdur Rahman was forced to agree to this border by the threat of economic embargo.

Regional dynamics changed significantly after British India was partitioned into India and Pakistan. Afghanistan had long been an independent state by the time Pakistan was created in 1947, and there was no particular reason to think Pakistan – an agglomeration of ethnic groups with little binding them besides the Islamic faith – would last. Immediately after Pakistan’s creation, Afghanistan made its hostility known. As the only country to vote against Pakistan’s admission into the United Nations, Afghanistan demanded that its neighbor allow Pashtuns in the northwestern part of the country to vote on whether they wanted to secede and become an independent state. Afghan advocates called the proposed independent state Pashtunistan, meaning “land of the Pashtuns.” Though proposals for Pashtunistan fluctuated in size over time, they frequently encompassed about half of West Pakistan.

Afghanistan soon militarized its conflict with Pakistan, as Kabul launched a series of low-level attacks in 1950. Tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan rose again in 1955, when Pakistan announced that it was consolidating its control over its tribal areas. Afghan Prime Minister Mohammed Daoud Khan criticized Pakistan’s actions over the airwaves of Radio Kabul. Following Daoud’s denunciations, demonstrations inspired by the Afghan govern-

ment flared up in Kabul, Kandahar, and Jalalabad. S.M.M. Qureshi of the University of Alberta notes that “Pakistan flags were pulled down and insulted and the Pashtunistan flag was hoisted on the chancery of the Pakistan Embassy in Kabul.”⁹ The two countries withdrew their ambassadors, and diplomatic relations weren’t fully restored until 1957.

The next crisis came in 1960-61. In September 1960, Afghan *lashkar* (irregular forces) dispatched by Muhammad Daoud Khan crossed into Pakistan’s Bajaur area. In May of the following year, clashes occurred in the Khyber Pass area. Pakistan announced that regular Afghan forces had attacked its border posts, and Pakistan’s air force strafed Afghan positions in response. After a new set of skirmishes broke out in the fall of 1961, Afghanistan and Pakistan once again severed diplomatic relations. The shah of Iran helped mediate a *détente* between the two neighbors in 1963, lasting for ten years – until Mohammed Daoud Khan deposed his cousin, King Mohammed Zahir Shah, on July 17, 1973.

Upon assuming power, Daoud – a longtime advocate of Pashtunistan – turned to the border dispute immediately, setting out to foment unrest in Pakistan’s tribal areas. His regime provided sanctuary, arms, and ammunition to Pashtun and Baluch nationalist groups. Even

9 S.M.M. Qureshi, “Pakhtunistan: The Frontier Dispute Between Afghanistan and Pakistan,” *Pacific Affairs* 39:½ (1966), 105.

as Daoud fomented ethnic insurgency, his regime simultaneously condemned Pakistan before the United Nations for its treatment of ethnic minorities. This escalation came just after Pakistan had lost nearly a third of its territory, as East Pakistan seceded in 1971 and became Bangladesh. Such provocations demanded a response, and thus Pakistan began supporting Islamic militants in Afghanistan. At the time, the VNSAs Pakistan decided to support seemed to fit the more traditional proxy model despite their religious outlook, as they appeared to be more narrowly focused on Afghanistan.

THE ENDURING IMPACT OF THE AFGHAN-SOVIET WAR

On December 27, 1979, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan began with Operation Storm-333, in which Soviet Spetsnaz attacked the Taj-Bek palace in Kabul and killed Afghan leader Hafizullah Amin.¹⁰ The backlash to this invasion was immediate throughout the Muslim world. In January 1980, Egypt's prime minister declared the Soviet invasion "a flagrant aggression against an Islamic state."¹¹ By the end of the month, foreign ministers of 35 Muslim countries, as well as the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), passed a resolution through the Organization of the Islamic Conference

(OIC) declaring the invasion a "flagrant violation of all international covenants and norms, as well as a serious threat to peace and security in the region and throughout the world." The OIC expelled Afghanistan's Soviet-installed regime, urging all Muslim countries to similarly withhold recognition from that government and sever their relations with it. At the time, the *Christian Science Monitor* described this condemnation of Soviet actions as "some of the strongest terms ever used by a third-world parley."¹²

Several states channeled aid to Afghan mujahedin who fought the Soviets. As noted earlier, the US and Saudi Arabia provided the bulk of the assistance, which was channeled through Pakistan's ISI. Though there were advantages to this arrangement – including the obfuscation of the US's role – one unintended consequence was bolstering connections between Pakistani intelligence and Islamist VNSAs.

In addition to drawing states into the conflict in support of the Afghan mujahedin, the Soviet invasion also prompted thousands of Arabs to flock to South Asia to aid the Afghan cause. Many who traveled to the region provided humanitarian aid, but there was also a contingent of Arab foreign fighters. Over time, bin Laden transitioned from being part of the former contingent, a humanitari-

¹⁰ Gregory Feifer, *The Great Gamble: The Soviet War in Afghanistan* (New York: Harper, 2009).

¹¹ "Egyptian Prime Minister on Middle East and Afghanistan," *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, January 5, 1980.

¹² James Dorsey, "Islamic Nations Fire Broad-sides at Soviet Military Interventions," *Christian Science Monitor*, January 30, 1980.

an worker and financier of mujahedin, to proving himself on the battlefield. When he traveled to Pakistan in the early 1980s, he initially occupied himself by “providing cash to the relatives of wounded or martyred fighters, building hospitals, and helping the millions of Afghan refugees fleeing to the border region of Pakistan.”¹³ After his first trip to the front lines in 1984, bin Laden developed a thirst for more action, and established a base for Arab fighters near Khost in eastern Afghanistan. Although the exploits of bin Laden’s fighters were irrelevant to the broader war, bin Laden was launched to prominence in the Arab media as a war hero.¹⁴ As noted earlier, Al Qaeda was founded in August 1988, in the waning days of the Afghan-Soviet war, after bin Laden and Abdullah Azam determined that the structure they had created should serve as “the base” (*al Qaeda*) for future mujahedin efforts.

Two points are worth making about Pakistan’s evolving proxy relationship with Islamist VNSAs. The first is that the Afghan-Soviet war occurred at a time when the Pakistani military was undergoing significant changes, both at the very top and also amongst the rank and file. General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq came to

power in a July 1977 military coup. In addition to being a religious man, Zia was “closely connected to several Islamists by virtue of his social and family origins.”¹⁵ During his rule, Zia changed Pakistan’s military culture in several ways. He incorporated Islamic teachings (such as S.K. Malik’s *The Qur’anic Concept of War*) into military training, added religious criteria to officers’ promotion requirements and exams, and required formal obedience to Islamic rules within the military.¹⁶ These changes came at a time when the demographics of the officer corps were naturally shifting. The first generation of Pakistan’s officers came from the country’s largely secular social elites, while many new junior officers hailed from the poorer northern districts and were more susceptible to religious fundamentalism.

The second point is that, as Pakistan’s support for Islamist VNSAs grew during the course of the Afghan-Soviet war, its strategic doctrine came to embrace this kind of support as a central means of advancing the country’s interests. Pakistan’s rivalry with India has always been one of its strategic priorities, and Pakistani government planners came to believe that supporting Islamist groups in Afghanistan would give them “strategic depth” against its foe. These planners

13 Bruce Riedel, *The Search for Al Qaeda: Its Leadership, Ideology, and Future* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008), 42.

14 Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 163.

15 Husain Haqqani, *Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005), 112.

16 Zahid Hussain, *Frontline Pakistan: The Struggle with Militant Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

further believed (correctly) that Afghanistan’s Islamist groups were more likely to be hostile to India, a non-Muslim power.

THE TALIBAN’S RISE AND ITS AFTERMATH

Though observers expected Afghan leader Mohammad Najibullah’s government to fall shortly after the Soviet Union withdrew its troops in 1989, the regime survived for several years. One reason it was able to survive so long is the regime’s soft-power strategy, in which Najibullah rebranded himself as a devout Muslim and ardent nationalist, and used a traditional tool of influence in Afghanistan – patronage networks – to neutralize foes.¹⁷

But Najibullah couldn’t survive without continuing Russian support. After the Soviet Union dissolved in December 1991, that support dried up and Najibullah’s regime fell quickly thereafter. Afghanistan descended into civil war.

The Taliban emerged in this chaotic milieu, growing rapidly after its founding in 1994. While they were effective fighters, they also benefited from ISI assistance. According to *US News & World Report*, the Pakistani intelligence directorate helped “uneducated Taliban leaders with everything from fighting the opposition Northern Alliance to more mundane tasks like translating interna-

tional documents.”¹⁸ By 1996 the Taliban had captured both Kabul and Kandahar, eventually controlling about 90% of the country.

During the Taliban’s rule, it became increasingly difficult for Pakistan to constrain its Islamist proxies, particularly after bin Laden moved Al Qaeda’s base of operations to Afghanistan. When the Afghan-Soviet war ended, bin Laden had returned briefly to Saudi Arabia before relocating to Sudan in 1991, where he started sponsoring terrorist attacks against the United States. Though these early attacks weren’t enough to launch him into the Western public’s consciousness, they caught the attention of the US and Saudi intelligence services, which pressured Sudan’s government. Sudan seized the construction equipment that formed the backbone of bin Laden’s business in that country, giving him only a fraction of its value in return.¹⁹ Fortunately for bin Laden, the mujahedin leader Yunus Khalis invited him back to Afghanistan. The Taliban agreed to protect bin Laden from his enemies, explaining in one statement: “If an animal sought refuge with us we would have had no choice but to protect it. How, then, about a man who has given himself and his wealth in the cause of Allah and in the cause of jihad in Afghanistan.”²⁰ Al

¹⁷ Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History*.

¹⁸ Michael Schaffer, “The Unseen Power,” *US News & World Report*, November 4, 2001.

¹⁹ Riedel, *The Search for Al Qaeda*, 56.

²⁰ Abdel Bari Atwan, *The Secret History of Al Qaeda* (Berkeley: University of California Press,

Qaeda established a network of training camps in its new Afghan safe haven that were used not only by that organization, but also a variety of other transnational jihadist groups.

PAKISTAN'S USE OF JIHADIST PROXIES

Pakistan tried to take advantage of the jihadist presence in Afghanistan, convincing some of the groups that trained and found refuge there to concentrate their militant activities on the disputed Kashmir region. But as jihadism became increasingly networked and transnational, Pakistan found it impossible to avoid incurring a price for utilizing these proxies.

One target of the jihadist groups that received Pakistani support was (and is) the United States. After Al Qaeda executed the devastating 9/11 attacks, the US naturally sought to enlist Pakistan's assistance on its side of the conflict. Just after the attacks, deputy secretary of state Richard Armitage gave Pakistan an ultimatum. In Pakistan's then-president Pervez Musharraf's words, Armitage told him that "we had to decide whether we were with America or with the terrorists, but that if we chose the terrorists, then we should be prepared to be bombed back to the Stone Age."²¹ Armitage's threat, coupled with material incentives, persuaded Musharraf to announce a dramatic about-face on the issue of VNSAs, declaring on

January 12, 2002, that "no Pakistan-based organization would be allowed to indulge in terrorism in the name of religion."²² He announced the ban of five jihadist groups, including Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed. However, Musharraf's reversal didn't hold up. The factors driving Pakistan's support for Islamist proxies in Afghanistan represented too tangled a web. In addition to the strategic calculations behind Pakistan's support for these groups, strong personal relationships and ideological affinities had developed between Pakistani officers and the VNSAs they supported. As noted earlier, the Pakistani state is not a unified actor, and this reality has given Pakistani officers the leeway to drive significant parts of Pakistan's VNSA-related policies, even when many in Islamabad do not share their ideological outlook.

A second target of jihadist groups is Pakistan itself. The state's relationship with both the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Haqqani Network (HQN) demonstrates the dangers involved in employing jihadist proxies. Established in 2007, TTP is "an umbrella organization for Pakistani militant groups" in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Khyber-Pukhtunkhwa, which was formerly known as the North-West Frontier Province.²³ About 13 militant groups were

2006), 54.

²¹ Pervez Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire: A Memoir* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 201.

²² Hussain, *Frontline Pakistan*, 51.

²³ Anne Stenersen, "The Relationship Between Al Qaeda and the Taliban," in *Talibanistan: Negotiating the Borders Between Terror, Politics, and Religion*, ed. Peter Bergen and Katherine Tie-

part of TTP at the time of its founding. Although Pakistan still supported jihadist proxies focused on Afghanistan at the time, it had also engaged in periodic military offensives against such groups in its own territory. These included a campaign in 2004 against Nek Muhammad Wazir's forces and several hundred foreign fighters that culminated in the Shakai agreement, as well as an early 2005 campaign against fighters commanded by the South Waziristan-based Baitullah Mehsud.

Ever since Mehsud, the antagonist in Pakistani's 2005 campaign, announced TTP's formation, the group has had an adversarial relationship with Pakistan. TTP's rise has been accompanied by a massive escalation in violence, as various networked militant groups have been able to conduct a full-blown insurgency. In early 2014, TTP has sparked concerns about worsening violence in several areas of the country. In Karachi, for example, where TTP "was largely responsible for a 90% spike in terrorist attacks" in 2013, insurgents have begun to take control of neighborhoods, giving rise to "concerns that one of the world's most populous cities is teetering on the brink of lawlessness."²⁴

Pakistan has rationalized its support for jihadist proxies by convincing itself that

Taliban factions can be neatly divided into "good Taliban," those that focus on Afghanistan, and "bad Taliban" that are active in Pakistan. If such a division were accurate, it would mean that TTP's various offensives against the Pakistani state are not actually blowback. But the dividing line that Pakistan draws is fictitious, as TTP spokesman Shahidullah Shahid made clear in an October 2013. "The Afghan Taliban are our jihadist brothers," he said. "In the beginning, we were helping them, but now they are strong enough and don't need our help, but they are supporting us financially." Shahid added that the Afghan Taliban were providing Pakistani commander Mullah Fazlullah with a safe haven in Kunar province.²⁵ American officials apparently find Shahid's claim credible, telling the *New York Times* that support given to either the Afghan or Pakistani Taliban "invariably bleeds into assistance for the other."²⁶

Thus, TTP is one illustration of the dangers of attempting to utilize jihadist VNSAs as proxies, and it fits all three of the criteria provided in this article. The first criterion was the groups' broad geographic scope and desire for revolutionary change. Although TTP's actions to date have largely focused on Pakistan, it would be a mistake to classify TTP as limited by Pakistan's national borders. For

demann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 78, Kindle edition.

²⁴ Tim Craig, "Karachi Residents Live in Fear as Pakistan Taliban Gains Strength," *Washington Post*, February 3, 2014.

²⁵ "Afghan Taliban Financing Militants in Pakistan: TTP," *Dawn* (Pakistan), October 8, 2013.

²⁶ Matthew Rosenberg, "US Disrupts Afghans' Tack on Militants," *New York Times*, October 28, 2013.

years both TTP and Al Qaeda have telegraphed the Pakistani Taliban's transnational outlook. In 2009, Al Qaeda's official media outlet al-Sahab "released a flurry of videos" featuring TTP leaders, in what should be seen as "a media campaign announcing their open alliance with Pakistan's deadliest militant network."²⁷ The following year, an academic study by Khuram Iqbal, a recognized authority on the Pakistani Taliban, concluded that Al Qaeda had even more influence on TTP than on the Afghan Taliban. "The TTP has vociferously endorsed Al Qaeda's agenda of global jihad," he wrote.²⁸

Nor is TTP's support for global jihad limited to rhetoric and ideas. In addition to its well-known sponsorship of Faisal Shahzad's attempted 2010 bombing of New York's Times Square, Iqbal notes other examples of TTP extending its international reach:

The 7/7 bombings in London, one of the most devastating terrorist attacks since 9/11, were planned from Bajaur Agency in FATA, as acknowledged by top TTP spokesman Maulvi Umer. Similarly, the foiled terrorist attacks in Barcelona, Spain in January 2008 were also attributed to the Al Qaeda-TTP nexus in FATA. These do not seem to be the

only examples of the TTP's capability to strike internationally. Evidence suggests that FATA has become an epicenter of international terrorism where terrorist outfits from all over the world operate under the protection of the TTP.²⁹

As to the other relevant criteria that distinguish jihadist proxies from others, Pakistan has experienced blowback at TTP's hands. Though the state hasn't aided TTP directly, its Afghan Taliban proxies have supported TTP, thus ensuring that Pakistan paid a price for supporting other Islamist groups. And the third criterion, religious motivations playing a role in the sponsoring state's decision-making, also applies to Pakistan's ongoing support for the Afghan Taliban.³⁰

Pakistan's concerns about TTP are illustrated by the fact that its problems with TTP have fundamentally altered its relationship with other Islamist proxies. Pakistan's relationship with HQN – a militant group led by Jalaluddin Haqqani and his son Sirajuddin – is more similar to a traditional proxy relationship, but Pakistan is increasingly aware of how this support intersects with the state's vulnerabilities. Jeffrey Dressler observes that Pakistan's sponsorship of HQN allows Pakistan to leverage the group to help "dissuade an-

27 Vahid Brown, "Al Qaeda Publicly Cements Ties to the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan," *Jihadica*, October 14, 2009, <http://www.jihadica.com/al-qa-%E2%80%99ida-publicly-cements-ties-to-the-tehrik-e-taliban-pakistan/>.

28 Khuram Iqbal, "Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan: A Global Threat," *Conflict and Peace Studies* 3:4 (2010), 4.

29 Ibid, 5-6.

30 Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, "A Handcuffed Superpower: The US, Pakistan, and the Afghanistan War," in *Allies, Adversaries and Enemies: America's Increasingly Complex Alliances*, ed. Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Jonathan Schanzer (Washington, DC: FDD Press, 2014), 14-17.

ti-Pakistan insurgents, such as TTP, from launching attacks on Pakistani security services and instead reorienting some of their focus on Afghanistan.”³¹

Thus, even in the case of the relatively loyal HQN, much of Pakistan’s priorities are determined by domestic concerns related to other jihadist groups that have turned against it. Pakistan thus hopes that HQN’s relationship with other jihadist factions can quell their anti-Pakistan activities. This illustrates how the Frankenstein’s monster that Pakistan built has escaped its control.

CONCLUSION

State sponsorship can help jihadist groups in ways that are rather obvious: few groups would pass up the opportunity to gain money, arms, training, and perhaps safe haven. Less obvious is the downside of state sponsorship. One of the biggest downsides, from jihadist groups’ perspective, is that such sponsorship may encourage a group to compromise its ideology. This is one reason that Somalia’s al-Shabaab boycotted an opposition conference being held in the Eritrean capital of Asmara, and ultimately split from other Somali insurgent factions. The American mujahid Abu Mansoor al-Amriki (who would later mutiny from the group, but at the time spoke with its leaders’ authorization), explained that Shabaab had

skipped the Asmara conference because cooperation with “infidels” would corrupt the jihad: Eritrea would open “the door of politics in order for them to forget armed resistance,” leaving “members of the [Islamic] Courts in the lands of the *Kuffaar*, underneath their control, sitting in the road of politics which leads to the loss and defeat they were running from.”³²

TTP, in choosing an antagonistic approach to the Pakistani state, may be privileging its ideology over the potential operational advantages of sponsorship – although it is able to ameliorate the disadvantages of this antagonism through its cooperative relationship with the Pakistan-supported Afghan Taliban.

It is important to recognize the major distinctions between traditional proxies and those that have a transnational jihadist outlook. Traditional proxies are less likely to bite the hand that feeds them than transnational jihadist proxies; and jihadists are more likely to sell their services to a rival state. Therefore, states that dabble in proxy warfare should pick carefully. ☹

Daveed Gartenstein-Ross is a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies and an adjunct assistant professor in Georgetown University’s security studies program. He is the author or volume editor of fourteen books and monographs.

31 Jeffrey Dressler, *The Haqqani Network: A Strategic Threat* (Washington, DC: Institute for the Study of War, 2012), 12.

32 Abu Mansoor al-Amriki, “A Message to the Mujaahideen in Particular and Muslims in General,” January 2008.



WWW.FLETCHERSECURITY.ORG



[@FLETCHERSECREV](https://twitter.com/FLETCHERSECREV)

