



## PAKISTAN'S ROLE IN THE RISE OF RELIGIOUS RADICALISM IN AFGHANISTAN

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**Abstract:** As we know, Islamic radicalism in Central Asia has become part of the process of globalization. Without knowing its deep roots and foundations, it is very difficult to understand how this situation arose. The main purpose of the article is to analyze the influence of international forces, external relations and relationships in the evolution and emergence of Islamic radicalism in Central Asia, despite their remote location. If we consider the historical aspects of Islamic radicalism in connection with the events of September 11, 2001, we can see the emergence of Pakistani Islamic radicalism and Afghan jihad.

**Key words:** “militarization of Islam”, Saur Revolution, mujahideen, “Islamic Society” organization, “Al-Badr”, Lashkar-e Taiba, Zia ul-Haq.

In scientific articles and literature (published in Russian), the role of Pakistan in Islamic radicalism in Afghanistan is vague. It is difficult to say why events unfolded this way<sup>1</sup>. The current government in the USSR, and later in Russia, did not perceive the state of Pakistan as a rival. Also, from the Russian point of view, Pakistan was considered only a state with a sphere of influence in the South Asian region. Despite the arrival of the military in Pakistan and the Islamization processes taking place in the region, for Moscow Pakistan is perceived as a state with a moderate Muslim regime, and good diplomatic relations with Islamabad are maintained and economic ties are continued.

The Soviet leadership, seeing Pakistan as a victim of historical processes and events, did not show any hostility towards it. External supporters of the jihadist movement in Afghanistan, including the United States, Saudi Arabia, China and other external powers, used Pakistani territory “effectively”.

In such a situation, it was necessary to avoid breaking relations with a couple with sufficient economic potential, to assess Pakistan as an independent participant in a large and long-term game on the international stage. At the same time, Pakistan's importance as an organizer and inspirer of the Afghan jihad was very high. In addition, this article is important in that it reveals the direct role of Pakistan as a state and the support of the country's ruling circles, the actions of Islamic radical forces, which are explicitly and covertly encouraged.

The process of “militarization of Islam” began in the summer of 1977, after the armed forces came to power in Pakistan under the leadership of Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq. However, this process began to take shape around 1974, during the rule of Z.A. Bhutto. At that time, the government began to implement an Islam-oriented domestic and foreign policy. A significant

<sup>1</sup> Исключением из этого правила является, пожалуй, книга генерала А.А.Ляховского, где приводятся высказывания М.Зия уль-Хака и неоднократно упоминается о действиях пакистанской агентуры против СССР и пришедших ему на смену режимов в центральноазиатских республиках. См.: Ляховский А.А. Трагедия и доблесть Афгана. – М.: Аскана, 1995.



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aspect of this was the decision to declare the Ahmadiyya sect as Westernized, "un-Islamic," in accordance with the demands of religious radicals, and the solemn holding of the second conference of leaders of Muslim countries in Lahore with high propaganda.

Since 1975, the Pakistan-Afghanistan Islamic Corridor began to take shape. At that time, the Afghan government exposed the uprising that was being organized in the Panjshir Gorge. Also, the leaders of the main anti-government forces and opposition organizations, including Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Burhanuddin Rabbani, Ahmad Shah Masood, crossed into Pakistani territory. As it turned out later, in Pakistan they underwent military training under the guidance of special service instructors<sup>2</sup>.

Illegal connections on the transport border between Pakistan and Afghanistan intensified, and in 1976-77, representatives of the radical Baloch tribes in Pakistan entered the territory of Afghanistan and established their bases in this area. After the execution of Z. A. Bhutto in April 1979, supporters of the prime minister and those who resigned joined the Pakistani diaspora in Afghanistan. In Kabul, a secret organization was created under the guise of the new communist government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto against Zia ul-Haq. The head of the organization was Murtaza Bhutto. (Murtaza and his brother Shah Nawaz married Afghan women). Some representatives of the Pakistani left movement participated in the struggle for power in Kabul and were imprisoned under the rule of H. Amin.

After the April 1978 Saur Revolution, the intensification of various illegal contacts on the borders of Pakistan and Afghanistan, and the introduction of Soviet military troops on the eve of the holiday in 1979, had a significant impact on the domestic and foreign policy of the new Afghanistan. In 1980, the main forces of the Afghan opposition openly settled in Pakistan. The Pakistani government did not want to get involved in military operations, so as not to face Soviet opposition. Also, the threat from the north created a favorable situation for Pakistan to remain "behind the scenes". This situation was beneficial for Pakistan in all respects.

First, politically and diplomatically. Pakistan became a central element in a broad international coalition struggle against the development of "aggressive Soviet communism" in the south.

Second, Pakistan, while relatively peaceful, orderly, and pro-Western in the context of the war in Afghanistan, seemed to be justified in supporting the groups that were active in the government. The Pakistani military government's commitment to Islamic values enhanced its prestige in the Muslim world.

Third, material and financial. Since the early 1980s, Pakistan has been supplying weapons, medicine, and food to Afghan jihad fighters (mujahideen) and their families living in numerous camps in the areas bordering Afghanistan. As a result of the fact that the weapons that were supposed to be delivered to the mujahideen in Afghanistan were replenished in the reserves of the Pakistani armed forces, some of the weapons did not even reach Afghanistan.

Pakistan was a major source of financial support. By the late 1980s, it was estimated that at least \$3.5 billion was channeled through Pakistan to jihadists in Afghanistan<sup>3</sup>. This amount

<sup>2</sup> Davis A. How the Taliban became a military force – W. Maley ed. Fundamentalism Reborn? Afghanistan and the Taliban. Lahore: Vanguard Books, 1998, p. 44.

<sup>3</sup> Harrison S.S. South Asia and the US: A Chance for a Fresh Start // Current History, March 1992, p. 96–97.



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is accounted for by senior officials and private enterprises that perform various organizational and intermediary functions.

It is necessary to dwell separately on the activities of radical Islamic organizations in Pakistan. The emergence and evolution of Islamic radicalism in Pakistan have deep historical roots. The formation of a government led by Z.A. Bhutto in the 1977 parliamentary elections in Pakistan, but the failure of the Pakistan National Alliance, formed from 9 opposition parties, to recognize the election results, led to political and economic instability in the country. The internal political crisis that followed the elections helped to strengthen the positions of Islamic parties. After the military seized power in July 1977 by Zia ul-Haq, the Islamization program received full support in the recognition of the countries of the Arab world. By this time, the "Islamic Society" organization had consolidated its position.

The movement of religious parties, which were the main force against the Soviet troops in the Afghan jihad of 1980-1989, played an important role. The first to be formed in Afghanistan was the military organization "Al-Badr". This organization closely assisted the Pakistani special services and the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate in communicating with the leaders of the Afghan Mujahideen. The "Islamic Society" organization established contacts with the "Hezbi Islami" led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. As a result, most of the material bases sent to fight the communists and Soviet troops in Kabul were directed to Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's side<sup>4</sup>. First of all, the Pakistani military government did not want Muslim scholars to get close to the government. The imposition of an Islamic program from above had a huge impact on the Afghan jihad and the regional situation.

These actions of the government have increased competition and disagreements among Islamists. Several main trends of radical Islam, which have been forming for many years, have emerged. In addition, the precarious attitude towards the scholars of the "Islamic Society" has led to a cooling of relations between Islamabad and Saudi Arabia in the mid-1980s. As a result, Pakistan's influence in Central Asia has increased and it has acted together with Iran for certain purposes. However, the collapse of the USSR has led to a decrease in control over Afghanistan and an increase in competition with Tehran.

The organization, which took power and aimed at Islamizing various aspects of social, political, and economic life in the country, caused a split between Muslim sects and followers of the movement. First, a split arose between Sunnis and Shiites. The attempt of government officials to introduce uniform rules for collecting voluntary Muslim taxes (zakat and ushr) met with fierce resistance from the Shiite community and led to the formation of its own Tehrik Nyafaz-e Fiqh-e Jafariya (Movement to Establish Jafariya) in 1980. As a result, the military agreed to meet the main demands of the Shiites.

They were a large religious party, Jamiat-e Ulama-e-Islam (Society of Islamic Scholars), based largely on traditionalism and puritanism. The ideological pillar of this party was based on the teachings of the school of scholars founded in 1867 in the northern Indian city of Deoband<sup>5</sup>. Deoband puritanism is manifested in a critical attitude towards Shiites and loyalty to tradition. In the first half of the 1980s, mosques and madrasas (religious schools) under the control of Deoband believers increased in number. At the same time, Deoband military

<sup>4</sup> Yousaf M. and Adkin M. Afghanistan – The Bear Trap. The Defeat of a Superpower. Barnsley: Leo Cooper, 2001, p. 105.

<sup>5</sup> Metcalf B.D. Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860–1900. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1982, p. 87–263.



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organizations were formed, first of all, the Sipahi Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), (Pakistan Warriors of the Prophet), and later the army called Lashkar-e Jangvi (founded by H.N. Jangvi). In response to the actions of extremist Sunnis, the Shiites also became radicalized. For example, first of all, the Sipah-e Muhammad (Soldiers of the Prophet) appeared. In addition, there was the Barelvi movement, which arose in northern India under the leadership of Ahmad Raza Khan. This movement developed into an organization called the Pakistan Ulema Society on the territory of Pakistan. By the 1990s, we could see the formation of military organizations such as the “Sunni Movement”. Bloody clashes between scholars of the Deoband and Barelvi schools have been observed in rural areas and small towns since the mid-1980s.

When the military came to power, the influence of the Wahhabi movement, which had been forming and strengthening its position for years, increased. It should be noted that this movement has no connection with the Wahhabis in Saudi Arabia. This movement originated in northern India in the mid-19th century, called the Ahl-e Hadith movement, and emerged in the 1960s in the cities of Punjab and Lahore, Pakistan. By the 1980s, the Dawat-wal-Irshad organization had taken a leading position among such movements. This organization was led by Hafiz Sayeed, a professor at the Lahore University of Technology, and his Lashkar-e Taiba (“Army of Peace”) militant group<sup>6</sup>.

In the 1980s, the influence of radical Islam in Pakistan was significantly strengthened. In particular, interference in Pakistan's domestic and foreign policy, in Afghanistan, Kashmir, as well as in the military affairs of Afghanistan, became the most important direction of the USSR. The strengthening of Afghanistan's military actions was supported by the USSR. In such a situation, as a result of the policy pursued by Zia ul-Haq, relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia cooled. The main reasons for the deterioration of relations between the two countries are not given. These processes led to the improvement of Pakistan-Iran relations in the second half of the 1980s<sup>7</sup>. As a result, the Economic Cooperation Organization resumed its activities in 1985<sup>8</sup>. While the USSR was engaged in military operations in Afghanistan, the rapprochement between Tehran and Islamabad had a significant impact on the USSR's policy in Afghanistan. Because the expulsion of the USSR from Afghanistan depended on the rapprochement between Tehran and Islamabad. At that time, Iran had millions of refugees and centers of Shiite organizations fighting against Kabul under the name of the Muslim holy war. Pakistan and Iran also had strategic plans in the context of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan from the north. Pakistan envisaged the transformation of the Afghan territories into a territory governed by Islamic law, and these plans were considered important for Pakistan in the event of disagreements between Pakistan and India. The views of Zia-ul-Haq did not contradict those of the political and religious leader of Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini. However, the deaths of these

<sup>6</sup> Об индийском ваххабизме, его отличиях от аравийского и истории движения Ахл-е хадис в Пакистане см.: Милославский Г.В. Ваххабизм в идеологии и политике мусульманских стран // Ислам и политика. – М.: Крафт+ИВ РАН, 2001, с. 76–80.

<sup>7</sup> Автору приходилось уже указывать на эти обстоятельства. См.: Белокреницкий В.Я., Москаленко В.Н., Шаумян Т.Л. Южная Азия в современном политическом мире. Взгляд из Москвы. Н.Й.: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2001, с. 136–137; Белокреницкий В.Я., Москаленко В.Н., Шаумян Т.Л. Южная Азия в мировой политике. – М.: Международные отношения, 2003, с. 117.

<sup>8</sup> “Iqtisodiy Hamkorlik Tashkiloti” 1964-yilda Eron, Pokiston va Turkiya tomonidan “Mintaqaviy Hamkorlik Rivojlantirish” nomi bilan tuzilgan. Keyin 1970-yillarda ichki mintaqaviy savdo susayib ketgani uchun o’z faoliyatini to’xtatgan. 1985-yilda “Iqtisodiy Hamkorlik Tashkiloti” nomi bilan qaytadan o’z faoliyatini boshladi.



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two statesmen in 1988 and 1989 complicated the efforts being made between the two Muslim countries.

At the same time, there were factors that influenced the rapprochement of relations between Pakistan and Iran. An example of such factors is Najibullah, who unexpectedly came to power with the help of the USSR. Najibullah headed the government until the spring of 1992. The full power of Najibullah was not manifested in the confrontation between the opponents supported by Islamabad on the one hand and Tehran on the other. At the end of the Cold War, disagreements between the United States and Pakistan over their goals in Afghanistan led to a rapprochement of relations between Moscow and Washington. At the same time, the United States, despite the results achieved in Afghanistan, feared that the situation in Central Asia would become unstable, that radical Islamic groups would strengthen their positions in Afghanistan and gain strength due to the support received from Iran, Pakistan and Arab states. Also, the suspension of military and economic aid provided by Washington to Islamabad in October 1990 led to a rise in anti-US sentiment among Pakistani society and the military. Through these actions, the US administration refused to supply F-16 aircraft to the Pakistan Air Force, and US actions in South Asia were more beneficial to India.

During the unfinished jihad in Afghanistan, the crisis in the Middle East, and the collapse of the USSR, Pakistan had a significant impact on the situation in Central Asia. The Pakistani intelligence service (ISI) played a significant role in these processes. Later, representatives of the Pakistani intelligence service met with Burhanuddin Rabbani and Ahmad Shah Masood and planned to destabilize the regime in Kabul and support the Islamic opposition forces in Central Asia, especially in Tajikistan<sup>9</sup>. The above plans reached their peak by 1992. For example, the fall of the Najibullah regime in Afghanistan, the rise of the Mujahideen to power, the establishment of a provisional government in Peshawar under the leadership of Sebghatullah Mujaddadi, serving the interests of Pakistan, the overthrow of the existing government in Tajikistan, and the initial victories of the Islamic opposition in the struggle for power<sup>10</sup>.

In 1992, Russian Foreign Minister A.V. Kozyrov visited Kabul to exchange information on Moscow's military operations and strategy in Afghanistan. However, by the end of the year, the situation in Afghanistan had not been resolved in Pakistan's favor. Despite Islamabad's resistance, the newly elected interim president of Afghanistan, Burhanuddin Rabbani, extended his term in December. Pakistan's attempts to promote Islam in Central Asia and strengthen its position in the region with the help of Islamic forces have encountered various obstacles<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> Ляховский А.А. Трагедия и доблесть Афгана, с. 637–639.

<sup>10</sup> В мае 1992 г. в Душанбе утвердилось правительство национального примирения; ряд его членов, в том числе заместитель премьер-министра Д.Усмон, представлял Исламскую партию возрождения Таджикистана. См.: Олимова С., Олимов М. Исламская партия возрождения в межтаджикском конфликте и его урегулировании // Центральная Азия и Кавказ, 2001, № 1, с. 135.

<sup>11</sup> Одна из попыток вмешаться в ход гражданской войны в Таджикистане была предпринята, по сведениям генерала Ляховского, почерпнутым из агентурных данных, в конце января 1993 г. В Пешаваре прошло совещание представителей мусульманских стран, в том числе, очевидно, Ирана, на котором были рассмотрены меры по оказанию помощи «таджикским братьям» в их «священной войне» и принято решение во главе таджикских боевых отрядов ставить афганцев, обладающих опытом партизанской войны против 113 советской армии. Таджикским исламистам, кроме того, выделялись значительные материальные средства. См.: Ляховский А.А. Трагедия и доблесть Афгана, с. 640.



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Firstly, the political consciousness and culture of the local population did not provide sufficient conditions for these processes. In addition, the national idea was based solely on ideas such as preserving the nation by separating Moscow from the Central Asian states.

Secondly, there is the Iranian opposition, which does not want Pakistan to become the sole ruler of Afghanistan and emerge as a leading independent player in Central Asia.

Third, Pakistan's internal political crisis in 1993, the decline in US attention to it in the system of international relations, and Pakistan's semi-isolation.

In conclusion, the contribution of external forces, including the United States, Saudi Arabia, China and other countries, to the development and spread of Islamic radicalism in Afghanistan and Central Asia is very significant. We can see that Pakistan's participation in this international and long-term game is important, and at the same time it has played the role of a mediator and has effectively used the political processes in Afghanistan for its own interests. Of course, the internal and chaotic political situation in Afghanistan has also created favorable conditions for external forces to use the territory of Afghanistan. The spread of Islamic radicalism and the efforts being made to combat it remain controversial to this day.



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