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Sectarian Conflict in Pakistan: A Case Study of Jhang

Mukhtar Ahmad Ali

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Regional Centre for Strategic Studies
2, Elibank Road
Colombo 5, SRI LANKA.
Tel: (94-1) 599734-5; Fax: 599993; e-mail: rcss@sri.lanka.net
Website: http://www.rcss.org

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Introduction

The decade of the 1990s witnessed a frightening upsurge in the Shia-Sunni sectarian violence in Pakistan, both in terms of scope and intensity. Frequent clashes between the two sects left hundreds dead and thousands injured, including Iranian diplomats, senior state functionaries, and important religious leaders on both sides. According to an official estimate, 422 lives were lost in 395 sectarian incidents, which occurred in Punjab between 1990 and June 1997. Unofficial estimates put the figure much higher. Recently, sectarian strife has engulfed even those areas, which were previously unaffected, largely because of the emergence of organised terrorist groups along sectarian lines. Besides target killings, these groups hit even ordinary members of each other's sects, whenever and wherever they find it operationally convenient. The problem, therefore, is no more of an occasional nature, or limited to isolated localities. Rather, it has now become a national concern with serious implications for the state and society.

Though the Shia-Sunni conflict is not new to Pakistan or even to the Indo-Pakistan Sub-continent, the ongoing phase is distinct in several ways. Firstly, the level and intensity of violence in this phase of sectarian conflict is unprecedently high because of easy access to weapons and training facilities in Afghanistan. Secondly, parties and groups have emerged with extremely narrow and exclusive sectarian agendas. While lacking the capacity to make any significant headway through the political process, these groups have greater inclination to opt for violent means to achieve a degree of nuisance value and better political recognition, particularly in the local contexts. They stand in contrast to the traditional religious parties, which pursue relatively broader objectives of Islamization and that too through democratic channels. Thirdly, the social base of the sectarian conflict has significantly expanded because of several factors which include: a) the use of print media, school textbooks, religious literature and posters and banners; b) accessibility to the means of electronic communication; and c) better transport services which have increased mobility of sectarian activists. The latter helps people from distant areas to join sectarian networks, generate funds and plan concerted political activities at the provincial and national levels. Fourthly, certain Islamic states "such as Iran and Saudi Arabia sponsor the activities of sectarian groups. This adds a regional dimension to the domestic sectarian conflict."

The existing academic literature analyses the causes of the upsurge in sectarian violence in terms of identity politics, a crisis of governance and increased interaction between religion and politics. In this regard, Mohammad Waseem and Mumtaz Ahmad's research need to be mentioned in particular. As far as identity politics is concerned, Mohammad Waseem argues that the "old model of sectarian identity", which "served the purpose of self definition for groups and individuals", was no more relevant within the framework of "interventionist state under late colonialism". The old model, he rightly points out, "represented a nearly ossified symbolism rooted in medieval tribal and dynastic loyalties around which a whole edifice of rituals had been built." He, however, exaggerates the macro factors by suggesting that "[n]ew sectarianism operated in a world characterised by extra-local ideological and political orientations underlined by a remote institutional-constitutional structure of values and norms which carried a deterministic potential in the long run." This explanation de-emphasises the relevance of local

realities, which may not be of a tribal nature in today's Pakistan, but their interplay, in terms of generating and sustaining sectarian conflict, cannot be denied. Nonetheless, his argument remains valid, that, in the context of a modern state, the "sectarian activists sought to reshape the state's priorities while reacting to changes in their socio-cultural environment. As the state persistently considered their demands medievalist and fascist, many of these activists opted for exit from the system altogether. These groups typically took to the substitute culture of proselytization and projection of sectarian goals."

In the context of Pakistan, Mohammad Waseem refers to the instrumental usage of Islam by the state within a global environment, which was characterised by the Muslims' confrontation with the West. Within this macro framework, Islamists reacted to the state's ideology in the light of their local realities. He particularly highlights the following factors: i) The state upheld Islamic agenda for identity and legitimacy purposes, ii) the Islamic lobby sought to change the character of the state along religious lines in confrontation with the West and Westernism; iii) historical roots of sectarianism notwithstanding, the sectarian conflict in a contemporary Muslim society such as Pakistan has to be understood in terms of power politics in the locality, the constellation of powers at the state level and the regional and international politics; iv) sectarianism has its own roots in the vast area of public activity which is either not covered by the state or is mismanaged and brutalised by it. With regard to the above explanation, it may be added here that the reaction of Muslims vis-à-vis the West has generally been of a pan-Islamist nature, which sought to unite them instead of fanning sectarian differences. The most relevant manifestations of such a reaction are 'fundamentalist' parties in various Muslim countries. These parties, unlike sectarian groups, are significantly tolerant of internal differences and prefer to focus their attention on issues of larger significance both within the national and international contexts. The two, therefore, should not be confused, as it may lead to misleading conclusions. Sectarianism is best explained within the framework of inter-Muslim politics at all levels but particularly at the local levels.

Mohammad Waseem also explains the sectarian conflict "with reference to the crisis of governance both in terms of establishing representative rule and performing the basic functions of public authority, in addition to the need of inculcating a normative set of values in the minds of citizens through a long and continuing process of civic socialisation." This explanation, particularly the failure in establishing representative rule, holds great significance, as it cannot be just a coincidence that the sectarian conflict acquired a violent dimension under the martial law regime of Zia-ul-Haq (1977-1988).

Mumtaz Ahmad, unlike Mohammad Waseem, specifically emphasises that it was under the dictatorial rule of General Zia-ul-Haq that religious revivalism had become associated with sectarianism. The reason, he argues, was that the "Islamization" agenda which he pursued was synonymous with "shariatization", as its primary emphasis was on the enforcement of Shariah and not on the implementation of Islamic principles of democracy, freedom, equality, tolerance, and social justice. As the approach to Islamization was legalistic, question arose as to which and whose interpretation of the Islamic law should be accepted as the basis of public policy. Zia did "hardly anything that threatened the political and economic status quo. The existing structures of social deprivations, economic exploitation, and political domination remained completely unaffected." It was, in Mumtaz Ahmad's view, the "trivialization of the Islamization process in

Pakistan" as the Shariah courts were not allowed to hear cases related to socio-economic and political issues.

Mumtaz Ahmad gives political explanations of sectarianism and sectarian violence at five levels. "First, the prolonged absence of channels for political participation during the eight years of martial law regime…". The second explanation is derived from what Lloyd and Suzanne Rudolph have described as the "'modernity of tradition' and the political mobilisation of certain traditional, primordial groups in modern associational type organisations in order to compete for economic resources and political opportunities opened up by the process of modernisation". The third explanation is related to what Jack Snyder has described as the "'institutional collapse' of the state" or what Mohammad Ayub has termed as "the lack of effective statehood". Fourth, "the cynical use of sectarian discord and conflict for short-term political gains by successive governments in Pakistan." And finally, the socio-economic explanation that "sectarian violence erupts in conditions under which socio-economic deprivations tend to be translated into a cultural world-view involving feelings of hostility against the 'other'."

Generally, the existing literature emphasises "the state's increased dependence on Islamic sources of legitimacy; the limited reach of the state's educational, health and employment services which creates a crisis of governance; and lack of predictability with reference to the state's professed goals such as liberating Kashmir from India, implementation of Shariah, unity of umma and real sovereignty, interpreted as deliverance from Western domination." The thrust of a majority of the studies is on the failure of state in managing identity politics, providing good governance, and accommodating the newly emerging classes and groups into the state structures. It is argued that the "state has generally failed to formalise a system of political participation on a regular basis". Furthermore, it has not "expanded the political agenda to incorporate large sections of the society, which have been mobilised in recent years through a vehement process of de-peasantization reflected through rural-urban migration and emergence of a migrant workforce in the Gulf. Nor indeed has the state tried to develop citizen orientations in the society at large." Instead, just the opposite happened as the "new sources of legitimacy in the form of Islamic ideology were cultivated for the specific purpose of painting democracy as a Western importation."

The above review of literature clearly shows that the explanations propounded so far for the sectarian conflict in Pakistan tend to analyse the phenomenon at the macro level and are statist. These are comprehensive in terms of covering all the important dimensions but fall short of providing in-depth insights into the social changes at the grass-roots level and establishing clear linkages of local dynamics with sectarian violence both at the local and national levels. The statist or macro explanations are problematic, as the sectarian violence has affected some parts of the country more than others, while the overall macro context remains the same. The popular explanation that the legal approach to Islamization has led to the confrontation on the question of 'which/whose Shariat' implies that the sectarianism is essentially a religious problem. But such a conclusion has been drawn without considering the socio-economic and political dimensions at the grass roots level and how the Islamization of the state has affected the social processes at the micro levels. It might also be noted that the question of "which Shariah" has not really been a point for violence in Pakistan in recent years. The sectarian violence generally erupts on petty differences ranging from the route of a Muharram procession to the allegation of tabarra against

Sahaba whom the Sunnis pay high regards. Meanwhile, the peculiar socio-economic and demographic conditions of a given context determine the nature and intensity of sectarian politics and violence.

Important questions, which have not been adequately dealt with in the existing literature, include: Why did the frustration of deprived sections find sectarian expression in certain local contexts than others? Why was violence more frequent and much higher in intensity between Deobandis and Shias than other sectarian groups? Why did some sects of the same fiqah, like Brelvis, remain out of sectarian frenzy? How did Shariatization affect different sects at grass roots levels and what implications it had for local arrangements? How did foreign support and influences affect different sects and their role in the community and politics? Why did sectarian violence affect certain areas of Punjab such as Jhang more than others? The current study attempts to answer these questions in the light of the following framework of analysis and empirical data collected from Jhang district of Punjab.

Framework of Analysis

Various analyses and causal explanations of sectarian conflict can be categorised broadly into three major perspectives, all of which have an explicit bias for macro factors. The first perspective emphasises national and international factors like politics of identity, crisis of governance, the interplay of religion and politics, and the role of external stimuli. The second perspective tries to explain the phenomenon by using insights of ideological controversies arising out of differing interpretations of various religious or revealed sources of jurisprudence. The third perspective attempts to appreciate the problem employing a historical approach with certain deterministic view regarding the inevitability of sectarian conflict. These macro perspectives do not seem exhaustive as they neglect the socio-economic and political realities of a given locale beset by sectarian conflict.

For an objective appreciation of sectarian conflict, the local realities at micro level need to be taken into account while keeping in view the macro perspectives as well. In fact, it is the interaction and interplay of these two levels of analysis, macro and micro that need to be explored at length. This interaction of micro factors or local contextual realities and the macro factors, that is, the national and international, has serious implications for local as well as national and international actors. To put it explicitly, the problems at national level such as governance and institutional decay have a direct bearing on the dynamics of sectarian conflict at local level. In addition, international developments too, especially if they are ideologically oriented, have some implications for the given conflict-ridden locale. In the same way, developments taking place at that given locale have the potential to spill over to other parts of the country and even beyond the national boundaries, besides influencing state policies and shaping international responses.

When a sectarian controversy turns into a violent conflict, an in-depth study of the contextual realities of the affected area or areas becomes all the more important. Micro factors, which in particular need to be considered during such studies, include the following: the urban-rural divide; a demographic profile in terms of groups having sectarian orientations; politically marginalized groups and the dynamics of their political interaction with the elite; emergence of a charismatic leadership in marginalized groups; the pattern of settlement of migrants in the case of post-colonial societies experiencing mass migrations; and the nature of economy and economic development. In addition to these factors, the processes of interaction between the existing and emerging power contenders, and use of various symbols in order to mobilise the masses also need to be analysed.

In order to verify the stated framework of analysis, the district Jhang in the Punjab province has been selected as a locale for the case study. Thus, this paper attempts to analyse the dynamics of Shia-Sunni sectarian politics and violence at the grass roots level in Jhang. Jhang district has been selected because it has been the most affected district of Pakistan since the very beginning of violent sectarian strife. Moreover, the violence erupting from this district has spilled over to other areas of the country. The conclusions of this study, however, are essentially based on the fieldwork in Jhang and, therefore, may not necessarily be applicable to the whole of Pakistan.

The study attempts to investigate the hypothesis that sectarian conflict has arisen on account of the struggle for political space by two contending forces. On the one hand, there is the presence of the traditional feudal families, who have historically commanded nearly complete control of political leadership of the district; on the other hand, there are the merging middle classes, which are mostly urban-based, comprising largely of migrant traders and artisans. These middle classes seek political recognition, but find themselves blocked by the wall of feudal dominance. Given that the feudal leadership is primarily Shia, while the majority of the population Sunni, and the majority of the emerging middle classes Deobandi or Ahl-i-Hadith Sunni, the latter have adopted the sectarian platform to confront Shia feudal power. In this context, although the overt battle lines are sectarian, the underlying cause of sectarianism is a class struggle. However, the term "class" should be taken here in the Webberian and not the Marxist sense. Unlike Karl Marx, Max Webber "divided the population into classes according to economic differences of market capacity that gave rise to different life-chances."

Reasons for using the term in the Webberian sense include the transitional nature of the economy of Jhang and the role which muhajirs play, not as an economic, but as an socio-economic category. The categories are, therefore, over-lapping. Nonetheless, it remains a class struggle as, although the economy of Jhang is still largely agriculture-based, a sizeable percentage of population is now involved in various trades and businesses in towns. These traders and businessmen are significantly independent of the feudal lords and look for alternate options to have more political space for themselves. In addition to this group, there is a group of small landowners, who have become relatively more prosperous, but find themselves politically blocked by the dominance of the feudal lords. They too tend to assert themselves whenever they find the opportunity. On occasions, they support the initiatives emerging from the urban parts.

The case study primarily relies for data on the fieldwork undertaken in various parts of district Jhang. The field work included informal discussions with common people; visits to various mosques, shrines and imambargahs; listening to the religious and sectarian discourses; formal interviews with a selected number of important people; and collection of printed material used by different sectarian parties to promote their respective agendas. Of particular importance, however, was a survey conducted to develop a deeper understanding of views of various sections of society in Jhang on sectarian conflict. The survey focused primarily on the town parts of Jhang (and the nearby rural areas) which have been more frequently affected by sectarian tensions and violence since the late 1980s. These included Jhang City, Jhang Sadr, Satellite Town, Chiniot, Shorkot, Garh Maharaja and Ahmad Pur Sial. In total, informal and casual discussions were held randomly with about 250 persons from varying backgrounds, out of which 50 were identified and formally interviewed. In the formal interviews, carefully formulated questions were asked to verify the impressions developed during the casual discussions.

Given the unavailability of detailed population data about various categories, the sample was largely based on estimates. In the case of categories like women, there was a problem of approaching them, which partly explains their under-representation. Certain categories like urban areas; muhajirs, males and Ahl-i-Hadith are over-represented because of their active involvement in the sectarian conflict.

The sample was distributed among Sunnis, who include Brelvi, Deobandi and Ahl-i-Hadith, and Shias, and further distributed by urban and rural, by local and muhajir, by gender and by occupation. In the sample, representation of the three Sunni sub-sects was 70 per cent. Brelvis and Deobandis accounted for 30 per cent each and Ahl-i-Hadith 10 per cent of the sample. Shias accounted for 30 per cent. For Brelvis and Shias each, 60 per cent of the sample was from rural areas to account for their predominance there. For Deobandis, 33 per cent of the sample was from rural and 66 per cent from urban areas to account for their predominance in the latter. Eighty per cent of the Brelvis and Shias in the sample are local, while over 50 per cent of Deobandis and 80 per cent of Ahl-i-Hadith are muhajirs.

Gender wise, 86 per cent of the sample consists of males and 14 per cent females, except among the Ahl-i-Hadith where no women were interviewed. The occupations covered include traders/shopkeepers, lawyers, professors and teachers, journalists, maulvis/sectarian party representatives, landowners, peasants and kammis.

Survey Frame in Ethno-Sectarian Terms

Area	Brelvi (15)		Deobandi (15)		Shia (15)		Ahl-i-Hadith (5)	
	Local	*Muhajir*	Local	*Muhajir*	Local	*Muhajir*	Local	*Muhajir*
Urban	4	1	4	6	4	2	1	3
Rural	8	2	3	2	8	1	0	1
Total	12	3	7	8	12	3	1	4

Survey Frame in Gender and Sectarian Terms

Area	Brelvi (15)		Deobandi (15)		Shia (15)		Ahl-i-Hadith (5)	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
Urban	4	1	9	1	5	1	4	0
Rural	8	2	4	1	8	1	1	0
Total	12	3	13	2	13	2	5	0

Survey Frame in Professional and Sectarian Terms

Urban Jhang (25)

	Brelvi	Deobandi	Shia	Ahl-i-Hadith
Traders/ Shopkeepers	2	4	1	2
Lawyers	1	2	1	0
Professors/ Teachers	0	1	1	1
Journalists	1	1	1	0
Maulvis/ Sectarian Party Representatives	1	2	2	1
Rural Jhang (25)				
Land Owners	2	2	4	0
Peasants	5	0	2	0
Shopkeepers/ *Kammis*	2	2	2	1
Maulvis/ Sectarian Party Representatives	1	1	1	0
Total	15	15	15	5

The Shia-Sunni Conflict in Historical Perspective

Origins and Evolution of Shia-Sunni Conflict

Since the very beginning, the Shia-Sunni sectarian conflict has been one of the major characteristics of Muslim history. Different factions in the respective Muslim societies have also closely interlinked it to the struggle for the acquisition of political power. It is this very fact that led Syed Amir Ali to remark in his famous book, The Spirit of Islam: "Alas! that the religion of humanity and universal brotherhood should not have escaped the internecine strife and discord; that the faith which was to bring peace and rest to the distracted world should itself be torn to pieces by angry passions and the lust of power." At the centre of sectarian strife has been the Shia-Sunni conflict. Immediately after the passing away of the Prophet of Islam, a division emerged on the question of succession. "A small group believed that such a function must remain in the family of the Prophet and backed ‘Ali’, whom they believed to have been designated for this role by appointment (ta‘yin) and testament (nass). They became known as his ‘partisans’ (shi‘ah) while the majority agreed on Abu Bakr on the assumption that the Prophet left no instruction on this matter; they gained the name ‘The People of Prophetic Tradition and consensus of opinion’ (ahl al-sunnah wa’l-jama‘ah)." The Shias believe that "the spiritual heritage bequeathed by Mohammad devolved on Ali and his descendants" and hence, they "repudiate the authority of the Jama‘at (the people) to elect a spiritual head, who should supersede the rightful claims of the Prophet’s family. … [T]herefore, Imamate descends by divine appointment in the apostolic line."

Besides the political dimension, there also existed a difference of opinion about the merits and functions of the successor to the Prophet. "Sunni Islam considered the Khalifah to be a guardian of the Sharia‘h in the community, while Shi‘ism saw in the ‘successor’ a spiritual function connected with the esoteric interpretation of the revelation and the inheritance to the Prophet’s esoteric teachings." In contrast to the Sunnis, the institution of Imamate is fundamental to the Shia Islam. "The Imam, besides being a descendant of the Prophet, must possess certain qualities—he must be Ma‘sum or sinless, bear the purest and most unsullied character, and must be distinguished above all other men for truth and purity." Whereas, the Sunnis believe that the "Imamate is not restricted to the family of Mohammad. The Imam need not be just, virtuous, or irreproachable (Ma ‘sum) in his life, nor need he be the most excellent or eminent being of his time; so long as he is free, adult, sane, and possessed of the capacity to attend to the ordinary affairs of State, he is qualified for election." Later, both the Shia and Sunni schools further split into several sub-sects on different issues related to succession, interpretation of scriptures and political theory of Islam. "The Church of Mohammad, like the Church of Christ, has been rent by intestine divisions and strives. Differences of opinion on abstract subjects, about which there cannot be any certitude in a finite existence, has always given rise to greater bitterness and a fiercer hostility than ordinary differences on matters within the range of human cognition."

In general, the Sunnis continued to support the established authority of Ummayads and Abbasides, though the "later Sunni jurists accepted only the first four caliphs as full embodiments of the ideal of caliphate." However, the Shias kept on challenging the legitimacy of different caliphates for most part of the Muslim history. "While other schools have preached

submission to rulers even if they are corrupt and oppressive, Shi'ism has preached resistance against them and denounced them as illegitimate. From the outset, Shi'ism have opposed oppressive governments."

The Shias, however, enjoyed political power in the fourth century under Buyides, who controlled all of Persia and wielded power in Baghdad, and later under Fatimides. Amongst the Shias, the "Isna- 'asharias alone, the followers of the saintly Imams, who reprehended the use of force, and who claimed and exercised only a spiritual dominion, maintained an attitude of complete withdrawal from temporal interests, until Shah Ismail, the great Safavi monarch, made Isna-'ashariaism the State religion of Persia." Under Shah Ismail, a vigorous campaign was launched to convert the majority Sunni population to Shiaism. Consequently, one of the "major development during the Saffavid reign was the end of the mutual toleration between Sunnis and Shias that existed from the time of the Mongols. The common form of Saffavid abuse was to curse Abu Bakr and Umar for having 'usurped' Ali's right to be caliph. The hatred served two purposes: it reinforced Shia sectarian identity as it underlined Persian against Arab ethnicity. Another development was the Shia rejection of Sufism and concentration on law and the external observances of religion and ritual." Besides other factors, these anti-Sunni policies of Safavides were responsible for their deteriorating relations with the neighbouring powers such as Mughals in India, Ottomans in Turkey and Uzbeks in Central Asia.

Sectarian conflict in the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent

Fearing persecution by Ummayeds and later Abbasides, some of the Shias had moved to the distant parts of the Muslim Empire. Sizeable Shia communities had been established in Punjab and Sindh after their conquest by Muhammad bin Qasim. Under the early Abbasides, the governor of Jhang, Umar bin Hafas, was a clandestine supporter of Fatimid's movement and it was under him that the Batinya influence spread into the areas between Shorkot and Sindh. Later, one of the Shia branch, the Karamata, was able to set up its independent dynasty in Multan. The Karamata had established contacts with the Fatimides in Egypt and continued to rule Multan and surrounding areas, which included parts of Jhang, until Mahmud Ghaznavi defeated and destroyed their "heretical" dynasty. With this, the Karamata movement was wiped out in the Indo-Pakistan context, as it could not survive the loss of political power. However, it left a deep religious imprint on the local population. This is one of the reasons why even today southern Punjab inhabits a sizeable Shia population.

In southern India, the Bahmani and Adil Shahi dynasties, which ruled for quite some time and acted as a bulwark against Marhattas, professed Shia doctrines. These dynasties were brought under the control of Mughals under Aurangzeb (d. 1707), which opened the way for the rise of Marhattas. Aurangzeb was allegedly hostile to the Shia dynasties, largely because he considered them heretical. As the Shia dynasties were receiving support from the Safavides of Iran, who were hostile to the Mughals, he had made an offer of alliance to Bukhara on the 'principle of Sunni solidarity as the basis of Mughal-Uzbeg relations'.

The weakening and disintegration of the Mughal Empire, after the death of Aurangzeb Alamgir, paved the way for a qualitatively different era in the Muslim history of the Sub-continent. The new era witnessed, on one hand, the onslaught of the British with both colonial and western

agenda and, on the other, the rise of Marhattas and Sikhs. Meanwhile, the early successors of Aurangzeb had come under the influence of their Shia courtiers, the Sayyids of Barha.

It was in response to these developments that Shah Waliullah (1703-1762) started his reform movement to reassert Islam in "two directions: against internal decay, and against external threat or domination." Another was the Wahabi movement of Muhammad Ibn ‘Abd al Wahhab (1703-1787), which started in Saudi Arabia, but had a great impact on the religious scene of India. "It was puritanical, vigorous, simple. Its message was straightforward: to return to classical Islam." Both these movements played a major role in the making of today’s religio-political scene of India and Pakistan.

The Wahabi movement emphasised essentials, preached reverting back to the original sources of Quran and Sunnah, and rejected many of the innovations and cultural adaptations made over centuries in the Indian context. It was vehemently opposed to the Sufi tradition and other divergent schools of thought such as Shia‘ism. Essentially, this movement was exclusionist, and far less tolerant and accommodative of divergence, heterogeneity and variations in religious matters. It lambasted the corruption and laxity of the Muslims’ attitudes and rejected the accommodations and cultural richness of the medieval empire. Its sole emphasis was on the classical law, which, in the view of its champions, was the sum and substance of the faith. They stood for the most rigid Hanbali version, which rejected all innovations, made through the intervening centuries. Everything else was superfluous and wrong.

The origins of the Wahabi movement in India can be traced back to the jihad movement of Syed Ahmad Brelvi (1786-1831) against the Sikh regime in Punjab. Given the puritan emphasis of some of its leaders and their leaning towards the extremist doctrines of scholars based in Najd (Saudi Arabia) and Yemen, this movement "got stuck in the quagmire of sectarian differences." It happened particularly after the death of Syed Ahmad Brelvi and Shah Ismail, Shaheed, who had strictly remained within the Hanafi School. The successors of Shah Ismail distanced themselves from the Delhi school. It led to an increase in the influence of Najdi and Yemeni schools within the movement. Consequently, followers of the movement began to be dubbed as "Indian Wahabis". The English also contributed to their portrayal as "Wahabis" because it facilitated them in taking strict action against them. The result was as expected. The Muslims in general, who were strongly opposed to "Wahabis" in view of the excesses they had committed in Najd, disassociated themselves from the movement. It was, despite the fact that many leaders of the jihad movement were not blind followers of Muhammad Ibn, ‘Abd al Wahhab to warrant the term "Wahabi" for them. Given their extremist credentials, however, the term was widely accepted and is still used in Pakistan for the people with similar puritan views. They are also called Ahl-i-Hadith.

Shah Wali Ullah, however, started the most significant reform movement, in the 18th century. Like Wahabis, Shah Waliullah strongly condemned the corrupted Sufi customs and practices, but he was a Hanafi and his version of purified Islam was not completely rejectionist. He himself was a Sufi. He tried to postulate an interpretation of Islam that would coalesce into a purified Sufism with a purified Sunnah. His Islam was, therefore, flexible, more comprehensive and richer as compared to Wahabis. For instance, he embraced and enlivened all the schools of law in his new amalgam. The Shah Wali Ullah’s movement later crystallised into the Deoband

movement, founded by Maulana Qasim Nanotawi, in the then United Provinces of British India in 1867. In 1857, Maulana Nanotawi had actively taken part in the rebellion against the British. Through the Deoband movement, however, he and his colleagues sought to achieve their goals through peaceful resistance. The goal, under the circumstances, was nothing but cultural and religious freedom and political independence.

In the following years, the Deoband movement adopted the attitude of peaceful resistance and non-co-operation towards the British. They refused to learn the English language and modern knowledge, and emphasised Arabic and teachings of Islamic classics. In religious terms, the Deoband movement continued to largely profess Shah Waliullah's teachings with puritan emphasis. Originally, the Deoband school had a policy of non-involvement into sectarian controversies, but later, especially under Maulana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi, the Hanafis became divided into rival groups. Among others, it was because Maulana Gangohi had condemned "the annual gatherings at the tombs of saints as well as the prevalent rites of fatihah and milad". These differences were a manifestation of dissatisfaction of the Deoband school with the things as they existed and its determination to improve them. Its aim was to resuscitate classical Islam, and to rid the Muslims of the theological corruption, the ritual degradations and material exploitation to which they had fallen prey since the British occupation. To many of the Hanafi Muslims, this sounded too rigid and unrealistic an agenda to reconcile with.

The puritan emphasis of Wahabis and Deobandis generated tensions among Muslims. The followers of Sufi Islam did not accept the puritan emphasis which, in their view, amounted to renunciation of mystic conception of Islam. It was, however, Maulana Ahmad Raza Khan (1856-1921) who founded the Brelvi school by setting up a madrasa at Breli in the United Provinces. Unlike the puritans, the Brelvi school expressed and sustained "the social and religious customs of a decadent people: the civilization, or lack of it, into which India fell after the feudal Mughal culture had succumbed and before a new culture arose under the imperial British penetration." Meanwhile, Lucknow had become the centre of Shia activism. The confrontation between these schools later spread to the whole of the Indo-Pakistan Sub-continent. In particular, it resulted in increased incidents of Shia-Sunni violence. Later, however, the emergence of Amada movement, whose founder, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, claimed to be the prophet, prompted a unified reaction from all of the above mentioned schools. The Ahmadis, who are also called as Qadianis and Mirzais, were declared non-Muslims by all of the above groups. This declaration was formulated on the basis that they do not believe in the finality of the prophethood of Muhammad. This controversy overshadowed the differences among the rest of the sectarian groups for decades until they were formally declared non-Muslims through a Constitutional Amendment in Pakistan in 1974.

The nature of Shia-Sunni violence under the British was radically different than it had been under the earlier Muslim empires or caliphates. Previously, it was always a conflict either between the established Sunni authorities and anti-status quo Shia denominations (that is, Ummayeds/Abbasides vs. followers of Fatimides) or between the Sunni and Shia dynasties or caliphates (that is, Mughals vs. the Shia dynasties of Deccan and Abbasides vs. Fatimides in Egypt). Under the alien rule of the British, the conflict declined to the communities' level, involving the general public and theologians alike in sectarian violence. The role of the government was limited to that of arbiter, enforcer of law or manipulator, if so required, in the

larger colonial interests. However, the state was secular and largely unrepresentative and, therefore, the use of sectarian idiom was limited to the purpose of self-identification.

The problem of sectarian conflict in the post-independence years can be analysed both in terms of the continuation of old historical pattern with certain new characteristics and, as a direct consequence of crises of identity and governance in Pakistan. The idiom and rhetoric of sectarian conflict is similar to the past but most of the issues, besides the socio-political context, are completely new. For instance, the restoration of Fatimids to the caliphate, which was the case historically, is no more an issue, though the new issues too, are intimately linked to questions of identity and power politics. Notwithstanding the fact that most often the sectarian agendas are the product of local contextual realities, the significant bearings of the changing character of state, the socio-political context and international environment can not be downplayed. It may be noted that the political discourse at macro level has revolved around the issues of Islamization vs. modernisation, centralisation vs. provincial autonomy, and democracy vs. authoritarianism in Pakistan since independence. The persistent ambivalence towards these issues has led the Pakistani State into a crisis of identity, causing frustration among almost all the sections of society including modernists, Islamists and various ethnic communities. The frustration has become further intensified in view of the failure of successive governments on the performance front, especially in terms of giving due representation to the marginalised sections of society in the top state institutions. Within this macro environment of ideological void and poor governance, people can be mobilised by vested interests around religious and sectarian identities to achieve certain political goals.

Immediately after independence, the confrontation had begun between the religious parties, on the one hand, and the secular-cum-modernist leadership of the country on the other. During the Pakistan movement, the essentially secular leaders of the Muslim League had used the idiom of ‘Muslim identity’ to mobilise masses and to justify a separate homeland for them. Interestingly, almost all the major religious parties of that time had opposed the demand of Pakistan either on the grounds that the concept of separate nationhood was not tenable from the perspective of Islam, or that the secular leadership of Muslim League could not be trusted to sincerely fulfil the promise of the creation of an Islamic state. Nonetheless, the Muslim League succeeded in creating Pakistan, despite the opposition of religious parties. The objective, however, was achieved after paying a heavy cost, as hundreds of thousands were killed and millions had to migrate during the communal clashes, which followed the establishment of Pakistan. As a result, the Islamic identity of the migrant communities, which settled mostly in the urban areas of Punjab and Sindh, was reinforced and they began to act as the major vehicle for the Islamization campaign in Pakistan. It was, in contrast to other ethnic groups such as Sindhis, Baluchis and Pakhtuns who, while de-emphasising the ideological debate, championed the cause of decentralisation and provincial autonomy.

Both Punjab and the migrants’ dominated parts of Sindh largely led the struggle for Islamization in Pakistan until 1977 when, under the Martial Law regime of Zia-UL-Haq, their agenda was co-opted by the state. This was a major shift with long-term implications. The religious parties lost their monopoly on the Islamization discourse and thus the capacity to mobilise masses in the name of Islam. In the context of Sindh this, coupled with the ban on political process, resulted in the assertion of muhajir identity in the shape of the formation of Muhajir Qaumi Movement

(MQM). In Punjab, given the fact that some Sunni religious parties had joined the Martial Law regime, sectarian differences were highlighted by those left out of the power corridors. Gradually, groups emerged out of the existing religious parties, which started emphasising the sectarian differences with the professed aim of persuading the state to accept their particular views into legislation and its policies. In the following years, Punjab was to become the major victim of sectarian violence.

Sectarianism in Jhang

Socio-political context of Jhang

Jhang is a district of the Punjab province, which is located about two hundred kilometres south of Lahore. A couple of centuries ago, it had a great politico-strategic importance in the Punjab because of two reasons: first, the Sial dynasty of Jhang was quite powerful and ruled over a large territory and population; and second, it was located between the two major cities of Multan and Lahore. It, however, lost its importance under the centralised British rule as it fell away of the major communication lines developed under them. Meanwhile, Lyalpur and Montgomery (currently Faisalabad and Sahiwal respectively) assumed greater importance. Jhang became small in size as parts of it were taken away in the process of creating new districts both under the British and later by the Government of Pakistan. Today, Jhang district consists of three tehsils that is, Jhang, Chiniot and Shorkot. Most of the population live in the rural areas and is dependent on agriculture or agriculture related business. According to the 1998 Census, the total population of Jhang is 2.804 million, out of which 2.149 million are settled in the rural areas and 0.655 million in the urban parts.

Jhang is still one of the most backward and feudal-dominated districts of the Punjab. The feudal lords and pirs have traditionally acquired an extremely important place in the socio-political set up of the district. At the time of independence, they monopolised economic and political power. Their attitude towards the poor was generally oppressive. They never allowed the conditions to emerge, which might have helped the downtrodden peasants and kammiis in their upward mobility in social and economic terms. They would not allow opening up of schools, as education was perceived as a threat to feudal interests. Similarly, building of roads or setting up of factories was not allowed as it would reduce the feudal influence by exposing the under-privileged to the new influences and providing them alternative means of earning their livelihood. In Jhang, the stories about the feudal lords' intentional moves to keep the district backward abound even today.

In 1947, a sizeable number of refugees from India settled in Jhang, especially in the urban parts. They mostly occupied the property evacuated by the Hindus, who had migrated to India, and got involved in small business activities. Only a small number of them were allotted small chunks of agricultural land. These migrants could not assimilate into the local social set up largely because they did not share the values of the prevalent feudal system. It was true even in the case of migrants from Indian Punjab, who had almost the same language, customs and traditions, not to speak of Panipatis and Biharis. The local feudal attitudes towards the migrants were also responsible for not allowing the migrants to assimilate. Though no clash occurred between the two along local vs. migrant lines, relations between the two were never as intimate as amongst the locals. Since they were not very comfortable with the feudal lords' dominance, they developed a sense of community among themselves, and sought and supported alternative political forces such as religious parties. It was significant as their religious identity had already been sharpened and reinforced because of the sacrifices and suffering experienced by them during the Pakistan movement and partition in the name of Islam.

After independence, the incidents of sectarian violence between different Muslim sects increased. The perceived threat of political and economic dominance by the Hindus was no longer there to keep them united. The context of Jhang was particularly interesting, as it was the district where the Qadianis had established their headquarters at Rabwa, near Chiniot. Though very small in size, the Qadianis were quite affluent. The people of Jhang generally believe that the affluence of Qadianis was because of their inward-looking character, community consciousness, and over-representation in the bureaucracy and politico-religious activism. Their privileged position in society had created a lot of resentment against them, in addition to the fact that they did not believe in the finality of Muhammad as the last prophet. Consequently, they became the major victims of sectarian violence in Jhang. The migrants, being more politically religious, were at the forefront of the anti-Qadiani movement in Chiniot right from the beginning. In 1974, the Qadianis were declared non-Muslims constitutionally, but it did not put an end to the sectarian tensions. A few years later, Jhang became the centre of Shia-Sunni violence. Certain Sunni parties began to demand that the Shias should be declared kafirs (non-Muslims). It was, despite the fact that, the Sunnis and Shias had co-operated with each other during the anti-Qadiani movement.

Though precise figures are not available, a majority of the population in Jhang is Sunni. Estimates vary as the Sunni religious leaders claim that the Sunni population is over 85 per cent, whereas the Shias put their number in the range of 25-30 per cent. Whatever the truth, the fact is that the Shia population is sizeable in Jhang, compared to other districts in Pakistan. Moreover, the Shias have been dominating the socio-political scene of Jhang since pre-independence days, primarily because most of the politically powerful feudal lords belong to the Shia sect. Among these Shia feudal lords, the Syed and Sial families are the most prominent. This is evident from the fact that all the chairmen of the Jhang District Council thus far have been either Syeds or Sials. Only one of them was Sunni. The dominance of Shia feudal lords is also obvious from their presence in various federal cabinets since independence. All the federal ministers from Jhang were Shia Syeds except two who served for a few months as ministers of state.

Profile of Sects and Sectarian Parties

The Sunnis, who constitute the majority, are further divided in different sub-sects such as Wahabis/Ahl-i-Hadith, Deobandis and Brelvis. The Wahabis/Ahl-i-Hadith trace their origin to the movement of Muhammad Ibn-ul Wahab of Saudi Arabia and tend to take an extreme puritan position. They consider Brelvis as superstitious and their version of Islam as Hinduised and, therefore, a diversion from the original Islam. They deride Sufi Islam and put greater emphasis on the legal and outward dimensions of Islam than on the spiritual side which is upheld by the Sufis, of whom the Brelvis are great admirers and faithful followers. They are also highly critical of Shias and fully support the anti-Shia campaigns in the context of Jhang.

The number of Wahabis/Ahl-i-Hadith in Jhang is very small. They are scattered all over the district, though most of them are settled in the urban parts. A large majority of them is found among the muhajirs. Generally, they earn their living through small trades and business. They are great admirers of the Islamic system that is in vogue in Saudi Arabia and very critical of revolutionary Iran. Jamiat Ahl-i-Hadith is the national level religio-political party, which works to promote, primarily, their sectarian interests. In the 1980s, it became very active under the leadership of Allama Ehsan Ilahi Zahir but since his murder in 1987 it has split in several groups.

Consequently, the Wahabi/Ahl-i-adith leadership in Jhang operates quite independent of the policies of its national level leadership and often is swayed by local political compulsions.

Like Wahabbis/Ahl-i-Hadith, Deobandis too are largely based in the urban areas such as the municipal areas of Jhang, Shorkot, Chiniot and in other towns of relatively small size. They have their major support base among the migrant groups who constitute the core of their political activism. Though not in the majority, they are far more numerous than Wahabis/Ahl-i-Hadith. On the theological scale, they fall somewhere in between the Brelvis and Wahabis/Ahl-i-Hadith. They too are puritan but do not share the extremism of Wahabis/Ahl-i-Hadith. They are against, what they call the aberrations; excesses and corruption of Sufi Islam but do not reject it per se. Yet they are perceived by the Brelvi population as anti-Sufi and hence are generally identified with the Wahabis/Ahl-Hadith. Unlike Wahabis/Ahl-i-Hadith, both Deobandis and Brelvis profess their agreement with the same Hanafi School of Islamic Jurisprudence.

There exist various political and religious parties which represent the Deobandi interests or which predominantly consist of Deobandis. Among others, these parties include Anjman Tahaffuz Haqooq-i-Ahl-i-Sunnat (ATHAS), Majlis Tahaffuz-i-Khatm-i-Nabuuat (MTKN), Jamat-i-Islami (JI), Jamiat Ulmai-i-Islam (JUI) and Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP). Of these, ATHAS, which had a manifest anti-Shia bias, has since the mid-1980s been swept over by more extremist SSP. MTKN, which aims at countering Qadianis, has declined in its popularity since 1974, when Qadianis were declared non-Muslims. However, it still has some following in Chiniot tehsil where its leader, Maulana Manzoor Ahmad Chinioti, is based. JI, though it largely consists of Deobandis, stays away from sectarian politics. It has a very small, but quite active and well-organised following in Jhang. Until the mid-1980s, JUI was the only national level religio-political party of Deobandis, but it split into two factions (now known as Fazal-ur-Rehman Group and Sami-ul-Haq Group) on account of political differences. Both groups enjoy a lot of respect among Deobandis in Jhang but it is the SSP, alone which is capable of winning their actual political support. Generally, SSP is considered more close to the Sami-ul-Haq group than the Fazal-ur-Rehman group. In overall terms, Deobandis are relatively better organised, less susceptible to feudalistic influences and politically more conscious and active.

Brelvis constitute the single most numerous groups in Jhang. A predominant majority of them is settled in the rural areas where they earn their living through agriculture or agriculture-related vocations. Most of them are peasants, small landowners or kammis. They also include among them many big landowners and pirs who have considerable influence in the local feudal set up. These landowners and pirs, however, constitute only the second order in the feudal hierarchy, as the most prominent feudal lords of Jhang happen to be Shias. Brelvis cherish Sufi Islam, pay regular visits to shrines and tend to be superstitious. They continue to be under the strong influence of pirs and feudal lords. They are closely associated with the local culture and refrain from making rigid interpretations of religious injunctions. Instead of looking towards the orthodox ulema in history for guidance, they prefer to follow Muslim mystics of India who had the reputation of being very flexible in their attitude towards the customs of local people, most of whom were Hindus. Besides, unlike Deobandi and Ahl-i-Hadith ulema, they rarely look towards the Arab countries for religious inspiration. With the exception of the Prophet and his close companions, almost all the major sources of their inspiration are found in India. The result is that they are co-cultural, less violent and more accommodating in social relations.

The major religio-political parties of Brelvis are Jamiat Ulema-i-Pakistan (JUP) and Pakistan Awami Tehreek (PAT). But only the most religious among the Brelvis, especially those located in the urban areas, associate themselves with these parties. The Brelvis are least organised of all the sects in the context of Jhang. They have stayed away from the anti-Shia campaign and the ensuing violence of the past few years, although the voting behaviour of those based in the urban parts has been affected by sectarian discourse. Common peasants Brelvis in the rural areas remain content just with their visits to the shrines and pirs. Many of them pay visits and even allegiance to the Shia pirs, notwithstanding the fact that their fiqah is Hanafi, which is different from those of Shias who observe Fiqah-i-Jafria. Deobandis and Wahabis/Ahl-i-Hadith condemn them as "Shiaised".

Like Brelvis, Shias are largely based in the rural areas and depend on agriculture for their living. They include among themselves the leading feudal lords of Jhang who have been monopolising political power since pre-independence days. Until the early 1980s, the Shias too were quite superstitious like Brelvis and were not interested in practising religion beyond Muharram rituals. But gradually they too have acquired puritan tendencies under the influence of Iran, which threw up the formally trained Shia ulema to prominence in Jhang, compared to the traditional zakirs who were completely co-cultural.

The major religio-political party of Shias is Tehrik-i-Jafria Pakistan (TJP). It is well organised and effectively represents the interests of Shia community in Pakistan. In Jhang, it has a significant following; though in recent years, as a result of increased pressure from the Sunni side, it has adopted a more reconciliatory and accommodating posture than in the past when it appeared more assertive and threatening vis-à-vis the government and Sunnis. TJP has several affiliated organisations, which too play a very active role. These organisations include Sipah-i-Abbas, Sipah-i-Ahl-Bait and Imamia Students Organisation, etc. Since 1994, the Sipah-i-Muhammad (SM), a splinter group of TJP has earned much notoriety as a Shia terrorist group involved in anti-SSP campaigns, violence and target killings. It is believed that this group has a significant number of followers in Jhang.

Sectarian Politics: 1947-1977

Jhang has a history of Sunni-Shia sectarian violence since pre-independence days. It is reported that the Tabarra movement, which started in 1930s in the United Provinces, had caused Shia-Sunni hostility in the district. Certain sections of Sunni masses, especially the Deobandis, were not happy because of the perceived oppression and discrimination of Shia lords against them. But they had limited options to air their resentment in the absence of universal franchise and the over-powering feudal structure. It may be noted that in the 1945-6 All India Central Assembly elections, Syed Abid Husain, a leading Shia feudal lord of the Shah Jeevna family, were successful on the Muslim League ticket. Intoxicated by political and economic power, the feudal lords were least sensitive to the religious beliefs of the Sunni masses. It was not unusual for them to publicly make blasphemous remarks (tabarra) against some of the companions of the Prophet (sahaba-i-karam) whom the Sunnis take in high regards. Sectarian tensions, therefore, continued to erupt off and on in Jhang.

In the 1950s, Maulana Ghulam Hussain, a Deobandi alim, started his anti-Shia crusade with the aim of breaking the socio-political dominance of Shia feudal lords. His movement, however,

could not stand their power and influence and gradually disappeared. Yet the Sunni landowners, which constituted a lower tier in the feudal hierarchy of the district, incurred significant political benefits from his anti-Shia campaign.

The 1950-51 provincial assembly elections were contested on sectarian basis in Jhang. Maulana Ghulam Hussain contested against a Shia feudal lord, Mubarak Ali Shah, but was defeated. However, Maulana Muhammad Zakir, a Brelvi alim, won the seat against the Shia Syeds of Rajoa, though his success is attributed largely to the anti-Qadiani sentiment of the time. Out of a total of nine seats, four Sunni feudal lords were able to win seats. Though the Sunni MPAs benefited from the anti-Shia sentiment, most of them belonged to the feudal class. They had no permanent bias against the Shias or the Shia feudal lords. In fact, some of them had very strong social relations with them. They used religious or sectarian symbols only because they were politically beneficial and rewarding, especially in terms of winning votes of Sunni mass during elections. For them, sectarianism was not an issue beyond general elections. This is obvious from the fact that sectarian identity was given no consideration in 1954 when the members of provincial assemblies were asked to elect members for the Legislative Assembly. Syed Abid Husain, a Shia, won the only seat from Jhang and became minister in the federal cabinet.

Meanwhile, occasional violence and target killings continued to take place in different parts of Jhang. Generally, the Sunnis suffered more and blamed Shia feudal lords for hatching anti-Sunni conspiracies. In late 1950, Jhang came in the grip of widespread Shia-Sunni tension after a Shia feudal lord and his companions in Hassu Balail, a town in tehsil Shorkot, were accused of making and setting on fire the effigy of Hazrat Umar. The government, however, was able to contain and control it by taking strict action against the accused.

The system of Basic Democracy under Ayub Khan suited feudal and bureaucratic interests, while it disempowered the masses. It was easy for feudal lords to influence the Electoral College of the National Assembly than the general voters. Meanwhile, the competing systems of feudal alliances, which emerged during the elections, were inclusive of all sectarian groups, and did not allow the use of sectarianism as a symbol. Consequently, another Shia feudal lord from the Shah Jeevna family, Zulfqar Ali Bukhari, managed to become member of the Parliament in 1962. He was the nephew of Syed Abid Husain, who was earlier member of the Legislative Assembly from Jhang and who had been disqualified for public offices by the Ayub government. Later in the 1965 elections, Nawab Nawazish Ali Khan, a Shia feudal lord of Sial family from Garh Maharaja, won the only central assembly seat from Jhang. It was, for the first time in the post 1947 history of Jhang that the seat of Central Assembly went to somebody out of the Shah Jeevna family, so strong was the dominance of Shia Syeds on the politics of Jhang.

The anti-Shia sentiment played a decisive role in the Central Assembly elections of 1970 in Jhang. Besides other factors, it was because of the Shia-Sunni clashes before the elections, which had left several Sunnis dead in Jhang City. This election, therefore, witnessed an unprecedented mobilisation of Sunni ulema and pirs against the dominance of Shia feudal lords in Jhang. They visited every nook and corner of the district to persuade voters to support Sunni candidates. Consensus candidates of all Sunni sects for the Legislative Assembly were launched on the Jamiat-i-Ulama-i-Pakistan (JUP) ticket. One of them was a Brelvi alim, the other one a pir cum

feudal lord and the third one a feudal lord. All of them won against the biggest and most influential Shia feudal lords of Jhang.

The interesting aspect of 1970 elections, however, was that two of the Sunni elected members later joined the ruling Pakistan People's Party (PPP). Only Maulana Muhammad Zakir stood with the JUP. The consequent sense of betrayal disappointed the Sunni voters. Moreover, just a power shift from Shia to Sunni feudal interests was not enough for common voters, although the monopoly of a few Shia families over political power had been weakened. It was because the Sunni feudal lords too were corrupt, indifferent to the socio-economic development of the district and shared all the demerits of Shia feudal lords except being Sunnis. The sectarian dimension of the problem, therefore, receded into background for a while, as it was a very poor indicator of deep-rooted social problems.

In the 1977 elections, all of the PPP candidates who represented a mixture of three Shias and two Sunni feudal lords, won the election in Jhang. Two of them were the ones who had also been elected the last time on the JUP ticket while taking advantage of the anti-Shia sentiment. This time the opposition came from the candidates of Pakistan National Alliance (PNA), all of whom except one Shia feudal lord were Sunnis from the middle class. The PNA blamed PPP for rigging the elections and started a movement against the Bhutto regime. Since the Sunni ulema were at the forefront of the movement, it came to be known as the Nizam-i-Mustafa movement.

The political scene of Jhang was completely dominated by the Shia feudal lords until 1970, as no Sunni could become a member of the central assembly, not to speak of becoming a federal minister. It was, despite the fact that in almost every election after 1947, sectarian identities were invoked to dislodge feudal lords who happened to be Shias. It was partly because the electoral constituencies were too big for the feudal lords of the lower tier, who included Sunnis also, to effectively campaign and win elections. The very powerful and well-connected Shia feudal lords had inherent advantage over others. Coupled with this was the fact that the middle class by then was very small and could not challenge the monopolies on political power on their own. Consequently, the small middle class, muhajirs among them being visibly active, chose to support Sunni feudal lords in the hope that they would be more responsive to their interests and concerns.

The sectarian differences notwithstanding, the socio-political context of Jhang was such that the only way to break the dominance of the Shia feudal lords was to play on anti-Shia sentiment. To confront feudalism directly was next to impossible, in view of the fact that majority of population took it as something natural, about which they could not do anything. On the other hand, it was easier to mobilise them in the name of Islam, which had always been very close to their heart, even for those who were otherwise not very religious. After 1947, it had become especially tempting because of the arrival of a sizeable number of muhajirs from India whose religious identity had been significantly augmented by the bitter experience of partition. They were ambitious, active, assertive and determined to create their own space in the new conditions. Their arrival had shaken the otherwise static socio-political structure. Having settled in communities, they had their own leadership, which also provided an alternative to even the feudal-ridden local people. Because of them, not only the regimented feudal structure got weakened but also the sectarian divides sharpened. In the post independence years, the muhajirs

were on the forefront of anti-Shia and anti-feudal discourse and activities. Initially, however, they were economically weak, had little support among the locals and the election laws and the size of the constituencies did not allow them to play any important political role vis-à-vis the feudal lords.

The number of central assembly constituencies in Jhang increased from 1 in 1965 to 3 in 1970 and 5 in 1977. It was now relatively easy for the non-feudal classes to strive for their political recognition. What they lacked, however, was capable leadership or a slogan, which could give them a sense of unification. Since leading feudal lords were Shias, the anti-Shia idiom was attractive. In the elections of 1970, the anti-Shia sentiment had largely benefited the Sunni feudal lords. Since they had essentially used it for political ends and not to break the status quo, they let the sentiment recede after it had exhausted its utility. Moreover, they had very strong social relations with the Shia feudal lords and shared with them the same value system. They would never allow the middle class, the muhajirs and the newly emerging business classes, who were simultaneously politically religious and anti status quo, to assume the leadership role. Nonetheless, it was obvious by then that the non-feudal classes were gradually becoming active, assertive and frustrated in view of the pathetic conditions, backwardness of the district and, most importantly, the lack of their political recognition. At the provincial assembly level, they had already won seats. For instance, Sheikh Muhammad Iqbal, a local businessman, became MPA on the Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam (JUI) ticket in 1970 elections. Later, he monopolised municipal politics for quite some time.

The only alternative available to the non-feudalized middle class was that of religious leadership (ulema), but it had its own serious limitations. First of all, it was quite hard for the common people to get rid of the feudal shackles and seriously explore other options. Most of them were illiterate, lacked exposure to developments at the macro level in view of their limited excess to means of communication, and were forced to think and operate within the limitations imposed by their local socio-economic and political context. They were dependent on the feudal lords not only for economic well being but also for security, which the feudal could ensure or deny with the support of the local administration. The religious leadership, on the other hand, was not interested in leaving their seminaries and providing such social services. They used the pulpit only for religious teachings, stayed away from Thana/Kutchehry work and, in many instances, played the role of second fiddle to the feudal lords. It was only in extraordinary circumstances, like the 1970 elections or the1977 anti-Bhutto movement that they would come out, but only for a brief time. Secondly, Sunnis were further divided into three major sub-sects, that is, Brelvi, Deobandi and Ahl-i-Hadith, a condition which was quite easy for the feudal interests to manipulate, in order to create divisions in their own respective interests. As already mentioned, the history of Jhang is full of the accounts of manazaras between Brelvis and Deobandis.

On several occasions, however, Sunni ulema were able to act together, especially against the backdrop of intermittent sectarian violence in different parts of the district. The electoral alliance of ulema with Sunni feudal lords in the 1970 election was partly a reaction to the alleged desecration of Sahaba-i-Karam by Shias. Such responses, however, were of a momentary nature and, therefore, could never succeed in bringing about sustainable changes in the power configuration of the district. Moreover, the Shia-Sunni issues kept on receding into the background as the attention of religious parties was focused on the Qadiani question on the one

hand, and Islamization on the other. Nevertheless, the defeat of Syed Abid Hussain in 1970 had sufficiently demonstrated that the Shia-Sunni issue could be exploited effectively to destroy the support base of Shia feudal lords and thus end their monopoly on political power. Feudalism itself could never become an election issue, as even the Sunni ulema relied on the Sunni feudal lords in their effort to defeat Shia feudal lords. The example of Ghulam Hyder Bharwana against Syed Abid Hussain is an example in point.

Sectarian Politics: 1977-1985

Though the Sunni ulema and feudal lords extensively used the anti-Shia sentiment for political ends, until the 1970s there was no sustained campaign to demand the declaration of Shias as non-Muslims. In 1974, however, the act of declaring Qadianis non-Muslims through a constitutional amendment had serious, though indirect, implications for the Shia-Sunni problem. Firstly, through legislation, it opened the door to declare any sect with divergent views non-Muslim. Secondly, in the context of Jhang, the Shias were likely to become the next focus of Sunni orthodox parties after the resolution of the Qadiani issue. Their morale was up, the state was on the retreat and they were ready to take on to other issues. For the time being, however, the Shia issue remained dormant as the emphasis was on Islamization and the anti-Bhutto campaign. Under these circumstances, Bhutto yielded to several demands of the ulema. He banned liquor and declared Friday as a weekly holiday. But, these concessions, instead of appeasing ulema, further emboldened them and prompted them to pursue their Islamization agenda with renewed vigour.

The Martial Law regime that stepped in co-opted part of the Islamization agenda of the religious parties and, thereby, diminished their capacity and potential to mobilise masses in the name of Islam. Two kinds of developments followed. Firstly, several ulema joined different state institutions with the aim of reforming them and helping the new regime in its Islamization program. Foremost among them were the representatives of JUI and Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) who were taken into the cabinet of Zia-ul-Haq. Their performance on the Islamization front notwithstanding, the consequent identification of state with the Sunni Islam disillusioned Shias and urged them to become organised for their interests. Until then, they had no religio-political party at the national level. Their parties, if any, were exclusively religious. Perhaps, they had not felt the need for active politics in view of significant representation of Shias in the bureaucracy and political parties. In the new politico-ideological situation, they thought of having their own political party and the same were formed by Mufti Jafar Hussain in 1979. The formation of Tehrik Nifaz-i-Fiqah-i-Jafria (TNFJ) had also been prompted by the Islamic Revolution in Iran. The new developments had engendered a race among different sects to struggle and lobby for their own brand of Islam to be accepted as state ideology. Consequently, sectarian differences and identities began to gradually get politicised and sharpened. The vacuum created by Zia’s ban on both political parties and political activities was filled in later on by ethnic and sectarian tendencies.

The imposition of Fiqah-i-Jafria in Iran by Khomeini and the fear of a revolution spilling over into the neighbouring countries led the Arab World, particularly Iraq and Saudi Arabia, to a confrontation with Tehran. This perceived fear engaged Iran and Saudi Arabia "in a proxy war for religio-political influence and clout in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and in the newly independent Muslim republics of Central Asia." These regional developments further contributed to the

already deteriorating Shia-Sunni relations in Pakistan under Zia. It was, therefore, no coincidence that TNFJ was formed in 1979, the year when Zia imposed zakat and the revolution occurred in Iran. Such developments at the national and international level were bound to have serious implications for Jhang, which was under the strong clutches of the Shia feudal lords and which had a history of sectarian strife. Though not a cause in themselves, they acted as stimuli and triggered a process of formation of sectarian parties and eruption of violent incidents. In the following years, the Sunni religious leadership in the district became highly critical of Shias, TNFJ and Iranian Revolution. Funds from external sources such as Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Iran also allegedly started pouring in.

The above developments, coupled with important social changes at the local level, led to the beginning of a new phase of sectarianism in Jhang — a phase which is radically different from the former one. Firstly, it involved the emergence of sectarian groups/parties, with the exclusive aim of promoting the interests of their respective communities. It was in sharp contrast to old religio-political parties such as Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam, Jamiat Ulema-i-Pakistan and Jamaat-i-Islami, whose primary professed objective was to struggle for the Islamization of state and society, and not for narrow sectarian objectives. Secondly, this phase witnessed increased, systematic and persistent resort to violence against each other. In the past, the incidents of violence were of an occasional and localised nature. Thirdly, during this phase, several Sunni sectarian parties formally started demanding the state to declare Shia non-Muslims. Finally, this phase of sectarian violence has a clear nexus with the external developments in Afghanistan and the Middle East. Before dilating upon the dynamics of sectarian violence, it would be appropriate to analyse the politicisation of the Shia community and its socio-political implications.

Politicisation of Shias

The formation of TNFJ in 1979 constitutes a watershed in the sectarian history of Pakistan. Formed in retaliation to Zia's Islamization program and the psychological boost received from the Iranian Revolution, it soon became popular in the Shia community of Pakistan. It first tested its muscles in 1980 when thousands of its followers besieged the Federal Secretariat in Islamabad to protest against the imposition of zakat on Shias which, they argued, the state was not authorised to administer under their fiqah. The Martial Law regime had to concede on two of their major demands: (a) exemption from zakat, and (b) separate Islamiat syllabi for the Shia students in schools and colleges. Hence, the TNFJ established its credentials of being a potent religio-political force. An increasing number of Shias, especially ulema and khateebs, joined TNFJ in the following years. For the first time, a nation-wide Shia party had emerged to articulate and promote Shia interests in Pakistan. It became more active and assertive under the leadership of Allama Arif Hussain Al-Husseini, who became its chief in 1984 after the death of Mufti Jafar Hussain.

The creation of TNFJ and its nation-wide reach caused a number of important attitudinal and social changes amongst the Shia community. It served as a bridge for the penetration of a relatively puritan version of Shia Islam originating from Iran amongst the Shias of Pakistan. Until then, the role of Shia ulema in the Shia communities was limited. Most of their mosques were under local khateebs and imambargahs under local mutawalis, both having no formal religious education. The relationship of khateebs and mutawalis with the feudal lords was that of subservience. Most of the religious activities were limited to the holding of majalis, azadari, and

bringing out of processions in the month of muharam. The local Shia communities used to invite zakirin for majalis off and on but especially in Muharram. The zakirin too had no formal religious education. There was little emphasis on formal religious education, praying or performing other religious ceremonials and rituals. The rituals of muharram notwithstanding, the Shia community was least religious amongst the Muslims in Jhang. In the context of Jhang, it cherished the feudal values and culture the most.

Since 1979, the Shia community in Jhang has become significantly religious. The Shia ulema have opened tens of new religious schools. Some of these ulema have degrees from the prestigious Shia institutions of Iran. They enjoy greater respect in the community because of their religious knowledge, their association with the centers of excellence in Iran, and their links with the TNFJ. Given the political character of the TNFJ, they, especially the district and tehsil level leaders among them, are not averse to take up day to day problems of their members. To the poor and powerless in the community, they provide an alternative leadership to the feudal lords. Thus, there has been a corresponding decline in the influence of zakirs and, to a certain degree, of Shia feudal lords. It is significant because, unlike ulema, zakirin were, and are, largely dependent on the Shia feudal lords for economic compensation of their visits to different imambargahs. Lacking formal religious education, their foremost qualification lay in their expertise to recite marsia about Hazrat Imam Hussain's sufferings in the battlefield of Karbala and make the audience feel the pain he and his family went through. They did not enjoy the kind of respect and status amongst the general public as well as in the eye of the feudal lords, which the ulema do.

Unlike zakirin, the ulema have gradually established a permanent presence in the mosques located in the Shia communities. They have practically replaced the zakirin who have lost their following. The ulema preach Puritanism of their own kind, condemn zakirin for the wrong portrayal of Islam, set up religious schools and mosques and emphasise the significance of strict adherence to religious practices. This change, at least in the context of Jhang, has by no means been short of a revolution. It was primarily welcomed by the newly prosperous classes, whereas the Shia feudal lords and their close associates were not very receptive to this change in the initial phase. Linked to this is the Shia activism, both in a political and religious sense, which was perceived as a threat by Sunni sections. The ulema provide guidance and leadership to the youth cadres who have received a great deal of inspiration from the Iranian Revolution. The Shia ulema thus symbolise the activism and assertiveness of the Shia community. It is evident from their frequent protest meetings and processions against what they perceive as American and Jewish imperialism. This Shia activism precipitated a reaction from the Sunnis, especially from the urban-based Deobandis and Ahl-i-Hadith. The Brelvis, however, remained largely indifferent.

The increased power of the Shia ulema has reduced the potential of the feudal lords to play the role of conflict or crisis manager at the community level. The influence of feudal lords on the Shia ulema is limited. This is because the Shia ulema, unlike the zakirin and khateebs, normally look towards their higher leadership for guidance and support and not to the feudal lords. Yet the Sunnis increasingly identify the Shia feudal lords with new Shia activism and mistrust them. It is particularly so because the vested interests have exploited sectarian hatred to their political benefit. The leading Shia feudal lords involved in electoral politics try to maintain an equi-

distance between sectarian parties, especially when it is perceived as politically counterproductive. The others, however, have explicitly or tacitly developed close relations with the TNFJ to increase their nuisance value. Sometimes, they work with the TNFJ tacitly in view of the fear of Sunni extremists. The Sunni feudal lords who compete with Shias in elections try their best to win support of SSP.

Emergence of Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan

The first place which got most affected by the increased sectarian tensions and violence under the influence of the developments outlined above in the region and at the state level was Jhang. In September 6, 1985, Maulana Haq Nawaz Jhangvi, a Deobandi alim of JUI (F), founded Anjuman Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan (ASSP), later renamed as Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) in Jhang. It was the first organized Sunni party with the exclusive professed objective to defend the "honour of Sahaba" and counter, what Maulana Jhangvi perceived as the increasing Shia activism under the impact of the Iranian Revolution. He used the pulpit formally and aggressively to demand the state to declare Shias non-Muslims. He also demanded that Pakistan, with majority Sunni population, be declared a Sunni state as, with Shia majority, Iran was a Shia state. He resented that, while in Iran no Sunni was allowed under the constitution to hold key state offices, no such restrictions were placed on Shias in Pakistan. The objectives of the creation of SSP included (a) to struggle against rafiziyat, (b) to struggle for the acceptance of Sunni demands, especially to declare Shias non-Muslims, within legal and constitutional parameters, and (c) to make sincere efforts for the unity of Sunni sects.

Being a firebrand speaker, he quoted Shia religious books in his public meetings and Friday sermons to persuade the large audience he attracted that the Shias were disrespectful to the Sahaba, the ummahat-ul-momineen, and that they shared none of the fundamental principles of Islam with the Sunnis. He questioned the Islamic character of Iranian Revolution and termed it as a Shia revolution with a serious threat to the Sunni interests and accused Iran of supporting the Shias of Pakistan. He vehemently accused Iran for suppressing the Sunnis in Iran, conspiring to export Shia revolution to Pakistan through the Shia minority, supporting the Shias in Pakistan and printing and disseminating blasphemous literature against the Sahaba all around the world. His style was more emotional and rhetorical than logical but, given the social context of Jhang, he made sense to the masses, especially to the Deobandis. Now it had become all the more important for them to put forward effective resistance to the Shia feudal lords who were perceived to be part of the conspiracy to export the Shia revolution of Iran to Pakistan. On the other hand, the muhajir communities and the emerging business classes found an opportunity to create an independent political space for themselves in the otherwise feudal dominated district.

The founder of the SSP wasalso a great critic of the Shia feudal lords in Jhang. He termed them morally bankrupt and oppressive towards common people and alleged that they were responsible for intentionally keeping the district backward in socio-economic terms. He particularly lambasted the Shah Jeevna family, which had been ruling the district since 1947, but failed to do anything to uplift the conditions of the district. Coming from a peasant family himself, he spoke against the Shia feudal lords with passion, used the idiom which people understood well, and was thus able to mobilise support. The district administration too did not escape his severe criticism, which, he charged, was inefficient, corrupt and protector of the interests of Shia feudal lords. His courage to fearlessly criticise administration, the Shia feudal lords and the Shias

together won him a great admiration among his audience, in particular, and the common people in general.

Before the formation of Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan, Maulana Jhangvi was a strong critic of certain beliefs professed by Brelvis. Later, however, he focused his attention on the Shias and adopted a policy of not offending other Sunni sects. Though incidents of violence still occurred between the two, he succeeded in containing violence and winning support of many among the Brelvis. He was also successful in winning support of Jamiat-ahl-i-Hadith in Jhang, which largely shared his views about Shias. Besides appealing to the anti-Shia sentiment, Maulana Jhangvi started addressing the social problems (especially the ones related to Thana-kutchery, etc.) of common people. This won him a great deal of support among the poor in the municipal area of Jhang. Gradually, he became popular even among the Sunni population of rural areas, not only because of his anti-Shia appeal, but also due to his willingness and capacity to address social problems. He was not a traditional type of maulvi, unwilling to come out of mosque to help solve the day to day problems of his followers. Consequently, he and his party had all the necessary pre-requisites to emerge as an alternate force to the feudal lords. A wide-scale acceptance of this potential helped him in winning the support of even those who were otherwise not very sympathetic to his person or ideology.

Sectarian Politics: 1985-1998

Until the mid-1980s, the Shia and Sunni communities were living side by side in relative peace and harmony in Jhang. Despite having certain doctrinal differences and occasional problems, the members of the two communities used to attend each other's functions and religious festivals. It was, for instance, not unusual for the Sunnis to join their Shia neighbours in azadari, matam and other Muharram rituals and demonstrations. Similarly, the Shias were the frequent visitors of shrines associated with Sunni saints. Praying in each other's mosques was quite common and not a problem at all. Problems between them, if any, were resolved, most of the times, at the local levels by the intervention of village elders and community leaders. Even when there was a big problem involving violence, it fast receded into the background and normalcy was restored in a short duration of time.

The situation, however, has fast deteriorated since the mid-1980s as the Shia-Sunni violence has witnessed a significant increase in Jhang, and several other districts of Punjab and NWFP. The incidence of violence increased after the creation of the TNFJ and, particularly after the emergence of the SSP in 1985 in Jhang. Both had extremely narrow agendas. The very name of Tehrik Nifaz-i-Fiqah-i-Jafria sounded offensive to the Sunnis. Why a minority sect like Shia should demand for the imposition of their fiqah in a Sunni majority state was the question, which the Sunni ulema frequently asked from the pulpit. The Shia leadership later realised it and changed the name from TNFJ to Tehrik-i-Jafria Pakistan (TJP) in 1994. But, by then, a lot of damage had been inflicted. Moreover, the emphasis of these parties was not on Islam or its intrinsic values such as tolerance, social justice, and respect for each other, but on promoting hatred and violence between different sects on the grounds of certain doctrinal differences.

In the new environment, which is infested with intolerance, there is little space left for intellectual dialogue and peaceful argumentation between the two sects. It is in sharp contrast to the situation a couple of decades back when scholars belonging to different sects used to argue

their respective positions in a completely peaceful manner through their writings and talks. Even in the rural areas, it was a common practice to hold manazras between religious scholars in order to settle religious differences. Though such manazaras never led to the settlement of differences, what is important to note is that there was a culture of dialogue, and not the use of weapons and terror to impose respective positions on each other. Along the way, the space for dialogue and intellectual discourse between the Shias and Sunnis has been taken over by intolerance and violence.

After the Iranian Revolution, the creation of the TNFJ in 1979 and the successful siege of Islamabad in 1980 by the Shias, there occurred a visible deterioration of relations between the Shia and Sunni communities in Jhang. The Sunnis started complaining of the spread of "filthy literature" by the Shias against the first three caliphs and other companions of Prophet whom the Shias consider "usurpers" and "enemies of Islam". They also protested against the increasing Shia activism, especially in bringing out Muharram processions and organising azadari meetings. Increased number of clashes started occurring on the routes of Muharram processions. The Sunni reaction, however, was more frequent and intense in district Jhang, which witnessed significant polarisation and violence along sectarian lines.

Within Jhang, the outbreak of violence has been more frequent in the areas where members of Deobandi and Ahl-i-Hadith communities are residing in sizeable numbers and where the Shia feudal lords have greater influence. This is the reason that besides the municipal area of Jhang, the Shia-Sunni violence has been more frequent in certain towns of Tehsil Shorkot such as Ahmad Pur Sial, Garh Maharaja, Shorkot City, Hassu Balail, Rodu Sultan, and Chiniot, etc. In all these locations, these are primarily the muhajir Sunnis who are pitched against the Shia feudal lords. The interesting fact, however, is that on the Shia side too the muhajirs, though very small in number, are at the forefront of sectarian violence. The general view is that the muhajirs, whether they are Shia or Sunnis, are more aggressive and assertive when it comes to religious issues. In response to the question why it is so, many in Jhang argued that it is because the muhajirs do not share the local values and ethos; whereas, the familial bonds of the locals cut across the sectarian differences, and are rooted deep in the generations of relationships. As a result, the locals have multiple ways of overcoming their problems, for not immediately resorting to violence.

The municipal area of Jhang is generally divided into three parts. These are Jhang City, Jhang Sadr and Satellite Town. Jhang City and a few parts of Jhang Sadr have been affected more by the violence as compared to the Satellite Town. In Jhang City, the muhajir population is in the majority. The major terrorists who caused a lot of bloodshed during 1990-1993 in Jhang were muhajirs. They included, amongst others, Hyder Butt, Saleem Fauji, Akram and Anwar Gadi. It may be noted that SSP election candidates have been getting a large majority of votes since the very beginning. It is in acknowledgement of their "sacrifices" that the founder of SSP, Maulana Jhangvi decided in the late 1980s to give one Friday sermon each month in Jhang City. The violence in that area has a local-muhajir dimension as well, since the politically dominant Shia Sial family of Nawab Aman Ullah has been a major target of violence. Consequently, on the Shia side, the involvement of locals has been much greater, compared to the Sunni side.

The support of muhajir communities and the rising middle-class played a major role in the success of the SSP. The young cadre of Sipah-i-Sahaba largely came from the predominantly muhajir Jhang City area. Since the muhajirs have greater internal cohesion and could never be assimilated by the feudal system, they find it easier to operate outside the feudal structure and opt for alternatives, if and when available. It may also be noted that many of the top leaders of Sipah-i-Sahaba have been muhajirs, that is, Isar-ul-Qasmi, Zia-ur-Rehman Farooqi, Azam Tariq and Zia-ul-Qasmi. As a result, the muhajir areas of Jhang have been worst affected by sectarian violence.

It appears that Haq Nawaz Jhangvi had political objectives in his mind since the very beginning. Significantly, the SSP was set up in the year when the first elections for the National Assembly were held under Zia in 1985. He supported the appeal of the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD) to boycott the elections only to the extent that he himself did not take part in the 1985 polls. But he supported the Sunni candidates of his liking and kept on preparing for the next elections. In his speeches, he vehemently attacked the local Shia feudal lords who had monopolized the local political scene for decades without doing much for the development of the district. He also started appealing to the Sunni masses to rise up against the increasing Shia activism which, in his view, was often backed by the Shia feudal lords and bureaucrats internally, and by Iran externally. As a result, he was successful in winning support of different sections of the Sunni population. Though he was defeated by Syeda Abida Hussain in the 1988 elections for the National Assembly, he received about 39,000 votes (32.5%), compared to 48,000 (40%) of the winning candidate, and hence clearly established his credentials as a strong political contender to the Shia feudal lords.

aulana Jhangvi was quite successful in attracting both the financial and political support of the leading businessmen of Jhang. A study of the profile of these businessmen reveals that many of them had political ambitions themselves or were deeply interested in breaking the monopoly of another local Sunni businessman on the politics of the municipality. The SSP offered a strong platform through which these businessmen could have achieved the desired objectives. Consequently, it may be noted that, first Sheikh Yousaf, and later Mian Iqbal and Mian Abid, all of them major businessmen of Jhang, aspired to become MPAs with the support of SSP. Sheikh Yousaf succeeded once in 1985. Mian Iqbal Hussain was killed on August 12, 1991, a few months before the provincial assembly elections for which he was the joint candidate of SSP and Anjaman-i-Tajiran. His brother, Mian Abid, became MPA uncontested on May 6, 1992. The loser of the seat was a Sunni who had first won the MPA seat for the first time in 1970 on the JUI ticket as a result of the anti-Shia sentiment of the time. Had Sipah-i-Sahaba been a anti-Shia party out of purely religious reasons, it should have nothing to do with the MPA seat comprising urban part of Jhang where all the important candidates were Sunnis in all the elections since 1985. Nothing explains this but the fact that the businessmen with grievances against the existing leadership or those with political ambitions used the SSP platform to achieve their objectives.

The support of the rising middle classes, especially in the urban areas of Jhang, for sectarian parties are pretty clear from their election performance. The SSP, in particular, has been winning a sizeable number of votes from the urban parts. It was because the economically well off emerging classes find an alternative in sectarian groups to seek political recognition, the doors of

which were closed in view of established monopolies. Even in the rural areas, the major support of Sipah-i-Sahaba came from the shopkeepers and small businessmen. It may be noted that the business class and shopkeepers were witnessing significant prosperity since the mid 1980s, owing to the boom in cotton crop and related businesses such as workshops, pesticides, fertilisers, ginning and textile factories, etc. In 1998, out of the 20 members of the Anjman-i-Tajiran, 11 were muhajirs including the president.

In 1987, Allama Ehsan Ilahi Zahir, the head of Jamiat Ahl Hadith, was killed in a bomb blast in Lahore. It was the first major incident of a sectarian nature in the country. The Shias, who had been the major target of Allama Zahir's speeches for the past few years, were accused of their involvement in the murder. The reverberations of the event were also felt in Jhang, where SSP organized protest marches against his assassination. The same year, the Shia leader Allama Arif-ul-Husseini decided to turn the TNFJ into a full-fledged political party. These developments added to the concerns of the SSP activists, especially because many of them believed that Iran under Khomeni was deeply interested in exporting revolution to Pakistan through the Shia population in Pakistan. About a year later, on August 6, 1988, Allama Husseini was killed in Peshawar. Amongst others, Captain Majid Raza Gilani, who belonged to Jhang, was accused of the incident. As he was one of the former staff members of President Zia, the TNFJ blamed Zia-ul-Haq for his murder and launched vigorous protests. The day of Allama Husseini's killing was declared a day of mourning in the neighbouring Iran. Besides, Ayatullah Janati, special representative of Ayatullah Khomeini and a member of powerful Council of Guardians, travelled to Peshawar and Kurram Agency to participate in the burial ceremonies. A few days later, Zia-ul-Haq was killed in the C-130 plane crash on August 17, 1988. Many activists of the SSP believe even today that he was killed as a result of a conspiracy hatched by the Shias.

Killings of the leaders of religious and sectarian parties did not stop with the murder of Arif-ul-Husseini in 1988. In 1990, Haq Nawaz Jhangvi was murdered in Jhang which caused violent protests in Jhang and elsewhere. At that time, most of the SSP leaders blamed the Shias and Iran for his assassination. In particular, some local Shia feudal lords and an Iranian official at the Khana-e-Farhang Iran, Lahore, were accused of conspiring to kill the SSP leaders. The question of direct responsibility notwithstanding, the political motives behind his killing were blatant, as he had started challenging the political dominance of several feudal lords of the area. Jhang has never been peaceful since his murder. The Sipah-i-Sahaba activists later killed several people whom they suspected for their involvement in Maulana Jhangvi's murder.

As a result of the sectarian row, the successors of Haq Nawaz Jhangvi were successful in winning at least one National Assembly and one Punjab Assembly seats from Jhang, besides influencing election politics in other constituencies. Maulana Isar-ul-Haq Qasmi, the immediate successor of Maulana Jhangvi, won the National Assembly seat in 1990. Only after a few months of his election, he too was killed in 1991. His seat remained vacant for about two years as the government decided not to hold elections on the pretext of law and order problem. These two years constitute, perhaps, the most violent phase in the history of Jhang. Later, however, Maulana Azam Tariq won the same seat in 1993 and 1995. It is interesting to note that with the election of Azam Tariq as the MNA in 1993, violence in Jhang decreased both in its frequency and intensity. Many in Jhang believe that it was because Maulana Azam Tariq wanted to get rid

of terrorists in the SSP ranks who had got out of control and become a liability. He told his supporters that after having been elected as MNA it was his party's responsibility to restore peace in the city. The extremists in his party did not like this change. Some of them later blamed the SSP leadership for betraying Jhangvi's mission and formed an exclusively terrorist outfit, Lashkar-i-Jhangvi. Since then, the target killings have been taking place at different places in Punjab and are no more limited to Jhang alone. In particular, the year 1994 witnessed a large number of target murders of both Sunni and Shia leaders, besides indiscriminate killings of common people.

In March 1995, Milli Yekjehti Council (MYC) was formed by 11 religious/sectarian parties to create sectarian harmony, point out causes of any misunderstanding between two or more sects and resolve the effects of any such development resulting from misunderstanding. The Council agreed in May 1995 to a 17-point code of conduct. As a result, the situation significantly improved in 1995 and 1996. However, the extremists in both the Shia and Sunni parties blamed their leaders for compromising on their respective basic beliefs and principles and, therefore, were not happy. After a lot of grumbling, they lost patience by the middle of 1996 and started another extremely violent phase of violence. It proclaimed the death knell of MYC. As a result, since mid-1996 the country has witnessed an unprecedented upsurge in sectarian violence. In addition to the religious leaders, police officials and bureaucrats are also now subject to terrorist attacks. The government has responded by enacting strict laws and setting up terrorist courts but has failed to achieve the desired results. Now it seems that out of frustration the Punjab Police are extensively relying on extra-judicial killings to counter sectarian violence.

Sectarianism and the Brelvi School

Most of the Brelvis have largely stayed away from indulging in the anti-Shia violence in the Jhang district. This is, despite the fact that, at the conceptual level they share the major SSP allegations against the Shia. Like the SSP, the Brelvi ulema criticise Shias for disseminating "blasphemous literature" against Sahaba, and blame Iran for supporting them. However, their criticism remains limited to their speeches and Friday sermons. It is only in the month of Muharram that they sometime make alliance with SSP or the Deobandis and Ahl-i-Hadith in general to stop Shia processions from passing through the streets of areas dominantly inhabited by the Sunnis. It is because the Shias are often accused of making derogatory remarks against Sahaba during these processions. Consequently, it has been a common demand of both the Brelvis and SSP that the Shia should be restricted to their imambargahs for their Muharram rituals.

In general, the Brelvis are least organised and lack effective leadership as compared to other sects. Since Jamiat Ulema-i-Pakistan (JUP) has lost its appeal in recent years because of internal divisions, a sizeable number of the Brelvis have joined Pakistan Awami Tehrik (PAT) of Allama Tahir-ul-Qadri. Though their major support comes from the Brelvis, both JUP and PAT are not sectarian parties. At a higher level, these Brelvi parties generally do not take up the controversial sectarian issues. At lower level, however, the local ulema do attack other sects. But the focus of Brelvi ulema is not exclusively on the Shias as they also criticise Deobandis and Ahl-i-Hadith. It is in contrast to the SSP which, in order to forge and maintain Sunni unity against the Shias, has lately adopted the policy of not indulging in any controversy or conflict with the Brelvis. Here it might be pointed out that the founder of SSP, Maulana Haq Nawaz Jhangvi, was actively

involved in the anti-Brelvi campaign until the early 1980s. In August 1979, he participated in a manazra with a Brelvi alim, Maulana Muhammad Ashraf Sialvi. In its initial years, SSP had a few clashes with the Brelvis, but gradually it was able to improve relations with Brelvis. This strategy has incurred significant political benefits for the SSP. A large number of Brelvis, for instance, have been voting for SSP candidates in various elections since 1988. Yet the Shia-Sunni violence is predominantly restricted to the Deobandis and Ahl-i-Hadith on one side, and the Shias on the other. The lack of Brelvi activism can be explained on the following grounds:

- A big majority of the Brelvi population is inhabited in the rural areas of Jhang and still is under the strong influence of Shia feudal lords.
- Most of the Brelvi population has very strong religio-cultural attachments with the local shrine institutions. Faced with problems, they visit these shrines which provide a kind of psychological support to them. As a consequence, they have developed a tendency of reverting back to the shrines, instead of showing activism on the political level for the resolution of their problems.
- The Brelvis do not feel politically under-represented, as many of the Sunni feudal lords and pirs happen to be Brelvis.
- Since the anti-Shia platform has already been taken over by SSP with Deobandi orientation, the Brelvis do not want to play a secondary role.
- They lack effective and charismatic leadership both at the national and local levels. It is in sharp contrast to the situation in 1970 when the JUP was quite active at the national level while, in Jhang, Maulana Muhammad Zakir was able to keep the Brelvis united. Consequently, the Brelvi candidates won all the three seats of the National Assembly at the JUP ticket in 1970.

Conclusion

Since the late 1980s, the Shia-Sunni sectarian violence has engulfed almost the entire province of Punjab and certain parts of the North-Western Frontier Province (NWFP). Though sectarian conflict is not a new phenomenon, the scope, intensity and the continuity of the ongoing violent phase are unprecedented in the history of Pakistan. Jhang in Punjab province was the first district to fall prey to the increased and persistent nature of sectarian violence in the 1980s. Many reasons are enumerated in the existing literature, ranging from the Islamization under Zia (which triggered a race among different sects to fight for their own brand of Islam to be accepted by the state) to the crisis of governance, to the easy availability of weapons, and to external support to the local sectarian groups. However, how these developments at the macro level translated into sectarian conflict in Jhang, and not in any other district with the same intensity and scope, remain under-researched. Similarly, the local socio-economic realities with possible implications for violence, both at the local and national levels, have not received in-depth treatment in the available academic literature.

In the context of Jhang, the Shia-Sunni sectarian conflict cannot be explained in religious and ideological terms alone; notwithstanding the fact that the religious and sectarian idiom is frequently used by religious leaders from the pulpit to encourage violence, mobilise their followers and achieve political goals. Had ideology been the major cause, the conflict would have been the persistent character of Jhang, or it would not have been largely contained to just a few pockets in Pakistan. It may be noted that sectarian violence beyond Jhang and certain other districts is primarily of a terrorist nature and, therefore, may not be symptomatic of tensions at the grass roots level. In Jhang, by contrast, tensions at the grass roots level are quite high. Besides, the anti-Shia sentiment is invariably invoked, especially by the SSP or the candidates supported by it, during elections.

The first conclusion of this study is that, in the context of sectarian violence, the local contextual realities have been of critical significance. The external stimuli might have played some catalyst role in terms of triggering off and accelerating the process of shift from the dormant sectarian conflict to the violent one. But what is important to note is that the potency of external stimuli and the nature of reaction they might provoke are determined at the local levels. The likelihood of a shift from dormant to violent conflict, however, increases if the institutional and legal structures in a given state fail to adjust and accommodate to the changing socio-economic realities and/or lack capacity to effectively respond and check the external stimuli.

The second conclusion is that the Shia-Sunni conflict in Jhang is primarily a manifestation of the socio-economic changes at the grassroots level, which have given rise to political tensions among different classes of society. This class conflict invariably finds an anti-Shia expression largely because most of the leading feudal lords in the district happen to be Shia. For these Shia feudal lords, their land and peasantry serve as a source of power. In addition, they draw power from their contacts with the leading politicians and bureaucrats of the country. Most importantly, however, their power originates from the backwardness of the majority of the population in their respective areas of influence. In this situation, the newly emerging middle classes of the society,

who have political aspirations, find it politically expedient to use the anti-Shia idiom, which has the potential to mobilise the Sunni masses in their support.

Thirdly, it is significant that the incidence of sectarian violence in Jhang increased after the settlement of muhajirs whose religious identity had been sharpened as the result of the experience of Pakistan movement and partition. They settled in the urban parts of Jhang and got involved in petty trades, small businesses, weaving of carpets, etc. Most of them were Sunnis who included a sizeable number of Deobandis and Ahl-i-Hadith. Since both the Deobandi and Ahl-i-Hadith communities had a long history of religious and political activism, as manifested by Ahrar, Khaksar and Jamiat Ulma-i-Hind (JUH) before 1947, their leadership got actively involved in politics, which amounted to challenging the monopoly of the Shia feudal lords over the politics of the locality. However, the muhajir leadership could not win elections and thus effectively challenge the feudal lords by just mobilising the muhajir population, which constituted just a small minority. Consequently, it found it attractive to exploit the anti-Shia sentiment to mobilise the local Sunni population against the monopoly of the well-entrenched Shia feudal lords. It may be noted that the local Sunni population was part of the feudal system and it was inconceivable for a large majority of it to stand against the dominant feudal lords. Yet they were deeply religious and could have been activated to defend the "honour of the Companions of the Prophet" against Shias.

Fourthly, spatial analysis of sectarian conflict reveals that the Shia-Sunni violence has been more intense and frequent in the areas inhabited by muhajirs. Many of the leading terrorists of Jhang, especially on the Sunni side, belonged to the muhajir communities. On the Shia side, however, the role of locals in sectarian politics or violence is more prominent. This gives the problem, at least in certain localities, the local-muhajir dimension. Nonetheless, it is clear from the data collected from Jhang that muhajirs are easy to provoke and that they act more aggressively in the sectarian conflict. Even on the Shia side, muhajirs, though they are in very small number, remain on the forefront of violent activities. The violent tendency of muhajirs may be explained in terms of their uprootedness and the fact that, unlike the local population, they do not share familial relations going back to generations.

Fifthly, emerging middle classes in Jhang, after having grown in size and witnessing relative prosperity, have become more assertive in terms of seeking their political recognition. This category of the emerging middle classes is significantly overlapping with that of muhajirs who, as mentioned above, are largely businessmen and/or are involved in petty trades. The middle classes have been able to throw up political leadership, particularly in the municipal area of Jhang where people from non-feudal backgrounds could manage to win various local and provincial assembly elections since 1970. By the 1990’s, the middle classes had significantly grown in many of the towns all across the district. As a consequence, the struggle for political recognition by these classes was no longer to be limited to the municipal area of Jhang. These emerging middle classes, like muhajirs, consist predominantly of Sunnis and hence tend to play on the anti-Shia sentiment in the process of finding a political space of their own in the district.

Sixthly, within the Shia community, the strengthening of ulema under the influence of Iranian Revolution and TJP, compared to the feudal dominated zakirin and khateebs, has led to a relative decline in the power of Shia feudal lords. The Shia population now looks towards the ulema/TJP

for leadership and not as much towards the Shia feudal lords. In the new role, the ulema provide motivation and guidance to the Shia youth wings and the religious-minded population, and thus they have emerged as new power centers. This change is significant, but remains unnoticed because the anti-Shia violence and rhetoric perpetrated by SSP has pushed them to stay united in the face of 'common enemy'. It has affected the nature of Shia-Sunni relations in two important ways: (a) the activism which has been generated in the Shia community as a result of the increasingly powerful role of ulema with puritan emphasis is perceived as a threat by the Sunni population; and (b) the Shia feudal lords can no longer effectively play the role of crisis managers at the community levels because the Sunni population identifies them with the Shia activism while the fact is that their influence on the Shia activists has diminished over the years.

Seventhly, until the 1970s, the exploitation of anti-Shia sentiment in Jhang had incurred no significant political benefits to the muhajirs or the emerging middle classes. By then, the electoral constituencies were too big for them to affect any change. Moreover, the emerging middle classes were numerically weak to pose any serious challenge to the established order. As a result, the major beneficiaries of anti-Shia sentiment, which was invariably invoked before or during the elections, were the Sunni feudal lords of relatively lower cadre. These Sunni feudal lords had very strong social relations with the Shias; and for that reason, they never allowed the anti-Shia campaign to go beyond a certain level. However, they proved to be equally disappointing to the muhajirs and the emerging middle classes, not only on the performance front but also in terms of their attitudes. Besides, as the social structure remained feudal-dominated, the muhajirs and emerging middle classes continued to operate outside the feudal system. By the mid 1980s, however, they were able to put forward an active resistance by supporting the leadership of SSP in which they found a potential to affect a change. In the new phase, the anti-Shia campaign led by SSP got violent, partly because a more assertive and active role was now being played by the middle classes themselves.

Tables

Table 1: Year-wise Sectarian Killings

Year	Killed	Injured
1987	11	155
1988	1	16
1989	10	102
1990	32	528
1991	47	263
1992	58	261
1993	39	247

1994	73	326
1995	59	89
1996	73	160
1997	165 (95 Shias, 70 Sunnis)	N.A.
1998	150	N.A.

Figures up to 1996 are from Air Marshal (Retd.) Ayaz Ahmad Khan "Your are one ummah", The Nation, February 8, 1998; and for the years 1997 and 1998 from the reports of Human Rights Commission of Pakistan.

Table 2: Population Profile of Jhang, 1998

Area	House-holds	Male	Female	Both Sexes	1981 Population	Avg. Annual Growth Rate **(1981-98)**
Jhang District	440,814	1,456,713	1,347,684	2,804,397	1,970,944	2.09%
Rural	344,054	1,115,745	1,003,316	2,149,061	1,527,366	2.03%
Urban	96,760	340,968	314,368	655,336	443,578	2.32%

Population and Housing Census of Pakistan, 1998 (Provisional Results) published by Population Census Organisation, Statistics Department, Government of Pakistan, July 1998.

Table 3: Federal Ministers from Jhang

No.	**Name**	**Caste/Sect**
1	Syed Abid Hussain*	Syed/Shia

2	Nawabzda Iftekhar Ansari	*Muhajir*/Sunni
3	Sardarzada Muhammad Ali Shah	Syed/Shia
3	Syed Iftekhar Bukhari	Syed/Shia
3	Faisal Saleh Hayat*	Syed/Shia
4	Sahibzada Nazir Sultan (Minister of State), once for a few months	Awan/Sunni
6	Syeda Abida Husain*	Syed/Shia

Persons with stars (*) have been ministers for more than one time with different governments.

Table 4: Senators from Jhang (1977-1999)*

No.	Name	Caste/Sect
1	Asifa Farooqi (1970s)	Sunni
2	Syed Iftekhar Bukhari	Shia
3	Sahibzada Abdul Majeed Sultan	Sunni

*Just two persons became senators for a period of three to five years during 1977-99. Exact duration for each person's senatorship, however, is not available.

Table 5: Members of National Assembly from Jhang: a sectarian profile

Year	Shia	Sunni	Total
1946	1 (Syed Abid Husain)	-	1
1954-55	1 (Syed Abid Husain)	-	1
1962	1 (Zulfqar Ali Bukhari)	-	1
1965	1 (Nawazish Ali Khan)	-	1
1970	-	3 (JUP)	3
1977	3	2	5

1985	4	1	5
1988	4 (3)*	1 (2)	5
1990	2	3	5
1993	3	2	5
1997	2	3	5

*At f*irst, four seats were won by Shias but later their number was reduced to three as a Sunni, Maulana Rahmat Ullah, got elected on the seat vacated by Syeda Abida Husain.*

Table 6: Provincial ministers/advisors from Jhang (1947-99)

No.	Name	Sect
1	Syed Abid Husain*	Shia
2	Mubarak Shah*	Shia
3	Sheikh Muhammad Saeed (Parliamentary Secretary)	Sunni
4	Sardar Sagheer Ahmad	Sunni
5	Sheikh Muhammad Iqbal	Sunni
6	Sardarzada Zafar Abbas (Advisor)*	Shia
7	Maulana Manzoor Chinioti	Sunni
8	Riaz Hashmat Janjua	Sunni
9	Sheikh Hakim Ali*	Sunni

Persons with asterisks held various positions with different government for more than one time. Duration of stay in office for each minister is not available.

Table 7: Members of Provincial Assembly from Jhang: a sectarian profile

Year	Shia	Sunni	Total
1950-51	5	4	9

1970	5	3	8
1977	5	5	10
1985	3	7	10
1988	3	7	10
1990	5	5	10
1993	3	7	10
1997	2	8	10

Table 8: Chairmen District Council/District Board, Jhang

No.	Name	Caste/Sect	Duration
1	Syed Abid Hussain	Syed/Shia	20-10-1948 to 3-2-1955
2	Khan M. Arif Khan	Sial/Shia	5-3-1955 to 3-4-1957
3	Syeda Abida Husain	Syed/Shia	28-1-1980 to 14-10-1983
4	Syeda Abida Husain	Syed/Shia	14-11-1983 to 2-1-1988
5	Akhtar Abbas Bharwana	Sial/Shia	21-1-1988 to 30-1-1992
6	Mehr Zafar Ullah Khan	Sial/Sunni	30-1-1992 to 15-8-1993
7	Syeda Sughra Imam	Syed/Shia	1998 to todate

Note: From 1957 to 1980, bureaucrats directly controlled the District Council either because they were given a role under the Basic Democracy System of Field Martial Ayub Khan or because no elections were held.

Table 9: Sectarian profile of district council members

Year	Sunni	Shia	Others	Total

1979	18	9	1 Christian	28
1984	26	12	-	38
1988	46	33	-	79
1992	52	26	-	80*
1998	72	56	-	128

*Sectarian affiliation of two of them is not known.

Table 10: Chairmen Municipal Committee, Jhang (1979-1998)

No.	Name	Caste/Sect	Duration
1	Sh. Muhammad Iqbal	Sheikh/Sunni	1979 to 14-10-1983
3	Aman Ullah Khan	Sial/Shia	13-11-1983 to 23-6-1984
4	Ch. Muhammad Boota	*Muhajir*/Sunni	23-6-1984 to 3-9-1984
5	Sh. Muhammad Iqbal	Sheikh/Sunni	3-9-1984 to 27-11-1987
7	Sh. Muhammad Iqbal	Local/Sunni	…to 22-1-1991
8	Haji Intezar Ahmad	*Muhajir*/Sunni	29-5-1991 to 29-1-1993
9	Ch. Sultan Mahmood	*Muhajir*/Sunni	29-1-1993 to 15-6-1993
10	Haji Munir Ahmad Shahid	*Muhajir*/Sunni	15-6-1993 to 1995
11	Mehr Khalid Mahmood Sargana	Local/Sunni	18-12-98 to todate

Table 11: Ethnic profile of Municipal Committee, Jhang

Year	Local	*Muhajir*	Others	Total

1979	13	7	3	23*
1983	9	13	2	24
1987	20	24	3	47*
1992	20	26	2	48
1998	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	54

*One seat was vacant for some reasons.

Table 12: Senior SSP Leadership

No.	Name	Post	Local/*Muhajir*
1	Maulana Haq Nawaz Jhangvi	Founder and the first Sarparast-i-Aala (Patron in Chief).	Local
2	Maulana Zia-ul-Qasmi	Chairman Supreme Council.	*Muhajir*
3	Maulana Esar-ul-Haq Qasmi	Naib Sarparast-i-Aala (Deputy Patron in Chief); was killed in 1991.	*Muhajir*
4	Maulana Zia-ur-Rehman Farooqi	Sarparast-i-Aala (Patron in Chief); was killed in 1998.	*Muhajir*
5	Maulana Azam Tariq	Naib Sarparast-i-Aala (Deputy Patron in Chief)	*Muhajir*
6	Shekh Hakim Ali	President	Local Sheikh
7	Yousaf Mujahid	Secretary General	*Muhajir*
8	Sheikh Ashfaq	Finance Secretary	Local
9	Munir Munir Ahmad Shahid (alias Kala Pehlwan)	Chairman Municipal Committee (1993-95)	*Muhajir*

Table 13: SSP *Majlis-i-Shoora* (Consultative Committee) of district Jhang in 1998

No.	Name	*Muhajir*/Local
1	Maulana Azam Tariq	*Muhajir*
2	Sh. Hakim Ali	Local
3	M. Yousaf Mujahid	*Muhajir*
4	M. Iqbal Siddiqui Shaheed	*Muhajir*
5	M. Saleem But Advocate	*Muhajir*
6	Ch. Sultan Mahmood	*Muhajir*