

Ayatollah's shadow lengthens over Pakistan

by Susan and Ramtanu Maitra

A new danger emerged in Pakistan with the surfacing of a pro-Khomeini Shia political party in early July. It is evident that Iran-based Shia fundamentalism is being given a new institutional push in Pakistan as part of a renewed drive for worldwide Islamic Revolution mandated in the ayatollah's "Charter of the Islamic Revolution," a 120-page manifesto released Aug. 8 in Teheran. Aimed at Saudi Arabia and the United States, in particular, the Shia fundamentalist upsurge significantly increases Iran's pressure on its beleaguered neighbor and will go a long way in helping Moscow weaken the Islamabad government.

In early July, some 100,000 chanting Shia activists gathered in Lahore, Punjab to launch the Tehrik-e-Nifaz Figh Jafariya (TNFJ)—the movement for enforcement of Shia jurisprudence—as a political party. The party, which advocates alignment with Khomeini's Iran, first emerged in 1980 in the form of a loose movement protesting Pakistani legislation which they claimed ignored Shi'ite beliefs. President Zia ul-Haq gave new momentum to Pakistan's "Islamicization" following the 1979 ouster of the Shah of Iran. The vast majority of Pakistan's Muslims are Sunnis; the Shias make up about 10-15% of the population, based mainly in Baluchistan and Sind provinces.

"Our first priority is to end the dependence on Western values in Pakistan," one TNFJ activist told reporters. "Politics in Pakistan now is dictated from the West and for the West. Western values have been so accepted and ingrained that people think they are part of Islam."

At the Lahore gathering that launched the party, spokesmen warned that any opposition to the ayatollah would be brutally crushed. Within 48 hours, a new wave of violence erupted, this time against anti-Khomeini Iranians living in Pakistan, whose homes in Karachi, Sind and Quetta, Baluchistan were attacked with heavy weaponry. Several were killed and there were many injuries and much damage. According to intelligence reports, the violent attacks were carried out by the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, who had skipped into Pakistan across the Baluchistan border.

In late July, the violence spread to the North West Frontier Province where the Turi Shia tribe attacked the Sunni Pathans in the border areas. According to unofficial reports,

at least 200 people were killed and the border town of Parachinar was cut off for about a week because of fighting between the tribes.

A broader plan

Mounting pressure on Pakistan by the Iranians at a time when the entire Gulf region is tense is part of a longer-term plan. Since Khomeini came to power in Iran in 1979, hundreds of anti-Khomeini activist groups, which also include a few pro-Moscow Iranian groups such as Masud Rajavi's Mujahiddins, have come into Pakistan. Iran has regularly sent squads of Revolutionary Guards over the border to harass them and, when feasible, assassinate them. Khomeini himself, an avowed anti-Saudi and anti-American, has been sending warnings to Pakistan urging President Zia ul-Haq to loosen ties with both the United States and Saudi Arabia.

The move to unleash Shia terror in Pakistan is principally an effort to put pressure on the United States. As TNFJ leader Arif Hussein told the Lahore rally, "Shi'ites would topple the government in Islamabad if it helped the United States to launch any anti-Iran operation from Pakistan." On July 23 the TNFJ released a statement warning the United States that its interests all over the world would be endangered if it dared to attack Iran.

A recent article by Mushahid Hussain, the former editor of *The Muslim*, an English daily in Pakistan, in the *Washington Post* on July 29, is an indicator of the broader scheme. Hussain enjoys close ties with the Iranian leaders and is also a favorite of Moscow. He wrote: Pakistan "has been a willing conduit of covert U.S. arms to the Mujahiddin battling the Soviet Army in Afghanistan at great cost to Pakistan's informal cohesion. . . . Islamabad could hit back by making up with the Soviets on Afghanistan, moving closer to Iran and China, and defending its security through a region-based foreign policy rather than a policy tied to the apron-strings of a distant godfather. . . ."

The "region-based foreign policy" that Hussain refers to is nothing other than getting the United States and its allies out of the region—a policy which has been formulated by Mikhail Gorbachov and supported by both Teheran and Beijing. The manifesto of TNFJ also reads like a draft prepared by Hussain. It called for following the path of Khomeini's revolution to "free the country of imperialist domination"—an obvious reference to Pakistan's ties to the United States.

The rise of Shia militance in Pakistan is not only supported and backed by Teheran but also by Moscow. Pakistan government officials have pointed out that the Turi Shia tribe, which is involved in irregular warfare against the Sunni Pathan tribes in the North West Frontier Province, is on Kabul's payroll and heavily backed by the KHAD, the Afghanistan Secret Service run by Afghan President Najibullah. It is no secret that the Turi leaders had led a campaign for an Afghan peace settlement, as prescribed by Moscow, and were jailed last year by Pakistani authorities.