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LONDON BRIDGE TO KASHMIR AND BEYOND

What Makes Jammu & Kashmir So Important?

— Philip B Haney & JM Phelps —

In 2018, India continued to face a diverse set of terrorism threats, as it has since early in its post-colonial history. These threats include terrorism related to the ongoing territorial disputes in Kashmir. Jammu and Kashmir remained the region most impacted by terrorism in 2018, with 321 attacks, resulting in 123 deaths, most of which were perpetrated by Islamist groups. The three most active groups remained Hizbul Mujahideen, Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT). Both JeM and LeT have also been active in Pakistan and Afghanistan, though most of their attacks are carried out in India.

ONE OF THE BEST SOURCES FOR background information on the complicated subject of Jammu and Kashmir is a book by Alastair Lamb entitled *Kashmir: A Disputed Legacy 1846-1990* (available online in PDF format). The Kashmir dispute has dominated India-Pakistan relations ever since the Transfer of Power in 1947. In this book, Lamb provides a detailed account of the history of the Northern Frontier which included Hunza and North-eastern Ladakh, in the final years of the British Raj and he shows how this may well have set the scene for British policy towards Jammu and Kashmir in 1947. The book also deals with Jammu and Kashmir since October 1947 and includes a detailed history of UN participation, Indo-Pakistani negotiations, Chinese involvement, the state's internal politics and the origins of insurgency in the state. It delves into the details of the armed bilateral conflict over Kashmir, the three successive wars, the stand-off at the Siachen Glacier and Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, all of which provide an essential background to the present situation in Kashmir.

A second source to consider is the September 17, 2019 article by Christopher Snedden entitled *The Intractable Mess in Jammu and Kashmir*.

It should also be noted that since September 25, 2019, about six weeks after India removed the special status of Jammu & Kashmir, US President Donald Trump has made at least four overtures to act as a mediator, intervener or interlocutor, if not directly on the Kashmir issue, then at least between Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India and Imran Khan, Prime Minister of Pakistan with consistent indications that he hopes for a meeting between Modi and Khan in the near future.

This is an important offer because the situation along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir remains highly volatile, with more than 950 ceasefire violations by Pakistan occurring between August and October, 2019. As we approach 2020, tensions could explode at any time, while the Indian Army prepares for an "escalatory matrix." Meanwhile, on December 11, 2019, the Indian Parliament passed the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) by an overwhelming majority. Designed to provide sanctuary to people fleeing religious persecution, the CAB has a direct bearing on Jammu and Kashmir. Vocal opponents of the CAB including the Prime Minister of Pakistan insist that it is, "couched in the language of refuge and seemingly directed at foreigners, but its main purpose is the delegitimation of Muslims' citizenship." Immediately after the CAB was passed, violent protests broke out and swept across India, with at least 24 deaths and thousands of arrests recorded by December 21, 2019.

LONDON BRIDGE

Just after 13:43 GMT on November 29, 2019, the world began to hear about a knife attack against pedestrians on the London Bridge. As more details came in, it became evident that the attacker was a 28 year old British national named Usman Khan (*aka* Abu Saif = *Bearer of the Sword*). It emerged that his family was of Pakistani descent and that he was born and grew up in Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, a town of about 271,000 in the West Midlands of England, about 150 miles North of downtown London.

By 14:03 p.m. (GMT) the same day, the world saw in near real time that Usman Khan had been chased down and restrained by courageous civilians, that they withdrew as he was surrounded by police officers and that during the ensuing struggle, he was shot dead by police. Not long afterward, it was reported that

Khan's sister's home in Cobridge where he was living at the time, had been raided in a July 2008 counter terrorism operation, that he was affiliated with the Markazi Jamia Ghausia Mosque in Cobridge, Stoke-on-Trent and that his family originated from the relatively prosperous area around Mirpur and Kajlani in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir.

By the end of the next day i.e. November 30, 2019, it was also revealed that Khan had been imprisoned in February 2012 on multiple terrorism charges related to a "serious, long term venture in terrorism"; that he had been a prominent member of a nine-member jihadist cell with connections in Kashmir and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in Pakistan, plus London, Cardiff and Stoke-on-Trent, that he had been closely affiliated with the Yemeni-American Muslim cleric Anwar Al-Awlaki, the now-infamous English-language jihadist recruiter and that he was also a close friend and student of Anjem Choudary (See pic. below), the notorious leader of the banned but still active terrorist group, Al-Muhajiroun (aka Islam4UK).

It is important to note that Al-Muhajiroun is linked to Hizb ut-Tahrir, which in turn is linked to Kashmir and at least 20 countries in Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent. In addition, Mohammed Bilal, who is known as the UK's very first suicide bomber, detonated himself in Srinagar on Christmas Day in 2000, killing six Indian soldiers and three civilians. In the aftermath, Al-Muhajiroun founder Omar Bakri Muhammad announced that he sent out "freedom fighters" from Britain to Kashmir on a regular basis, that a group of 23-24 year olds left some two weeks before Christmas and that it was "quite possible" that one of them had been involved in the attack in Srinagar.

As other details came to light, it was revealed that Khan, along with other members of his *jihadist* cell, had somehow been granted a reduced sentence, despite the fact that the Court considered Khan such a significant risk that even a lengthy term of imprisonment could not adequately protect the public, adding, "Khan expected only victory, martyrdom or imprisonment," and that he was released in December of 2018, without ever appearing before the Parole Board.

Finally, as Chris Phillips, the former head of Britain's National Counter Terrorism

Security Office, said on November 30, 2019, "We're playing Russian roulette with people's lives, letting convicted, known, radicalised *Jihadi* criminals walk about our streets," especially since the plot that sent Khan to prison "was described as one of the most significant terrorist plots in British history."

DIGGING DEEPER - THE CROWN COURT SENTENCING COMMENTS

A review of the remarkably insightful February 09, 2012, *Sentencing Remarks* of Justice Wilkie, a judge with the Crown Court at Woolwich (Greater London), reveals that Usman Khan's UK cell had deep connections to Jammu and Kashmir that were not just cultural, but were also tied to *Jihad* and *Madrassas*, subjects also discussed by the authors in the May 2019 *Defence & Security Alert* article entitled *Madrassas Ingrained Worldwide - 20,000 Madrasas In Pakistan, Gateway To Jihad* and in the September 2019 Indian Defence Review article entitled *Unveiling The ISI-Terrorist Nexus*.

On November 29, 2019, the world began to hear about a knife attack against pedestrians on the London Bridge...

JAMMU & KASHMIR CITED 11 TIMES IN THE CROWN COURT SENTENCING COMMENTS

(Page 02 - Point 06): Usman Khan and Nazam Hussain were Pakistani in origin and their families came from the same village in Kashmir.

(Page 03 & 04 - Point 10): Rather, they intended to proceed on a more long term and sustained path, to establish and operate that terrorist military training facility where Usman Khan and Nazam Hussain



Anjem Choudary (centre), was a guest speaker at a conference in Stoke-on-Trent in 2009. Pictured next to him on the right is Usman Khan (Source: <https://www.stokesentinel.co.uk/news/stoke-on-trent-news/were-going-carry-until-last-3609481>)



would train, which would make them and others whom they would recruit to be trained there, more serious and effective terrorists. They would initially operate in Kashmir...

(Page 14 - Point 53): It is clear to me that Usman Khan and Nazam Hussain were to attend the Madrassa and were themselves keen to perform acts of terrorism in Kashmir [i.e. to fight against India].

JIHAD (CITED 10 TIMES)

(Page 02 & 03 - Point 07): Be that as it may, it is clear from a meticulous survey of the evidence by the prosecution that, in becoming so attracted, they fell under the influence of radical or extremist clerics [i.e., Anwar Al-Awlaki & Anjem Choudary] who preached an obligation, by way of *Jihad*, to engage in struggle including not only fighting non-Muslim occupiers of Muslim lands [i.e., Kashmir], but also extending the fight to attack civilians within the United Kingdom.

(Page 06 - Point 20): The Crown's position was that these three defendants were part of the group of nine formed in October 2010 to decide how best to further the *Jihadist* cause including planning for acts of terrorism.

(Page 09 - Point 32): In my judgment it is proper to infer that they [Usman Khan & two others in the

cell] regarded themselves as more serious *Jihadis* than the others.

MADRASSAS (CITED 17 TIMES)

(Page 03 & 04 - Point 10): They had a longer term view, were focused, among other things, on fundraising for their plans to establish and recruit for a terrorist military training facility under the cover of a *Madrassa* on land owned by Usman Khan's family, where there was already a mosque and looked to the others to supply them with substantial quantities of cash.

(Page 05 & 06 - Point 19): The basis of that plea was as follows: first, they were trying to raise funds to build a *Madrassa* beside an already existing Mosque in Kashmir: second, the long term plan included making the *Madrassa* available for men who would be fighting to bring *Sharia* to Kashmir in Pakistan. It has emerged in the course of this hearing that both Nazam Hussain and Usman Khan agree that they intended to travel to the *Madrassa* in January 2011.

(Page 14 - Point 50): The plan was to make that *Madrassa* available for men who would be fighting to bring *Sharia* to that region. Such people would receive firearms training at the *Madrassa*. It is now clear that the plan would involve Usman Khan and Nazam Hussain attending the *Madrassa* from early January for that purpose.

FAST FORWARD - FROM LONDON BRIDGE TO RIOTS IN PAKISTAN

On December 04, 2019, five days after the London Bridge attack, the headquarters of *Dawn*, Pakistan's

The Dawn had identified the attacker in several reports as Usman Khan, "a UK national of Pakistani origin"...

leading daily, was besieged by Salafi Muslims who called for the editor to be hanged over the London Bridge coverage.

The *Dawn* had identified the attacker in several reports as Usman Khan, “a UK national of Pakistani origin”. Khan was born and raised in Stoke-on-Trent, but the Telegraph reported he had travelled to Pakistan [Kashmir] after leaving school to live with his mother, before returning.

According to this report, the crowd repeatedly shouted, “*Long Live Pakistan Army, Death to Dawn*” and harassed employees for several hours until police arrived to disperse the crowd.

Another story from the same day revealed that the “*choice of words*” of a UK-based correspondent for *Dawn* had triggered criticism by several high-level Pakistani government authorities.

The reporter’s identification of the attacker as a British citizen of Pakistani origin was deemed as unpatriotic and defamatory because of the usage of the phrase “Pakistani origin” and the linkage to Pakistan.

Chaudhry Fawad Hussain, Pakistan’s Federal Minister for Science & Technology, even took to his official Twitter page to criticise *Dawn*’s writers and editors for the story: “Dawn walas [people] please have some mercy on this Nation, shocked on your cheap attempt to link a British terrorist to Pakistan, Anwar Al Awlaki and Anjem ch[Chaudhary] both are of British origin and had nothing to do with Kashmir or Pakistan. Britain should handle its problem within - irresponsible and cheap attitude.”

Hussain’s tweet was then retweeted by Shireen Mazari, Pakistan’s Minister for Human Rights, who wrote, “*Dawn* has its own agenda - read *The News* where their UK-based reporter has given details of the man’s life including the fact that he was born in the UK!”

BUT, WAIT – USMAN KHAN BURIED IN KASHMIR!

And yet, despite all the drama and virtue signaling from the highest levels of the government in Pakistan, it was quietly reported on December 06, 2019, that the London Bridge terrorist Usman Khan had been buried in his family village in Pakistan.

A cousin said his parents wanted to keep the burial “low key” and “did not want to bury him in the UK” because they were “scared.”

A pre-burial ritual known as a *Janaza* took place in a Birmingham mosque before the body was flown to Pakistan after being released by the City of London coroner. But it is understood many members of the Muslim community in Cobridge, Stoke, were unhappy with a burial at the local Ghausia Masjid despite its close ties with Khan’s family.

It is interesting to note that despite repeated public disavowals of his actions, Usman Khan was given a full Islamic funeral and burial. A *Janaza* is the Islamic funeral prayer, which is part of the Islamic funeral ritual. The prayer, which is performed to seek pardon for the deceased, is a collective obligation upon all Muslims, meaning that if no one fulfils it, then all Muslims involved will be held accountable.

The calls for Jihad in Jammu and Kashmir are growing louder, every day...

Then, a second article, dated December 07, 2019, added that Usman Khan was quietly buried in a remote village in Pakistan-administered Kashmir, adding, “While the local administration in Kashmir could not confirm the funeral, Samaa TV reported it took place on Friday in the village of Kajlani, located in the region of Azad Jammu and Kashmir.” A third story, dated December 08, 2019, revealed that Khan’s body was flown to Islamabad from London on Pakistan International Airline’s (PIA) flight PK792, without informing the airline about the true identity of the dead person and that Swiss Port International did not



West Midlands Police, Image Caption: Usman Khan, circled, with his fellow defendants in a surveillance image released by police in 2012 (Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-50618324>)

inform PIA officials that the person being transported was Usman Khan.

CALLS FOR JIHAD IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR

The annual Global Terrorism Index (GTI) has been published for the last seven years. Each edition includes a discussion of terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir, with summaries such as these from the 2019 GTI report:

Moving into 2020, national security experts and counter terrorism specialists must recognise that Muslims around the world are ready, willing and able to fight and die in Jammu and Kashmir as Mujahideen for the sake of Allah...

In 2018, India continued to face a diverse set of terrorism threats, as it has since early in its post-colonial history. These threats include terrorism related to the ongoing territorial disputes in Kashmir. Jammu and Kashmir remained the region most impacted by terrorism in 2018, with 321 attacks, resulting in 123 deaths, most of which were perpetrated by Islamist groups. The three most active groups remained Hizbul Mujahideen, Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT). Both JeM and LeT have also been active in Pakistan and Afghanistan, though most of their attacks are carried out in India.

As may be seen in the annual GTI reports, terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir is nothing new. For example, consider these verbatim remarks from a June 02, 2013, speech at the *Hizb ut Tahrir India Conference for the Khilafah* (Caliphate) in Jakarta, Indonesia:

“Hind [India] remained a part of the Khilafah for over a thousand years and in the era of the Khaleefah Haroon Ar-Rashid (786-809 AH), the Islamic army spread over Sindh till Gujrat [two areas in Eastern Pakistan and Western India]. And then the Muslim army built a base and established new cities in it and from that time onwards millions of non-Muslims started entering the folds of Islam in Hind, moving out from the darkness of ignorance and shirk to the light of Islam [derived from Quran 14.1], obeying none but Allah (SWT) and His Messenger (SAW). So the Islamic ruling was known to the people of Hind, Pakistan, Kashmir and Bangladesh for over 1,000 years. And after Hind gained its so-called independence under “Jawaharial Nehru”, the Muslim oppression continued. Hundreds and

thousands of the Muslims were killed in Kashmir and other places and continue to be killed until today. Thousands of Muslim sisters were raped, masajid [Mosques] destroyed and the lives of Muslims converted to hell. The world witnessed what happened in 2002, when 3,000 Muslims were massacred in broad daylight in Gujarat.”

In other words, Muslims have considered Jammu and Kashmir (and India) to be part of the global Islamic Caliphate for more than 1,000 years since Brahmin Raja Dahir of Sindh encountered Muhammad bin Qasim at the Indus River in the year 712 AD. And, the calls for *Jihad* in Jammu and Kashmir are growing louder, every day. For example, on July 27, 2017, Al-Qaeda formally announced that it had established an affiliate in Jammu and Kashmir called Ansar Ghazwat-Ul-Hind (Helpers of the Fight for India), adding in the press release that “*the jihad in Kashmir has entered a stage of awakening.*”

On September 22, 2019, Sumaira Farrukh, a prominent activist once nominated for a ‘British Muslim of the Year’ award, was filmed saying ‘*jihad is the only solution,*’ as she demanded action over India’s plans to strip Kashmir of self-rule. On September 26, 2019, it was reported that Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan lamented the lack of support from the international community for his Kashmir agenda this week and that terror groups have been preparing for an offensive [in Kashmir] and have reactivated their terror training camps. Chief of the Army Staff General Bipin Rawat confirmed that the Pakistan-based terror group Jaish-e-Mohammed had reactivated its camps in Balakot, where 40-50 *Mujahideen* were training to become homicide (*aka* suicide) bombers.

In case there were any doubts, on September 29, 2019, Prime Minister Khan, declared that “whether the world is with the Kashmiris or not, we are standing with them,” while adding that “It (standing by Kashmiris) is *Jihad*. We are doing it because we want Allah to be happy with us. It is a struggle and do not lose heart when the time is not good. Do not be disappointed as the Kashmiris are looking towards you.” Two months later, on November 17, 2019, it was reported that Pakistan violated a ceasefire over 2,500 times between January 2019 and November 15, 2019 in the border areas of Jammu and Kashmir and along the Line of Control (LoC) and that at least 135 terrorists had infiltrated the same area of Jammu and Kashmir since August 05, 2019, the day India removed Article 370.

CONCLUSION

Moving into 2020, national security experts and counter terrorism specialists must recognise that Muslims around the world are ready, willing and able to fight and die in Jammu and Kashmir as *Mujahideen* for the sake of Allah, in order to regain these areas for the Caliphate and to (re)implement Islamic *Sharia*. Jammu and Kashmir has remained a concentrated flashpoint for *Jihad* and sectarian violence for centuries. India and Pakistan have fought four wars in the region since Partition in 1947 and military clashes or *Jihad* intrusions occur somewhere along the LoC nearly every day.

One of the Muslims who was ready to become a *Mujahideen* for the sake of Allah was Usman Khan. Even though he was born in the West Midlands of

England in 1991, he heard the call of *Jihad* from thousands of miles away, from his family's ancestral homeland in Kashmir, which remains one of the most violent and hotly contested places in the world. And, Usman Khan was anything but a "Lone Wolf." Instead, he was a central figure in "one of the most significant terrorist plots in British history" who maintained deep connections to high-level Islamic leaders and multi-national Islamic terrorist organisations, all based on the desire to liberate Kashmir as seen in the name *Hizb Ut-Tahrir*, which means The Party of Liberation.

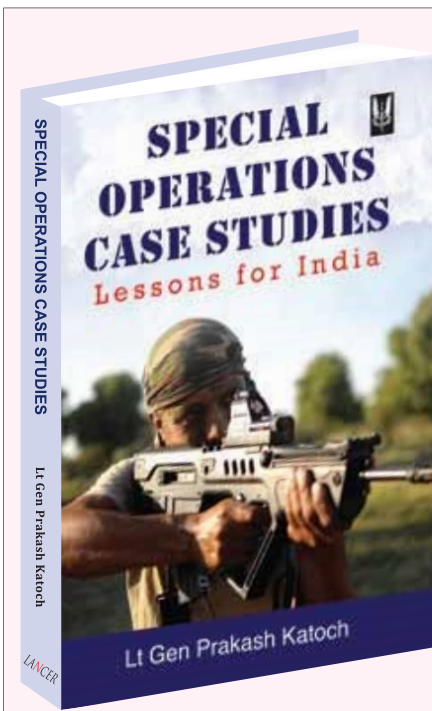
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