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Role Models: The Jama'at-i Islami and its Big Plans for Reshaping Pakistani Society

By Nicholas Schmidle

SEPTEMBER 2006

ON THE EVENING OF August 14, Pakistan's Independence Day, a mostly male crowd of 25,000 gathered in a park in central Lahore to cheer along the opposition as it denounced the military regime of President Pervez Musharraf. A coalition of six Islamist parties known collectively as the *Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal* (MMA), or United Action Front, organized the rally. They used the occasion of August 14, one of the country's most important national holidays, to stage the event. The tone of the speakers wavered between Nationalist and Revolutionary. Flags representing the MMA's six component parties outnumbered the Pakistani flags.

During a short, scheduled break between orators, a song with a reggae beat and a catchy melody played over the PA system: "*Why doesn't Musharraf take off his uniform?/ Because he would be naked/ Musharraf, why don't you die?!*" If a speaker happened to pause for more than a few seconds, a cheerleader-cum-firebrand would charge the microphone, throw his fist into the air, and scream one of a handful of battle cries that included "Leave! Musharraf! Leave!", "*Islami Enqelab!* (Islamic Revolution!)," and "*Pakistan ka matlab kia?* (What is the meaning of Pakistan?)," to which the crowd would respond: "*La illaha illa Allah!* (There is no god but God!)"

The MMA has, in recent months, gained significant momentum toward its goal of throwing Musharraf out of office. In early August, the Islamist coalition joined the Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy (ARD), thereby uniting the various opposition groups in the National Assembly. (The ARD includes erstwhile rivals Pakistan Muslim League (N), People's Party of Pakistan, and now, the MMA.) Weeks later, MMA politicians attracted headlines again when they tore the Women's Protection Bill — an amendment proposed by Musharraf to repeal some of the measures spelled out by the Hudood Ordinances — into shreds and stormed out of the parliament. (The Hudood Ordinances were passed in 1979 by General Zia ul Haq and proscribe rigid punishments such as stoning for adultery and amputations for theft, codes that the MMA contends accord with the Quran and Sunna — the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad.) Then, on August 29, the opposition submitted a no-confidence vote in the National Assembly against Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz. The effort fell short by thirty votes, but Aziz's government — and Musharraf's regime — remains under fire from all sides. Two days before the no confidence motion failed, the army killed longtime Baluch politician and rebel leader Akbar Khan Bugti, igniting violent protests and riots throughout the country. In late August, the President of the MMA and Amir of Jama'at-i Islami, Qazi Hussein Ahmed, told reporters that Musharraf's policies were pushing Pakistan toward chaos and that "people want to get rid of the present regime."

As Qazi arrived at the Lahore rally on August 14, the crowd burst into a deafening chant of "QA-ZI! QA-ZI! QA-ZI!" People jumped out of their seats and pumped their fists. A hodge-podge of young activists and *madrassa* students were assigned to handle event security. Their primary responsibility, it seemed, was to



Qazi Hussein Ahmed, amir of Jama'at-i Islami, leads the prayer at the August 14 rally.

protect the religious leaders in case pandemonium broke out — not to secure the general public. Most of them were teenagers, holding shafts of bamboo and wearing stickers and headbands that said *Enqelab ya Shahadat* (“Revolution or Martyrdom”). Hours earlier, they had simply stood aside when a few hundred attendees, wanting a closer seat, hoisted their chairs above their heads and rushed toward the stage. A smaller number of the security detail, looking to be in their 20s and 30s, wore camouflage vests, matching *pakols* (the woolen caps worn by residents of the North West Frontier Province, or NWFP, and Azad Kashmir), and long, straight hair — the trademark look of the *mujahideen*. When I asked one of them where he’d gotten the camouflage pakol, he professed to belonging to Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, a *jihadi* organization that has been fighting the Indian Army in Kashmir for almost two decades. The pakol, he said, was part of his uniform.

The chants for Qazi, a troll-like figure with a Cumulus Nimbus beard, continued until someone guided him through a crowd to the lectern. In true celebrity fashion, he raised one hand to acknowledge — and pacify — the tens of thousands of attendees.

Finally, at around 10 p.m., it was Qazi’s turn to speak. Mostly, he just repeated what others before him had to say. Previous speakers had already joked that “Musharraf calls the White House every morning to ask what color shirt he should wear!” and screamed that “Friends of America are traitors! Go away America — Pakistan is ours!” But Qazi spoke with authority. After emphasizing that Pakistan, first, is not yet a true Islamic society and second, is being governed at the whim of Washington, he proclaimed, “We are ready for *jihad* and we welcome these sacrifices to bring change.”

Qazi’s party, Jama’at-i Islami, is the most established

party in the MMA. It has almost thirty seats in the National Assembly. In stark contrast to the smattering of other parties in Pakistan, the Jama’at is organized, disciplined, and careful to keep its ideological debates behind closed doors. Its members are sophisticated, educated and committed, while its leaders are both focused and opportunistic. In short, it’s just the kind of party that could seize the initiative if the opposition to Musharraf snowballs.

OVER THE PAST FEW

years, the popularity of Islamist parties has increased across the Muslim world. Following the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the leaders have succeeded at channeling anti-Western sentiments

into support for their respective parties. Local experts agree that this factor best explains the MMA’s strong showing in the 2002 elections, when it won almost 12 percent of the national vote and formed governments in two of Pakistan’s four provinces.

These parties have also triumphed thanks to the Bush administration’s rhetoric of “promoting democracy.” In places like Egypt, Palestine, and Iraq, where secular dictatorships had long kept Islamist forces at bay, elections mean that the Islamists suddenly have a voice. The results, however, aren’t what the White House had in mind.

Since then, a few historians and intellectuals have stepped forward to recast the parameters of the debate concerning Islamist parties. Paul Berman, an intellectual whose ideas resonate in Pentagon policy circles, does just this in his book *Terror and Liberalism*. In it, Berman contends that Islamist politics suffer from the same nasty tendencies that characterized Nazism, Fascism and Communism. Adolph Hitler, after all, was elected. Not all candidates are interested in promoting Jeffersonian Democracy. Some parties, so this line of thinking goes, such as Hamas in Palestine and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, don’t *deserve* the chance to govern because they are inherently anti-liberal. In an August press conference, President Bush described America’s adversary in the “War on Terror” as “Islamic Fascism.”

Still, there are many who contend that providing Islamist parties with opportunities to participate in the political process can lead to good results. According to the “pothole theory of democracy,” when Islamist groups take power and become entangled in day-to-day tasks like fixing sewers and paving roads, they will have less and less time to contemplate jihad. The responsibilities of

governance, in other words, can do a lot toward moderating Islamists' fiery and combative policies.

This debate is particularly acute in Pakistan, where the MMA is constantly making news by staging rallies and protests against the government. Should the "Islamist threat" be interpreted based on the MMA's ideology or its practice in office? For example, the Jama'at, like most of its Islamist counterparts, recognizes jihad as the "sixth Pillar of Islam." (The other five being *shahadah* (profession of faith), *salat* (prayer), *sawm* (fasting), *zakat* (paying of alms), and *hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca).) Their literature is spiked with talk of an Islamic revolution, jihad, and the doomed fate of the Western, secular world. Not all Pakistanis, however, are sold.

On the night of August 14, after the rally finished, I hummed across Lahore in a rickshaw, on my way to meet my wife and some friends for dinner. The first two minutes of the ride, I contemplated the extent to which the MMA rally was any indication of what's to come in Pakistan — an Islamist takeover, mullahs with nukes, etc. But once we got beyond earshot of the MMA's mammoth PA system, packs of hot-dogging young men on their motorcycles became the main attraction. While "the beards" were chanting and praying and screaming against America, the middle-class was recklessly weaving through traffic, popping wheelies, and giving their riding partners high-fives along the way. Most of them wore bandanas, patterned with the red, white, and blue of the Stars-and-Stripes, tied around their heads. And on this night, no one was going to stop them from having fun. Such juxtaposing scenes — between the 25,000 people screaming at the rally and the packs of "Rolling Thunder" on the roads — reflect the complex situation in Pakistan.

Still, Jama'at-i Islami believes it can offer at least a little something to everyone. As evidence, supporters point to the mayoral-tenure of Naimatullah Khan in Karachi. Khan served as mayor of the 15 million-person megalopolis, roughly equivalent to the population of Florida, from 2001 until 2005. I asked across a spectrum of people in Karachi to find out what they thought about him. Many said Khan was the city's greatest mayor ever. "I didn't...and still don't...agree with most of his ideas," said an ardent and long-time supporter of the People's Party of Pakistan, between puffs on his pipe, "but he did a fine job...much better than any of these other buggers."

In four years of office, Khan gave Karachi a thorough facelift. He increased the city's annual budget almost four-fold. He built three flyovers to ease the city's traffic problems, all of them on time and within budget. Today, meanwhile, the Jama'at's arch-nemesis, the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), is in the city government and is swamped with allegations of corruption, extortion and sweetheart deals for party members. "You want to know why I succeeded as the *nazim* [mayor] of Karachi? Because I was not acting as the nazim representing Jama'at-i Is-

lami. I was the nazim representing all the people living in Karachi," Khan said.

"Those who came to power before me were from a different category of society. They were from Oxford and Cambridge and they feel that only they can give good governance to the people. I have contradicted all this [mistrust in Islamist parties] because I have given good governance. The people coming from religious parties have the right to rule. Only they can give good governance. I am an example of this."

DURING THE LAST WEEK of July, monsoon rains flooded Karachi and left the city paralyzed for days. Streets in the upscale Clifton neighborhood were passable only by boat or SUVs. Residents remained without electricity for days and the stagnant pools of rainwater penetrated underground pipes, contaminating the city's water supply. When I arrived on August 5, most of the water had receded off people's doorsteps, though alleys and back roads were a muddy mess. The city smelled like a combination of soupy cat poop and the inside of a gerbil cage.

While sitting in a traffic jam one afternoon, the result of five lanes merging into one because of flooding, my taxi driver sighed and shook his head in frustration. "This would have never happened under Naimatullah," the driver said. "No one can predict the rain, but he would have been out here right away trying to find a solution. It took the [present] nazim a week to come and see the damage himself."

Khan's response to flooding in 2003 has gained near mythic status. In late July and early August of that year, rains lashed the city consecutively for days. Musharraf flew down from Islamabad to consult Khan about the situation. After their meeting, the two men climbed into Musharraf's car to see the damage first hand. "At that time, security was not as tight," Khan said. (It wasn't until six months later, in December 2003, that Musharraf



A flooded street in one of Karachi's upscale neighborhoods.



MMA supporters gather in the shadow of Badshahi Masjid, a 17th century mosque built by the Moghuls during the height of their power.

survived two assassination attempts that left dozens dead.) “So we drove around for an hour — just he and I — and I explained all the problems of Karachi to him.” And the main problem, according to Khan, was a lack of investment on the part of Karachi’s major stakeholders — Karachi Port Trust, Pakistan International Airlines, Pakistan Steel, Port Qasim Authority, Export Processing Zone, Civil Aviation, and others.

“They are using my roads, my flyovers, my schools, my hospitals and my colleges, but they have not contributed a single penny toward the development of Karachi,” Khan said to Musharraf.

“Nazim *sahib* (honorific title), I will support you [in trying to involve the stakeholders]. Tell me how much money you need,” Musharraf replied.

Within a few weeks, Musharraf had convinced the city’s economic giants to pitch in on a package totaling 29 billion Rupees (\$480 million USD). It marked the first time that Karachi’s business magnates invested in the city’s development. In 2005, the World Mayor project recognized Khan as a “strong” contender for a spot among the Top Ten. However, local election rules forced him out of office before the contest was finished in October 2005, thus barring him from receiving any official accolades. (Similar circumstances disqualified Tehran’s former mayor and

current president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who left his mayoral seat in June 2005 to become president.)

I met Khan one morning at the Jama’at’s main office in Karachi. The office complex, known as Idara Noor-i-Haq, is a three-story, whitewashed bungalow edged in on all sides by swaying palm trees. The turquoise, green-and-white Jama’at-i Islami flag flapped out front. Khan, in his mid-70s, sat in a back office. He wore a lambskin cap and had a grandfather’s sagging features. Before winning the mayoral election in 2001, Khan spent ten years as the Jama’at’s amir in Karachi. I asked him how, after that experience, he’d prepared to run a city of 15-million people. Did his bedside reading material change? “I drew inspiration, from the teachings of [Sayyid Maulana Abdullah] Mawdudi, who said, on the basis of Quran and Sunna, that we should be equal and just to everyone,” he answered.

Sayyid Maulana Abdullah Mawdudi founded the Jama’at in 1941. Before that, he had been involved in the Khilafat Movement, a post-World War I push by Indian Muslims to see that Great Britain honored its promise at Versailles not to abolish the Caliphate. After that failed, he tried to lead Muslims on the Subcontinent to recapture their preeminent position in Indian society, which had been in decline since the fall of the Moghul Empire. Eventually, when Mawdudi accepted that demograph-

ics would never allow Muslims to rule India (Hindus constituted a 3:1 majority), he trained his attention on influencing the burgeoning idea known as Pakistan. In order to do this, he formed the Jama'at.

Mawdudi was determined to challenge and defeat the vision of Muhammad Ali Jinnah's Muslim League. Jinnah sought to create an independent state for Muslims living in India. Mawdudi not only wanted to see the creation of an Islamic state, he also imagined himself as simply a greater leader than Jinnah. "No trace of Islam can be found in the ideas and politics of the Muslim League," Mawdudi once wrote. "[Jinnah] reveals no knowledge of the views of the Qur'an, nor does he care to research them, yet whatever he does is seen as the way of the Qur'an. All his knowledge comes from Western laws and sources. His followers cannot be but *jama'at-i jahiliyah* [party of pagans]." Though these comments were published six years before Pakistan's creation, they set the tone for the still-unresolved dilemma over the identity and meaning of Pakistan.

Mawdudi wrote exhaustively about democracy and Islamic revolution. He insisted that the Jama'at not stray from its original commitment to both democratic decision making within the party — and the adoption of democracy on a national level. With each successive authoritarian government in Pakistan, Mawdudi's resolve grew stronger. In rare circumstances only did Mawdudi leverage his powers as the amir to trump a decision taken by the central *shura*, or consultative committee.

From his early writings until his death, Mawdudi's concept of an Islamic revolution bucked conventional assumptions. He believed that revolutionary change flowed from the "top-down." Since its origins, the party has been stacked with people of influence — doctors, lawyers and teachers. The Jama'at looks at society's leaders to lead the revolution, not the teeming masses. Consequently, one general is worth a hundred captains. In this regard, Pervez Hoodbhoy, Professor of Nuclear Physics at Quaid-i-Azam University in Islamabad, told me: "They have been the most successfully party in Pakistan, by far."

General Zia, for instance, was a longtime sympathizer and supporter of the Jama'at. In the mid-1970s, he began promoting Mawdudi's books in the barracks. Although the Pakistani Army had typically been the terrain of hard-drinking anglophiles, a sharpshooter serving during Zia's tenure as Chief of Army Staff was more likely to be handed Mawdudi's treatise on jihad than a glass of scotch after a good day on the firing range. After Zia's 1977 coup, the Jama'at found its members in ministerial positions of great authority. Khurshid Ahmad, a leading party member and close disciple of Mawdudi's, was Zia's appointee for Federal Minister of Planning. Three other Jama'at members were chosen by the National Assembly as State Ministers. Moreover, Hoodbhoy said, the party "made a beeline for the education department." In 1979, the Jama'at-Zia alliance struck twice: first with the Jama'at's

insistence that former Prime Minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto be hanged, and second, with the passage of the Hudood Ordinances. Later, when the Afghan jihad commenced, the Jama'at made itself a financial and logistical middleman between the Pakistani Army, the myriad intelligence services, the mujahideen and the Afghan refugees.

The Jama'at's relationship with power, however, has always been twisted. It champions Pakistan's nuclear weapons program and lionizes its notorious scientist, Dr. A.Q. Khan. But it has also, at some time or another, opposed every government in Pakistan's history. For instance, although it benefited during Zia's rule by interjecting its ideas into the ranks of the military and government, not to mention some factions of the warring Afghan population, its relationship at an official level soured soon after Zia took power. In 1979, Zia reneged on his commitment to hold elections and the Jama'at bowed out of its cabinet spots. Then, in 1984, Zia banned the IJT. Two years later, he booted the mayor of Karachi, a member of Jama'at, out of office. "Why do people say that Jama'at-i Islami and Zia were so close?" a senior party official in Karachi said, "Even the MQM is a gift from Zia."

The MQM was founded in the mid-1980s and immediately chipped away at the Jama'at's support base. Nevertheless, Jama'at-i Islami had already established itself in various layers of society. Now it just had to wait for those ideas to germinate. "It is rubbish when people say that, 'They only have a small percentage of seats in the National Assembly,'" said Hoodbhoy. "They have *never* gotten the popular vote. But you don't need the popular vote to change the complexion of the country."

Mawdudi thought that a patient approach to change, with supporters in all the right places, would eventually usher in an Islamic revolution. "Some people are scared," Khan admitted, "No one ideology is accepted 100 percent. But that's democracy. We have chosen the path of democracy and we will keep on that path."

I steered the conversation back to Khan's political inspirations and his political role models. Who did he look up to? "I admired [former Malaysian Prime Minister Mohammad] Mahathir," he answered. Mahathir, perhaps more than any other Muslim leader in recent history, paired religious revivalism with modernization. During the 1990s, Malaysia was one of the so-called Asian Tigers. The Tigers were a cadre of countries in Southeast Asia whose investment-friendly and export-driven economic policies fostered a global financial boom. In Malaysia's capital, Kuala Lumpur, the world's tallest buildings, twin minarets rising 88 stories, were inaugurated in 1997. Meanwhile, Mahathir made courses on Islam mandatory for schoolchildren and Muslim couples were forced to carry identification cards that verified their marital status. If a Muslim man and woman were caught alone without the cards, they could be arrested.

This "progressive but principled" approach to Islam

is what the Jama'at would like to see implemented in Pakistan. "The entire Muslim world should have leaders like Mahathir and [Iranian President Mahmoud] Ahmadinejad," Khan said. "Only they have had the courage to challenge the Western powers that are out to destroy the entire Muslim world." Without forgetting his ideological mentor, he continued: "But, you know, when Mawdudi started his organization, there was no Malaysia, no Mahathir, no [Islamic Republic of] Iran, no Ahmadinejad."

FROM ITS INCEPTION, JAMA'AT-I Islami has operated in a highly systematized and disciplined manner. While other parties in Pakistan have splintered and fractioned to pieces, the Jama'at remains a single, focused entity. It has always stood by the philosophy that it's better to have a few, die-hard members than a plethora of half-hearted ones. There are approximately 5,000 members in all of Pakistan. Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, author of the authoritative book *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution: The Jama'at-i Islami of Pakistan*, describes the Jama'at as an "'organizational weapon' in the Leninist tradition, devised to project the power of an ideological perspective into the political arena."

To project its power, the Jama'at oversees numerous wings and sister organizations. Naimatullah Khan, for instance, is presently the Chief Coordinator of Al-Khidmat Foundation, the Jama'at's main welfare organization. Al-Khidmat was one of the first organizations to arrive in the devastated areas of Azad Kashmir and NWFP after the October 2005 earthquake. There are also associations for laborers, scientists, doctors, farmers, businessmen, religious scholars and students. Each one acts like a general purpose union — and an arm of the Jama'at. Moreover, the party has divided the country down to a basic unit of society — the neighborhood. Doing this guarantees that no neighborhood is neglected, and that those already belonging to the group are constantly kept up with developments and policy changes within Jama'at-i Islami. In Karachi, party meetings are held almost every night of the week, beginning on Sundays, when the amir of the Jama'at in Karachi sits down with the senior leadership and the 8 district nazims to hash out the week's agenda. (In each city, the district is the largest administrative unit in Jama'at lingo, followed by the zone, and then unit.) Zone nazims meet on Mondays, unit nazims on Tuesdays, and units themselves on Wednesdays.

On a recent afternoon, I went to meet Javed Sheik, a unit nazim in Karachi, at the office of his advertising firm in Clifton. Sheik, a middle-aged man with horn-rimmed eyeglasses that gave him the look of a Lower East Side hipster, rolled around behind his desk in a wheelchair. He spoke English effortlessly, had an advanced degree and lived in one of Karachi's nicest neighborhoods. This is pretty typical for the Jama'at. Most of its members were educated in non-Islamic subjects at state universities. Many have spent time either working or studying overseas, including in the United States. They are profession-

als who are well-integrated into Pakistani society, albeit a society they see as severely lacking.

Nonetheless, the Jama'at's particular social base has, for a number of reasons, compromised its ability to attract mass appeal. First, the party's strongholds are in cities like Karachi and Lahore, while most Pakistanis live in rural areas. Second, the party relies on written literature to disseminate its ideas, though more than half of the country can't read. And thirdly, the Jama'at's literature is mostly printed in Urdu, which despite being the national language, is only the mother tongue of about eight percent of the population. Regardless of these impediments, Sheik noted that the Jama'at's influence and power continues to expand in Pakistan. "It's not because anything changed in Pakistan — it has everything to do with the international system. Our base will continue to grow because of international events. People are starting to listen to us more and now they are gathering around us."

To become a member — not just a hanger on — Sheik explained to me, is no easy task. Both the Jama'at and its student wing, Islami Jami'at-i Tulaba (IJT), have an intense "application process" that, in the end, involves a shura's assessment of one's knowledge of the Jama'at's ideological roots, as well as one's moral character. To prepare for the first part, Sheik read all of the required books, including the Quran, books of Hadith, a history of the IJT and all of Mawdudi's work. A current member of the IJT told me that the list today also includes the prison diary of Hassan al-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.

The second part of the screening procedure requires the applicant to keep a log. In it, he records his daily schedule — when he prays, when and what he eats, what he thinks about and his daily schedule. I asked Sheik if writing something like "I had sex today" or "I got drunk last night" would automatically disqualify an applicant. It all depended on the shura's decision, he said. Some actions might be forgivable if your other actions were honorable. "One of the biggest things is praying with the jama'at [community]," he added.

Sheik eventually became a member of the IJT while he was studying at NED — University of Engineering and Technology in Karachi during the early 1980s. "Sometimes, we worked 12 to 15 hours a day," he said, full of nostalgia. "We were more straightforward and righteous back then. Students tend to live in that spirit." On the weekends, they would take retreats to contemplate the life of the Prophet Muhammad. During the week, they spent long nights sitting together to read Quran. Occasionally, when someone heard of a particularly scandalous party, a group of IJT members would tromp across campus to break it up. They often harassed unmarried couples who were walking together.

When he graduated in the late 1980s, Sheik went through the entire application process again to gain entry

to the Jama'at. Although their ideas are similar and they hold Quran, Sunnah, and Mawdudi to be the pillars of the ideology, the IJT and the Jama'at remain institutionally distinct and membership in one does not qualify someone for membership in the other. During this period of his life, however, Sheik said he was "hypocritical" and "distracted." In 1994, he resigned from the Jama'at. (He'd didn't care to elaborate on specifics.) Unfortunately, the Jama'at's politics followed him.

In early 1995, while walking to the curb to take the bus to work one morning, two gunmen from the MQM, the Jama'at's arch-rival in Karachi, sped by on motorcycles and shot Sheik three times. His mother watched the entire scene from the window. One bullet pierced Sheik's spinal cord. He spent 22 days in the hospital and emerged in a wheelchair. He spent the next eight years flailing, unsure of what he wanted to do with his life. Then he turned 40.

"In our culture, starting at forty, you have to choose your path in life and commit yourself to it," he said. "I went on hajj. During the *umrah* [pilgrimage], I realized that the eternal life is more important than this worldly life." Sheik knew he wanted back in. "The first thing I did when I got to Karachi was to call the Jama'at-i Islami office," he said. Within two years, he became a unit nazim. (Sheik is still going through the application process, and though it's his third time, he doesn't disparage an ounce of the effort he's put into it. If only people in America would have the same attitude toward taking a Driving Test on their 85th birthday.) He now regularly attends the Tuesday meetings for unit nazims and chairs the Wednesday meetings in Clifton.

When I asked what they discussed in these meetings, Sheik reached for a dog-eared notebook and flipped it open. It included minutes from every meeting over the past year. Some entries: pooling money to assist Hamas (the Jama'at collected and sent 10 million Rupees (roughly \$170 million USD)); organizing protests against the screening of *The Da Vinci Code* (the Jama'at ultimately succeeding in having the film banned in Pakistan because, as one member told me, "It hurt the religious sensibilities of our Christian brothers"); notifying members of a weekly Quran Walkers Club; raising money for victims of the October 2005 earthquake in northern Pakistan; Es-



The IJT takes over a major walkway in Karachi University.

establishing missionary camps; and organizing demonstrations against the government. "Our focus right now is on dislodging this government," Sheik said between sips of tea. "The direction of the MMA's opposition movement will be defined by this country's rulers." If they miss an election, he said, the Jama'at will gather and protest in Islamabad. "But our desire is not to rule this country. Our desire is to see the rebellion of Allah."

IT IS, OF COURSE, well-accepted that college students are an impressionable lot. On American campuses, they're liable to experiment with everything to "find themselves" — drugs, sex, alcohol, sexuality, losing weight, religion, gaining weight, atheism, yoga, vegetarianism, insomnia, republicanism, fraternities, righteous aloofness, sororities and so on and so forth. By pure coincidence, I had brought along Tom Wolfe's *I am Charlotte Simmons* on a two-week trip I took in August to report on the IJT's activities on campuses in Karachi.

Wolfe's main character in the novel is an over-achieving country bumpkin named Charlotte Simmons. He writes about how she handles the social — and, when there's time, academic — stresses of freshman life at a fictional, Ivy League university known as DuPont. Simmons, in a word, bucks hard under pressure. After feeling like a loser for being repeatedly "sexiled" (thrown out of a dorm room by a roommate who's about to get lucky), she loses her virginity — and self-respect — to a misogynistic frat boy, winds up dissing an intellectual reporter from the school newspaper, and only, in the end, manages to rescue her social standing by linking up with the star of the

basketball team. It's a little farfetched, but it took me back to the headiness of experimental morality and reminded me how pliable (and resourceful) college students can be. The back cover of *Charlotte Simmons* points out that "these students are the leaders of tomorrow."

On August 12, two days before the anniversary of Pakistan's independence, the students and administration of Karachi University were observing the holiday by hosting a rally in support of war victims in Lebanon. It featured speeches by top admin officials and a giant birthday cake topped with green icing that had been cut into tissue-box-sized pieces. After a few nationalist songs and chants of *Allahu Akbar* ("God is Great"), the crowd of students dispersed to attend smaller gatherings put on by individual student organizations. The main promenade leading to the Arts Faculty, roughly fifty feet wide, was the domain of Islami Jami'at-i Tulaba.

The middle of the sidewalk was lined with dozens of portrait-sized photographs, propped and leaning against the back legs of upside-down chairs. The pictures showed wounded babies wrapped in gauze, mutilated piles of dead bodies, and other gruesome scenes of war from Kashmir, Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan and Lebanon. Miniature Pakistani and IJT flags were strung overhead and made a faint rattling sound when they twitched in the breeze. In a shaded corner of the promenade, around ten students loitered and leaned against a ledge. The tallest one of the bunch, a skinny guy wearing spectacles in the shape of sidelong piano keys, eyed the crowd as they walked up and down the rows of chair-framed pictures. If he made any sudden moves, his companions took notice and would turn to ask him what's wrong. Although none of them looked particularly menacing, their reputation preceded them everywhere they went. As one student in the Philosophy Department told me, "Everybody on campus knows who the IJT guys are — and everybody knows how to stay away."

In 1947, six years after the Jama'at's first meeting, the IJT was formed as a missionary group to educate the "future leaders" of Pakistan. Since then, it has transformed into a formidable political entity by adapting its message and practices to the political and social trends blowing through the nation at any given time. During the late 1960s and 1970s, for instance, it acted as an arm of the Pakistani Army while it tried to put down the separatist rebellion in East Pakistan (present-day Bangladesh). (These efforts failed; Bangladesh gained its independence in December 1971.) At the time, according to Nasr, the IJT "developed into an antileft force... [and] the government actively encouraged the IJT in its clashes with the leftist National Student Federation in East Pakistan and with labor-union activists in West Pakistan." The blood shed by the hundreds of IJT activists killed during Pakistan's civil war enshrined the IJT's revolutionary credentials. The experience elevated its position among Pakistani nationalists and proved that the IJT was not simply a subservient wing of the Jama'at. With its own membership,

leadership and policies, the IJT firmly became an Islamist force unto its own.

During the 1970s, the IJT flexed its muscles again when it led agitations against the minority Ahmadi community. (The Ahmadis were officially labeled non-Muslims in 1974 for denying the finality of the Prophet Mohammad's message; they believe that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, who lived at the end of the 19th century in India, was a prophet.) Later, it was the only political force in the country able to challenge the People's Party of Pakistan. In 1977, the IJT joined the opposition movement against Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and supported General Zia ul-Haq's coup.

Initially, Zia patronized both the Jama'at and the IJT. But he grew concerned over the IJT's rising strength, and in 1984, he banned political parties on universities campuses. (His decree remains in effect today.) Simultaneously, his intelligence services propped up the MQM and its student wing, the All-Pakistan Mohajir Students Organization (APMSO) in Karachi, formerly a stronghold for Jama'at and the IJT. Though the presence of the MQM cut into the Jama'at's electoral strength, the IJT remained active in educational institutions.

On campuses today, the IJT plays up its role as a wise upperclassman, willing to help younger students. When freshmen begin arriving on campuses at the start of the academic year, IJT workers are there to greet them and help new students register for classes. Between signatures and suggestions, they provide information about the IJT's ideas, as well as its activities on campus. "We are obliged to share the message of Jamiat with the new students," a senior party leader in Karachi told me. Some of these events include book banks, poetry readings and displays like the one put together on August 12. During the orientation period, IJT rarely mentions its sporadic fits of violent vigilantism.

After sitting a few minutes among the posse of IJT workers at Karachi University, Noman Hamid, the tall, spectacled nazim of the Arts Faculty, agreed to speak with me privately and we broke away from the gang. I asked him about a controversial incident that had occurred on campus a few weeks earlier. In late July, a female student going to take her LLB exam was harassed — and some say, raped — by a university employee. The girl immediately filed a complaint with the administration. Several days later, no disciplinary action had yet been taken against the employee. Finally, someone noticed the employee sneaking out the back door of a university building and five people — two from a Shia student organization, two "neutral" people and one from IJT — ran there and beat him up. "We believe this is a proper reaction from the students," Hamid said, "We are not ashamed of this act." The university fired the male culprit and two other employees, but didn't punish any of the five assailants.

I asked Hamid if the IJT imagined itself as a sort of

“morals police.” Is this type of vigilante justice the responsibility of IJT? “No, it’s not our responsibility — it’s the responsibility of the university to give out punishments,” he answered. “But if they are not effective enough, then we have to do something. Employees with the teachers union have more influence than the university administration, and most members of the teacher’s union are tied to our rival party [the MQM].” Another member of the IJT, whom I met in the party’s main office in central Karachi, told me, “It’s not the duty of Jamiat — it’s the duty of every Muslim. But since they are not performing their duty, then it becomes our duty.”

The IJT’s use of intimidation and violence is prevalent on campuses throughout the country. Hassan Askari Rizvi taught in the Political Science Department at Punjab University in Lahore for 30 years before retiring in 2001 because of declining academic standards and the radicalization of campus politics. “The Jama’at-i Islami succeeds in controlling the academic institutions,” he told me. “If you openly confront them, you get into trouble.” Three other teachers left the Political Science department at the same time, for the same reasons. “In the meantime, at least one generation of students has been undermined,” Rizvi said. Pervez Hoodbhoy, the nuclear physics professor, said that the Islamist’s pressure tactics are boldly manifesting themselves. “You should have come at 2 or 3 o’clock,” he said to me, “You would have seen a sea of young women...with burqas or hejab. Thirty-three years ago [when he started teaching]...there wouldn’t have been a single girl covered up like that.”

Hamid agreed that hejabs were indicative of the IJT’s strength — and appeal — in society. Recently, his own sister became a worker for the IJT’s women’s wing. Two of his three brothers are also active with the party. Hamid’s father, who voted for the MQM before his son joined the IJT, now reads and discusses Mawdudi with Hamid. When election time comes around, the father always votes for Jama’at-i Islami.

As he was telling me about his family background, I noticed Hamid looking more and more pensive. Fellows from the gang shuttled over from the shade to whisper things in Hamid’s ear, glance around, whisper some more, and then shuttle back. In the process, they passed out green stickers commemorating Independence Day and stomped on the American and Israeli flags painted on the sidewalk. “Students step on it proudly,” said Norman Ahmed Burnui, Press Secretary for the IJT at Karachi

University. “We have to add another fresh coat of paint every year or two.”

Just a stone’s throw from the anti-American floor murals and the loitering pack of IJT supporters, a handful of Army Rangers holding assault rifles leaned against the bed of a white pickup truck. The Rangers were originally deployed to Karachi University in 1989 on a temporary basis, but frequent campus disruptions have kept them there since. Their main reason for being there is to prevent clashes between IJT and APMSO. After much whispering and looking around, Hamid finally stood up, apologized, and excused himself. “Can we finish talking another time?” he said as his eyes darted back and forth.

Burnui, the Press Secretary, came over and asked if I wanted a tour of the campus. It was unsafe, he said, for me to stay on the promenade. So we got onto his motorcycle and rode to a fly-infested canteen on the other side of the university. When we arrived, Burnui apologized for having to cut my discussion with Hamid short. “You are a guest and while you are at Karachi University, you are our responsibility,” he said.



IJT members sitting in their usual spot.

“We noticed one of the APMSO activists watching you and Hamid very suspiciously,” he said. “And though there hasn’t been any

gunfire since the Rangers came, we didn’t want to take a chance.”

Burnui wore a puckered scowl and a black shalwar kameez that hung off of his coat-hanger shoulders. Like Hamid, he was thin. But compared to Hamid, who was more soft-spoken and easy going, Burnui lent the impression of being scrappy and willing to fight someone twice his size. A scar the size of a pinky slanted across his forehead.

Last April, Burnui and a handful of other IJT members were sitting under the leafy, overhanging tree by the sidewalk to the Arts Faculty when about 40 people from the APMSO circled around. “Most of them weren’t even active students,” Burnui said. “But they somehow managed to drive right past security in a Coaster (minibus).” The encircling students came closer and closer. They held bricks and metal rods. “One of them swung a piece of pipe and hit me in the head...all of my clothes were covered in blood.” When I asked if there is a hospital on campus, Burnui chuckled and rubbed his scar. “There’s a dispensary where they will stitch you up like a cobbler,” he said.

After we finished discussing other acts of campus



A leader from the Jama'at speaks to a gathering of thousands in Rawalpindi on September 6.

violence that have taken place over the years at Karachi University, I asked Burnui to explain how he interpreted Mawdudi's writings on Islamic revolution. "It comes from the grassroots level," he told me, "not from sham acts like the Hudud Ordinances, which were only enacted by Zia to extend his dictatorship. It will come when the common masses want it. Mawdudi talks mostly about a democratic revolution," Burnui said.

Yet a number of Burnui's classmates remain skeptical. Just a few days earlier, I had sat at the same picnic bench at the same canteen with a small group of students from the Philosophy and English Departments. One Ph.D. student shared his ideas on the German Critical Theorist Jurgen Habermas and his "theory of communicative action;" the lack of any "public space" in Pakistan, he posited, prevented the growth of true democracy. He elaborated on the defects in the philosophy of Jama'at-i Islami and the IJT. "They don't realize that you can't Islamize through a Western, liberal, non-Islamic process like democracy," he said. Such ideological confusion on the part of the Jama'at, he continued, makes the Islamist mindset weak. "The Jama'at has adopted democracy as a matter of strategy, not ideology."

OSAMA BIN RAZI IS a tall, balding man with a soft voice, an even softer laugh, and a flush, yet trimmed, beard. He has spent his entire adult life as an acolyte of

Mawdudi, who, he said, "cleared dust off the face of Islam." During the late 1980s, he served three years as nazim of the IJT at Karachi University. He thought that the IJT made him "an ideological, goal-based person" and instilled in him a belief that you must have "ideology in your life and justice in your heart." After graduating, bin Razi became an editor at the Jama'at's daily newspaper, *Jasarat*, before moving on as a researcher at two Jama'at institutes in Karachi. He told me that he is writing his Doctoral dissertation now on the "Political Aspect of the Islamic Religion." "Is it just a religion?" he asked me rhetorically, "Or is it part of a larger system, like the way blood runs through the body?" Bin Razi comes across as a cerebral, non-violent individual. He is one of the next generation of ideologues in the Jama'at.

Like a handful of prominent Islamist thinkers before him, bin Razi's convictions and animosities against the West were strengthened after spending some time there. In the late 1940s, Sayyid Qutb, the forefather of the modern jihadi movement, lived in Greeley, Colorado, for two years. When he returned, disgusted by the way people laughed and danced in church and repulsed at not being able to find a good barber anywhere, he was a changed man. He openly supported jihad and his thoughts clashed with those of Egypt's secular establishment. In 1966, he was hanged. Although Mawdudi, the founder of the Jama'at, didn't visit the United States until the final year of his life when he sought specialized medical treatment

in Buffalo, New York, he was well versed in English literature and Western culture. His interest and familiarity with Western thought informed his rejection of the West's core tenet — secularism.

In 1997, bin Razi spent a month in the United States, first attending a conference in Pittsburg, and then traveling to 17 cities around the country. In our first meeting, he told me about the journey; in our second, he gave me a copy of his trip report. When he spoke about his experience, his voice quivered as if he were distraught to the verge of tears. "America is very impressive at first look," he said, "but I am sorry to say, it is an extremely superficial society... It is like a studio set — it looks good from far away, but when you get close, you can see there is nothing real there." His voice quivered even more. "It would be horrible for me to live in that society." At one point in the report, he writes: "Women have become a 'sex toy' who, by the time of turning 40, have been 'played with' by 10 to 12 men, often leaving a bun in her oven." And a day in Disney World just about pushed him to the edge. Not only are "adult children" there "pacified" by "larger-than-life toys," but bin Razi found the display of human evolution at Epcot Center "dishonest." "America is just a total Cosmetic World while it deems itself as the New World," he writes.

Despite his nausea and disdain for American culture, bin Razi acknowledged the centrality of its thinkers, particularly Samuel Huntington and Frances Fukuyama. In *The Clash of Civilizations*, Huntington wrote that the Christendom and the Islamic world are destined to clash. In *The End of History*, Fukuyama theorized that, with the fall of Communism, mankind may have reached its "ideological evolution" in the form of universal Western liberal democracy. "*The End of History* is true in the sense that secularism is unable to produce another system to replace capitalism. That's because it has failed to establish even the basic unit of society — the family. Your teenagers are becoming pregnant without marriage," he said. "Secularism doesn't give justice to anyone and it can't birth any new system." Islamic ideology, on the other

hand, is in ascendance because it doesn't compartmentalize society into "religious things" and "secular things." "By not breaking up society into parts, Islam engenders harmony and develops a synchronized society," bin Razi explained. And because of this, he's convinced that the Islamic system will ultimately prevail across the globe. "The West is fighting a losing battle." This is the Jama'at's version of Manifest Destiny.

Bin Razi pledged his ideological devotion to Mawdu-di, but he saw things a little differently when it came to revolutionary thought. The step-by-step approach, to him, was untenable. "Islam cannot be mixed with other systems," he said. "It is a complete system. Hudood will come when an Islamic society forms because Islamization is not a process — it replaces the past system entirely. It's not like you can put the hand of a monkey on a human body."

"Is there an ideal that you have in mind?" I asked.

"If there is a practical system in the world, it is Iran. Iran is a society that traveled a period of revolution after 15 years. After about 15 years, the revolution there became a system," he answered. "We want a democracy based on the guidance of Allah and Iran has shown that it is possible."

Some differences remain, however, between the rhetoric of elder politicians like Naimatullah Khan and up-and-coming ideologues like bin Razi, whose generation grew up during the Iranian Revolution, the rise of the United States as a dominating global power, and the increasing diffusion of anti-American sentiments across the Muslim world. When I asked a senior party official from Karachi for his take on Jama'at-i Islami's idea of revolution, he told me that, though the electoral system is corrupted, the party is committed to democratic politics. "We want a 'soft revolution' by changing people's minds and attitudes, not by forcing anything from the gun," he said. "We are not tired, *al hamdullila* [praise God]. Morale is high and everything is going toward our goal." □

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Richard D. Connerney (January 2005 - 2007) • INDIA

A lecturer in Philosophy, Asian Religions and Philosophy at Rutgers, Iona College and the University of Hawaii at Manoa, Rick Connerney is spending two years as a Phillips Talbot Fellow studying and writing about the intertwining of religion, culture and politics in India, once described by former U.S. Ambassador John Kenneth Galbraith as "a functioning anarchy." Rick has a B.A. and an M.A. in religion from Wheaton College and the University of Hawaii, respectively.

Kay Dilday (October 2005-2007) • FRANCE/MOROCCO

An editor for the *New York Times'* Op-Ed page for the past five years, Kay holds an M.A. in Comparative International Politics and Theory from the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, a Bachelor's degree in English Literature from Tufts University, and has done graduate work at the *Universiteit van Amsterdam* in the Netherlands and the *Cours de Civilisation de la Sorbonne*. She has traveled in and written from Haiti and began her journalistic life as city-council reporter for *Somerville This Week*, in Somerville, MA.

Nicholas Schmidle (February 2006-2008) • PAKISTAN

Nicholas is a freelance writer interested in the intersection of culture, religion and politics in Asia. He is spending two years in Pakistan writing on issues of ethnic, sectarian, and national identity. Previously, he has reported from Central Asia and Iran, and his work has been published in the *Washington Post*, the *Weekly Standard*, *Foreign Policy*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, and others. Nick received an M.A. in International Affairs - Regional Studies from American University in December 2005. He lives with his wife, Rikki.

Andrew J. Tabler (February 2005 - 2007) • SYRIA/LEBANON

Andrew has lived, studied and worked in the Middle East since a Rotary Foundation Ambassadorial Fellowship enabled him to begin Arabic-language studies and work toward a Master's degree at the American University in Cairo in 1994. Following the Master's, he held editorships with the *Middle East Times* and *Cairo Times* before moving to Turkey, Lebanon and Syria and working as a Senior Editor with the Oxford Business Group and a correspondent for the *Economist Intelligence Unit*. His two-year ICWA fellowship bases him in Beirut and Damascus, where he will report on Lebanese affairs and Syrian reform.

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