

Hizbul Mujahideen (HM)

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Master Ahsan Dar formed the Hizbul Mujahideen in 1990, along with Mohammad Abdullah Bangroo, with the support of Pakistan. Pakistan was looking for an alternative to the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF). Pakistan preferred the Hizbul Mujahideen to the JKLF for two reasons. First, JKLF was no longer a pro-Pakistan outfit, but a pro-independence outfit, which Pakistan did not like. Secondly, the JKLF was secular, and Pakistan preferred an Islamic group.

Objectives

The Hizbul Mujahideen is very close to both the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) in Kashmir and Pakistan. Most of the cadres of the Hizbul are drawn from the Jammata-e-Islami of Kashmir. The Hizbul advocates Kashmir's merger with Pakistan and also campaigns for Islamisation of Kashmir.

Command and Structure

In 1991, the Hizbul Mujahideen set up a Supreme Advisory Council, which is the final decision making body. This Supreme Advisory Council replaced Master Ahsan Dar with Salahuddin, who, after becoming the Supreme Commander, re-organised the HM. He divided the organization into administrative and military wings. The leaders of the JI were in charge of the administrative wings of the HM and always had control over the commanders of the military wings. The Hizbul has a women wing Binatul Islam, whose strength is not known.

Factions

When Ahsan Dar was replaced, he left the Hizbul Mujahideen and launched his own outfit the Muslim Mujahideen. However, the Muslim Mujahideen could not retain its identity, as Ahsan Dar was kidnapped by the HM in 1992 where after, both he and his outfit lost their influence. There was another faction led by Nasir-ul-Islam known as Jamait-ul-Mujahideen. This faction also lost its relevance after Nasir-ul-Islam was killed.

Strength

The Hizbul Mujahideen, in the early 1990s had a strength of 12,000 cadres, especially after Abdul Majid Dar merged his Tehreek-e-Jihad-e-Islami in 1991. However it has only 1500 cadres now, half of whom are in Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK). There are around 700-800 members of the Hizbul Mujahideen fighting in the Kashmir Valley. The decline in its strength was due to several factors. Firstly, it lost most of its members in its fight against the Indian security forces. Secondly, the counter insurgents, known as Ikhwan were also responsible for killing many of its members. It is estimated that nearly 2000 Hizbul cadres were killed by the Ikhwan.

Areas of Influence

The Hizbul, being comprised of the local militants, have influence all over the Valley. Besides, it also has influence in Poonch, Rajouri and Doda districts of the Jammu region.

Training Camps

The Hizbul Mujahideen has training camps in Pakistan and in PoK. Ever since the Taliban came on the scene in

Afghanistan, the training camps for the Hizbul were closed, as the Hizbul is viewed as the militant wing of the Jamaat-e-Islami. The Taliban does not have cordial relations with the Jamaat-e-Islami of Pakistan as the latter has been supporting the former's opponents in Afghanistan.

External Linkages

Though the Hizbul was founded with active help from Pakistan, in the second half of the nineties, the Hizbul found itself getting distanced from Pakistan. Hizbul's closeness to the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) of Pakistan and the changed equations between the Pakistan government and JI in Pakistan was the main reason for Hizbul losing its significance. In the late 1980s and the early 1990s, the ISI and Nawaz Sharif were very close to the JI and its chief, Qazi Hussain Ahmed. Later, when the equations between the ISI and Qazi changed, Hizbul's closeness to Qazi became a factor in ISI-Hizbul relations.

Secondly, the Pakistani distrust towards Kashmiri militants resulted in its propping up foreign militants at the cost of the local Kashmiri militants. The Hizbul did not like to be porters, couriers and guides for the foreign militants. The differences in ideology between the Hizbul and other militant groups such as the Lashkar-e-Toiba and Harkat-ul-Ansar also resulted in Hizbul distancing itself from these groups, which further alienated the ISI from it.