

The Politicization Of The *Ghazwah Al-Hind* Traditions in Pakistan: Ḥadīth Criticism and Social Movement Analysis



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Abstract: This article critically examines the politicization of the *Ghazwah al-Hind* ḥadīth in Pakistan, particularly in relation to the Kashmir conflict. Using qualitative library research and Social Movement Theory, the study analyzes two narrations recorded by al-Nasā'ī in *Kitāb al-Jihād*: the report of Abū Hurayrah concerning an expedition to India and the report of Thawbān concerning a group that would invade India. Ḥadīth criticism is combined with analysis of militant discourse, religious and political publications, news reports, books, and digital media. The findings show that the two narrations have different authentication statuses: the Abū Hurayrah report is assessed as *ḍa'īf*, while the Thawbān report has received assessments ranging from ḥasan to ṣaḥīḥ based on corroborating chains. Neither report explicitly identifies modern India, Pakistan, or Kashmir as the fulfillment of the narrated expedition. Through the dimensions of framing, mobilizing structures, and political opportunity structures, the study demonstrates how particular actors connect the ḥadīth to the Kashmir conflict, circulate this interpretation through religious and media networks, and amplify it during periods of heightened India–Pakistan tension. The study concludes that the political significance of *Ghazwah al-Hind* emerges through processes of interpretation and mobilization rather than directly from the ḥadīth text itself.

Keywords: *Ghazwah al-Hind*, politicization of ḥadīth, Social Movement Theory

Abstrak: Artikel ini mengkaji secara kritis politisasi hadis *Ghazwah al-Hind* di Pakistan, khususnya dalam kaitannya dengan konflik Kashmir. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian kepustakaan kualitatif dan Social Movement Theory untuk menganalisis dua riwayat yang tercatat dalam *Kitāb al-Jihād* karya al-Nasā'ī: riwayat Abū Hurayrah tentang ekspedisi ke India dan riwayat Thawbān tentang kelompok yang akan menyerang India. Kritik hadis dipadukan dengan analisis terhadap wacana kelompok militan, publikasi keagamaan dan politik, pemberitaan, buku, serta media digital. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kedua riwayat memiliki status yang berbeda: riwayat Abū Hurayrah dinilai *ḍa'īf*, sedangkan riwayat Thawbān memperoleh penilaian antara ḥasan hingga ṣaḥīḥ berdasarkan jalur penguat. Keduanya tidak secara eksplisit menyebut India, Pakistan, atau Kashmir modern sebagai pemenuhan ekspedisi tersebut. Melalui dimensi *framing*, *mobilizing structures*, dan *political opportunity structures*, penelitian menunjukkan bagaimana aktor tertentu menghubungkan hadis dengan konflik Kashmir, menyebarkan interpretasi tersebut melalui jaringan keagamaan dan media, serta menguatkannya dalam situasi ketegangan India–Pakistan. Dengan demikian, signifikansi politik *Ghazwah al-Hind* muncul melalui proses interpretasi dan mobilisasi, bukan semata-mata dari teks hadis itu sendiri.

Kata Kunci: *Ghazwah al-Hind*, politisasi hadis, Teori Gerakan Sosial.

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Introduction

The *Ghazwah al-Hind* tradition refers to a group of prophetic reports concerning a military expedition to *al-Hind*, a geographical designation whose historical meaning and eschatological significance have been interpreted differently across Islamic scholarship. Several reports associated with this tradition are transmitted through different chains and appear in classical ḥadīth collections, including *Sunan al-Nasā'ī* and other works. One narration attributed to Abū Hurayrah reports that the Prophet Muḥammad promised an expedition to India, while another narration transmitted by Thawbān describes two groups of the Prophet's community who would be saved from Hellfire, including those who fight in India. The status of these reports is not uniform. Their chains and textual formulations have received different assessments from ḥadīth scholars.¹ This contested textual status is significant because the reports have subsequently been invoked not merely as historical or eschatological traditions, but as religious resources in contemporary political discourse.²

In Pakistan, the *Ghazwah al-Hind* ḥadīth has acquired renewed political significance, particularly in relation to the Kashmir conflict.³ Militant organizations such as Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), and Hizbul Mujahideen have instrumentalized this narration in recruitment propaganda⁴ and to legitimize armed conflict in the Kashmir region.⁵ Groups affiliated with al-Qaeda, such as Ansar Ghazwat al-Hind, have also incorporated the *Ghazwah al-Hind* narrative into their ideological discourse.⁶ These actors have framed the Kashmir conflict in religious and eschatological terms rather than solely as a political or territorial dispute.⁷ Beyond Pakistan, transnational *jihadist* networks have expanded the geographic and theological meaning of "Hind" to encompass broader areas of South and Southeast Asia, thereby incorporating the tradition into wider jihadist ideological narratives.⁸

Existing scholarship has examined the *Ghazwah al-Hind* tradition and related jihadist discourse from several perspectives. Husain Haqqani, for example, examines the relationship between prophecy and jihad in the Indian subcontinent, including the ideological significance of *Ghazwah al-Hind*.⁹ D'Souza and Routray analyze jihadist actors, agendas, and the expansion of militant benchmarks in Jammu and Kashmir.¹⁰ Research on jihadist propaganda

¹ Abu Abdurrahman Ahmad (Imam an-Nasa'i, *Sunan an-Nasai* (Gema Insani, 2023). See more in *Kitab al Jihad* number 3175.

² Husain Haqqani, "Prophecy and the Jihad in the Indian Subcontinent.," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 18 (2015); "The Irreligious, Inauthentic Narrative of 'Ghazwa-e-Hind,'" in *MP-IDSA*, n.d., accessed July 21, 2025, <https://www.idsa.in/publisher/issuebrief/the-irreligious-inauthentic-narrative-of-ghazwa-e-hind>.

³ Haqqani, "Prophecy and the Jihad in the Indian Subcontinent.," 2015.

⁴ Shanthie Mariet D'Souza and Bibhu Prasad Routray, "Jihad in Jammu and Kashmir: Actors, Agendas and Expanding Benchmarks," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 27, no. 4 (2016): 557–77, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2016.1189485>.

⁵ Kalicharan Veera Singam, "The Islamic State's Reinvigorated and Evolved Propaganda Campaign in India," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 12, no. 5 (2020): 16–20.

⁶ Alastair Reed, "Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent," *The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, The Hague*, 2016, 3–17.

⁷ Carolyn C. James and Özgür Özdamar, "Religion as a Factor in Ethnic Conflict: Kashmir and Indian Foreign Policy," in *Religion in World Conflict* (Routledge, 2014).

⁸ Mahfuh Bin Haji Halimi and Muhammad Saiful Alam Shah Bin Sudiman, "Debunking Jihadist Ideological Misinterpretations and Distortions," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 12, no. 1 (2020): 87–91.

⁹ Haqqani, "Prophecy and the Jihad in the Indian Subcontinent.," 2015.

¹⁰ D'Souza and Routray, "Jihad in Jammu and Kashmir."

has further examined how religious and eschatological narratives are incorporated into representations of conflict in India and Kashmir.¹¹ Reed's study of Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent highlights the transnational dimension of jihadist organization and ideology in the region.¹² James and Özdamar, meanwhile, examine religion as a factor in the Kashmir conflict and its relationship to Indian foreign policy.¹³ Other studies have addressed the ideological distortion and reinterpretation of jihadist narratives in South and Southeast Asia.¹⁴

Taken together, this scholarship has established the presence of religious, ideological, and political dimensions in the circulation of *Ghazwah al-Hind* discourse. However, existing studies tend to emphasize the historical significance of the prophecy, the activities of jihadist organizations, the Kashmir conflict, or the ideological and propagandistic dimensions of militant discourse.¹⁵ Less attention has been given to the mechanisms through which a contested prophetic tradition acquires political and mobilizing significance in particular contexts.¹⁶ In particular, demonstrating that a ḥadīth has been politicized does not by itself explain why such politicization becomes effective in particular contexts, through which organizational and communicative structures it is sustained, or under what political conditions it gains or loses mobilizing influence.

This article addresses this gap by approaching the politicization of *Ghazwah al-Hind* through Social Movement Theory. Social Movement Theory provides a framework for examining how collective actors construct meanings, organize resources, and respond to changing political environments in contentious contexts.¹⁷ Rather than treating the ḥadīth text as an automatic source of political mobilization, the study examines the processes through which its meaning is constructed, circulated, and activated within contentious political contexts. Three analytical dimensions are central to this study¹⁸: Framing concerns how actors interpret and present the *Ghazwah al-Hind* tradition, for example, by constructing the Kashmir conflict as the fulfillment of a prophetic prediction or by presenting participation in armed struggle as religiously meaningful. Mobilizing structures refer to the organizational and communicative networks through which such interpretations circulate, including militant organizations, religious networks, media platforms, and other forms of social infrastructure.¹⁹ Political opportunity structures concern the broader political conditions that can facilitate or

¹¹ Singam, "The Islamic State's Reinvigorated and Evolved Propaganda Campaign in India."

¹² Reed, "Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent."

¹³ James and Özdamar, "Religion as a Factor in Ethnic Conflict."

¹⁴ Halimi and Sudiman, "Debunking Jihadist Ideological Misinterpretations and Distortions."

¹⁵ Haqqani, "Prophecy and the Jihad in the Indian Subcontinent," 2015; D'Souza and Routray, "Jihad in Jammu and Kashmir"; Singam, "The Islamic State's Reinvigorated and Evolved Propaganda Campaign in India"; Reed, "Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent"; James and Özdamar, "Religion as a Factor in Ethnic Conflict"; Halimi and Sudiman, "Debunking Jihadist Ideological Misinterpretations and Distortions."

¹⁶ D'Souza and Routray, "Jihad in Jammu and Kashmir"; Singam, "The Islamic State's Reinvigorated and Evolved Propaganda Campaign in India"; Reed, "Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent."

¹⁷ Doug McAdam et al., "Dynamics of Contention," *Social Movement Studies* 2, no. 1 (2003): 99–102, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2003.10035370>.

¹⁸ McAdam et al., "Dynamics of Contention."

¹⁹ Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement* (Cambridge university press, 2022); Charles Tilly, "From Mobilization to Revolution," in *Collective Violence, Contentious Politics, and Social Change* (Routledge, 2017).

constrain the resonance of such narratives, including periods of military conflict, political Islamization, and changing relations between state institutions and religious movements.²⁰

This theoretical approach also makes it possible to distinguish between the availability of a religious text and its political efficacy. A contested ḥadīth does not automatically produce militant mobilization simply because it contains references to warfare or eschatological expectation. Its political significance depends on how particular actors frame the tradition, the networks through which that framing is disseminated, and political circumstances that make the frame more or less persuasive or actionable.²¹ Conversely, the same tradition may become subject to competing interpretations and counter-framing by scholars and religious institutions. The political use of *Ghazwah al-Hind* should therefore be examined as a contested social process rather than as a direct or inevitable consequence of the ḥadīth itself.

Against this background, this study asks three questions: (1) How is the *Ghazwah al-Hind* tradition framed by actors who employ it in contemporary political discourse in Pakistan? (2) What mobilizing structures facilitate the circulation and political use of the tradition? and (3) Under what political opportunity structures does the tradition gain or lose mobilizing influence? To answer these questions, the article combines ḥadīth criticism with Social Movement Theory. The ḥadīth analysis examines the relevant reports through *takhrīj*, comparison of their chains and textual variants, and consideration of scholarly assessments of their authenticity and interpretation. The social analysis examines selected militant, media, political, and scholarly materials according to the three analytical categories of framing, mobilizing structures, and political opportunities. The article argues that the political efficacy of the *Ghazwah al-Hind* tradition does not derive from the ḥadīth text alone, but from the interaction between contested textual authority, interpretive framing, mobilizing structures, and political opportunities. This interaction helps explain both the emergence of militant appropriations of the tradition and the possibility of their contestation through alternative religious and political frames.

Method

This study employs a qualitative library research design combining ḥadīth criticism and Social Movement Theory to examine the politicization of the *Ghazwah al-Hind* tradition in Pakistan. The analysis is conducted at two interconnected levels: the textual status and interpretation of the ḥadīth reports, and their contemporary political mobilization.

The primary ḥadīth corpus consists of two reports recorded in *Sunan al-Nasā'ī*, *Kitāb al-Jihād*: the report attributed to Abū Hurayrah (no. 3173) and the report transmitted by Thawbān (no. 3175). They were purposively selected because they represent two principal formulations of the *Ghazwah al-Hind* tradition. Other reports attributed to Abū Hurayrah, Ka'b al-Aḥbār, and Ṣafwān ibn 'Amr were used comparatively to situate these two reports within the broader tradition. Ḥadīth analysis involved *takhrīj*, comparison of *isnāds* and *matn*

²⁰ Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970* (University of Chicago Press, 1999), <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=ADiJTD8s4KYC&oi=fnd&pg=PR7&dq=Doug+McAdam&ots=oJ07v68T-8&sig=iusawZq8AEVCmxLziQP7m4dBvkg>.

²¹ McAdam et al., "Dynamics of Contention"; Tarrow, *Power in Movement*; Tilly, "From Mobilization to Revolution."

variants, and examination of the evaluations of ḥadīth scholars concerning the reliability of transmitters and the status of the reports. The analysis distinguishes the textual status of individual reports rather than treating *Ghazwah al-Hind* as a single homogeneous tradition.

The contemporary corpus consists of materials concerning Pakistan and the Kashmir conflict, including militant-group publications, political or religious statements, media and digital materials, and scholarly or institutional responses. Materials were selected purposively based on their explicit or contextual reference to *Ghazwah al-Hind*, jihad, Kashmir, India, or related eschatological narratives, as well as their relevance to the circulation, political use, or contestation of the tradition. The study distinguishes organizational discourse, individual commentary, media amplification, official state positions, and external representations rather than treating them as equivalent evidence of Pakistani public opinion.

The contemporary materials were coded using three dimensions of Social Movement Theory: framing, mobilizing structures, and political opportunity structures. Framing identifies how actors construct *Ghazwah al-Hind* as a prophetic prediction, religious obligation, or justification for contemporary struggle. Mobilizing structures examine the organizational and communicative networks through which the narrative circulates, including militant organizations, religious networks, and digital or media platforms. Political opportunity structures examine political conditions that may facilitate or constrain the narrative's mobilizing potential, including military conflict, political developments, and state-religious movement relations. The three dimensions are analyzed relationally to explain how a contested prophetic tradition acquires, sustains, or loses political efficacy.

Results and Discussion

Critical Examination of the *Ghazwah al-Hind* Ḥadīth

The *Ghazwah al-Hind* tradition refers to several reports concerning a military expedition to *al-Hind* that appear in early Islamic ḥadīth and historical literature. Among these reports, two narrations transmitted by Abū Hurayrah and Thawbān are particularly relevant to the present discussion. The first report, narrated by Abū Hurayrah, is recorded by al-Nasā'ī in *Sunan al-Nasā'ī*, *Kitāb al-Jihād*, and states that the Prophet Muhammad promised an expedition to India:

أَخْبَرَنِي أَحْمَدُ بْنُ عُمَرَ بْنِ حَكِيمٍ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا زَكَرِيَّا بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو، عَنْ زَيْدِ بْنِ أَبِي
أُنَيْسَةَ، عَنْ سَيَّارٍ، ح قَالَ وَأَنْبَأَنَا هُشَيْمٌ، عَنْ سَيَّارٍ، عَنْ جَبْرِ بْنِ عَبِيدَةَ، - وَقَالَ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ عَنْ جُبَيْرٍ، - عَنْ أَبِي
هُرَيْرَةَ، قَالَ وَعَدَنَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ غَزْوَةَ الْهِنْدِ، فَإِنْ أَدْرَكْتُهَا أَنْفَقَ فِيهَا نَفْسِي وَمَالِي، فَإِنْ أَقْتُلْتُ كُنْتُ
مِنْ أَفْضَلِ الشُّهَدَاءِ، وَإِنْ أَرَجَعْتُ فَأَنَا أَبُو هُرَيْرَةَ الْمُحَرَّرُ.

"The Messenger of Allah promised us (a) battle expedition (in) India. If I live to see that, I will expend myself and my wealth in it. If I am killed, I will be one of the best of the martyrs, and if I come back, I will be Abu Hurairah Al-Muharrar (i.e., the one freed from the Fire)." ²²

²² an-Nasa'i, *Sunan an-Nasai*. See detail in *Kitab al Jihād* Sunan an-Nasa'i number 3173. The grade of this ḥadīth is *da'if* (weak) according to most ḥadīth ulama.

A second narration is transmitted from Thawbān and is also recorded by al-Nasā'ī in *Kitāb al-Jihād*. It states:

أَخْبَرَنِي مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَبْدِ الرَّحِيمِ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا أَسَدُ بْنُ مُوسَى، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا بَقِيَّةٌ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنِي أَبُو بَكْرِ
الزُّبَيْدِيُّ، عَنْ أَخِيهِ، مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ الْوَلِيدِ، عَنْ لُقْمَانَ بْنِ عَامِرٍ، عَنْ عَبْدِ الْأَعْلَى بْنِ عَبْدِ الْبَهْرَانِيِّ، عَنْ ثَوْبَانَ، مَوْلَى
رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: "عِصَابَتَانِ مِنْ أُمَّتِي أَحْرَزَهُمَا اللَّهُ مِنَ
النَّارِ: عِصَابَةٌ تَغْزُو الْهِنْدَ، وَعِصَابَةٌ تَكُونُ مَعَ عِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ

"The Messenger of Allah said: There are two groups of my Ummah whom Allah will save from the Fire: the group that invades India, and the group that will be with 'Isa bin Maryam, peace be upon him."²³

These two reports should be distinguished from the wider *Ghazwah al-Hind* tradition, which includes other narrations attributed to Abū Hurayrah, Thawbān, Ṣafwān ibn 'Amr, and reports transmitted from Ka'b al-Aḥbār. Related materials are found in works such as *al-Tārīkh al-Kabīr* of al-Bukhārī, *Jāmi' al-Kabīr* of al-Suyūfī, and *al-Fitan* of Nu'aym ibn Ḥammād.²⁴ The present study focuses on the two narrations recorded by al-Nasā'ī because they provide a sufficiently clear textual basis for examining both the promise of an expedition to India and its association with eschatological salvation.

The two reports do not have identical ḥadīth status. The Abū Hurayrah narration has been assessed as *da'īf* by a number of ḥadīth scholars, while the Thawbān narration has generally received a more favorable assessment and has been classified as *ḥasan* in the cited edition of *Sunan al-Nasā'ī*.²⁵ The latter assessment, however, should not be presented as the only scholarly position. Al-Albānī, for example, examined the Thawbān narration in *Silsilat al-Aḥādīth al-Ṣaḥīḥah* (no. 657) and considered it *ṣaḥīḥ* on the basis of corroborating transmission routes (*shawāhid*). He nevertheless noted a weakness in the al-Nasā'ī chain, particularly concerning Baqiyyah ibn al-Walīd, whose transmission practices have been subject to scrutiny. According to the explanation cited in the *ḥadīth.id* discussion, other scholars have maintained a weaker assessment because of concerns surrounding Baqiyyah ibn al-Walīd and the disputed status of Abū Bakr al-Zubaydī.²⁶

Thus, the appropriate conclusion is not that the *Ghazwah al-Hind* tradition is simply "authentic" or "inauthentic." Rather, the reports have differing levels of authentication, and the Thawbān narration itself has been subject to scholarly disagreement, ranging from *ḥasan* to *ṣaḥīḥ* on the basis of supporting chains. This distinction is important for evaluating contemporary claims that invoke the narration as an unequivocal divine prediction of a particular war.

²³ an-Nasā'ī, *Sunan an-Nasā'ī*. See more in *Kitāb al-Jihād* Sunan an-Nasā'ī, ḥadīth number 3175. The grade of this ḥadīth is *ḥasan* (fair).

²⁴ al-Bukhari, *Tārīkh al-Kabīr* (Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiyah, 2001).

²⁵ an-Nasā'ī, *Sunan Nasā'ī* (Dar Al-Kotob Ilmiyah, 1991).

²⁶ Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn Albānī, *Silsilat al-Aḥādīth al-Ṣaḥīḥah: wa-Shay' min Fiḥihā wa-Fuwā'dihā* (al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1985).

The textual meaning also requires caution. The wording “*a group that invades India*” (*‘iṣābatun taghzū al-Hind*) identifies an expedition to *al-Hind*, but the report itself does not explicitly identify modern India, Pakistan, Kashmir, or any particular contemporary political conflict. Nor does the text itself establish that a specific group operating in the present must constitute the promised group. Consequently, moving from the transmitted report to the claim that the Kashmir conflict represents the divinely prescribed *Ghazwah al-Hind* involves an additional interpretive step that cannot simply be equated with the wording of the ḥadīth.

This point becomes particularly significant in the context of Pakistan–India relations. The *Ghazwah al-Hind* reports have been incorporated into political and jihadist discourse surrounding Kashmir. Haqqani documents how the prophecy became increasingly prominent in Islamist discourse following the emergence of jihadist activity in Kashmir in the late twentieth century, while D’Souza and Routray discuss the relationship between jihadist actors, Kashmir, and the ideological framing of armed struggle.²⁷ The narrative has consequently been used by certain militant actors to represent the conflict not merely as a territorial or political dispute but as the fulfillment of a prophetic prediction.²⁸

The critical problem, therefore, lies not simply in the existence of the *Ghazwah al-Hind* reports, but in the interpretive transformation through which a contested prophetic tradition is connected to a specific contemporary conflict and converted into a religious imperative for violence. As the discussion of Mazhari indicates, some Muslim scholars have explicitly challenged the identification of the Kashmir conflict with *Ghazwah al-Hind*, arguing that such an identification constitutes a form of jihadist propaganda rather than an uncontested conclusion of ḥadīth scholarship. This critique is particularly important because it separates the question of what the ḥadīth reports transmit from the subsequent political claim about what a contemporary Muslim community is religiously obliged to do.

Accordingly, the critical reading adopted in this study does not seek to dismiss the *Ghazwah al-Hind* reports solely on the basis of their contested authenticity. Instead, it distinguishes three levels of analysis: the transmitted text, its ḥadīth authentication, and its contemporary political appropriation. At the textual level, the reports refer to an expedition to *al-Hind* and associate participation with religious merit. At the authentication level, their status is not uniform, with the Thawbān report receiving different assessments, including *ḥasan* and *ṣaḥīḥ* through corroborating chains according to al-Albānī. At the political level, however, identifying a present-day conflict (particularly Kashmir) as the fulfillment of this prophecy constitutes an interpretive and ideological construction that requires independent justification.

This distinction is essential to prevent the ḥadīth from being employed as an unqualified instrument for constructing religious divisions. A critical ḥadīth approach must therefore preserve the textual tradition while simultaneously examining the historical circumstances, interpretive claims, and political interests through which it is mobilized. The issue is not whether the *Ghazwah al-Hind* reports should simply be accepted or rejected, but

²⁷ Husain Haqqani, “Prophecy and the Jihad in the Indian Subcontinent,” *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 18 (2015), <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&profile=ehost&scope=site&authtype=crawler&jrnl=1940834X&asa=N&AN=103259463&h=APT6v15iX66S%2Fu1VN%2BLgMBUTBaUa1agPtSBwIBP0cmrjZxOqa9H3DjGaEFsViQfvTqLKjYvRg2AmEWbcsb5%2F4g%3D%3D&crl=c>.

²⁸ James and Özdamar, “Religion as a Factor in Ethnic Conflict.”

whether their contemporary political appropriation can legitimately be derived from the ḥadīth texts themselves.

The Politicization of *Ghazwah al-Hind* in the Kashmir Conflict

The politicization of *Ghazwah al-Hind* needs to be situated within the longer history of the relationship between Islam, state formation, and conflict in Pakistan. The formation of Pakistan was shaped not only by territorial and political considerations but also by competing visions of Islamic identity and the role of religion in public life. Thinkers such as Abul A‘la Maududi contributed to this ideological discourse by advocating an Islamic political order in which sovereignty ultimately belonged to God.²⁹ After independence, these tensions persisted alongside the unresolved conflict between India and Pakistan, particularly over Kashmir. Following Partition in 1947, the predominantly Muslim region became the site of military confrontation and has remained a persistent source of conflict between the two states.³⁰ Over time, the Kashmir dispute acquired religious symbolism in addition to its territorial and political dimensions.³¹ This historical setting provided an important context in which religious narratives concerning conflict with India could be connected to contemporary political struggles.

Within this context, *Ghazwah al-Hind* was increasingly invoked as a religious framework for interpreting the Kashmir conflict. Rather than treating the ḥadīth as a contested prophetic report requiring historical and textual examination, particular militant actors presented it as a prophecy concerning an ongoing or imminent confrontation with India.³² Husain Haqqani notes that discussion of *Ghazwah al-Hind* gained renewed prominence alongside the development of jihad in Kashmir from the late 1980s, while Pakistani media during the 1990s also contributed to its circulation as a narrative capable of motivating *jihadis*.³³ The result was a shift in the function of the ḥadīth: from a report concerning *al-Hind* whose referent and temporal meaning remain disputed, it was reframed as a direct interpretive key to a contemporary geopolitical conflict.

This reframing can be observed in the discourse of specific Pakistani militant and ideological actors. Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), and Hizbul Mujahideen have operated within the broader militant landscape surrounding the Kashmir conflict, where armed struggle has been articulated in explicitly religious terms.³⁴ In this discourse, Kashmir is not merely represented as a territorial dispute but as a site of *jihad*, while *Ghazwah al-Hind*

²⁹ “Pakistan and Islam: Ethnicity and Ideology,” in *State and Ideology in the Middle East and Pakistan*, by Hamza Alavi (Macmillan Education UK, 1988), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-19029-4_4; A. Mukti Ali, *Alam Pikiran Islam Modern di India dan Pakistan* (Mizan, 1996); Noorhaidi Hasan, *Islam Politik Di Dunia Kontemporer: Konsep, Genealogi, Dan Teori* (Suka-Press, 2012).

³⁰ Ajid Thohir and Ading Kusdiana, *Islam di Asia Selatan: Melacak Perkembangan Sosial, Politik Islam di India, Pakistan dan Bangladesh* (Humaniora, 2006); Victoria Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict*, 2010, <https://www.torrossa.com/gs/resourceProxy?an=5209385&publisher=FZ4100>.

³¹ Mridu Rai, *Hindu Rulers, Muslim Subjects: Islam, Rights, and the History of Kashmir* (Princeton University Press, 2004), <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780691207223>; James and Özdamar, “Religion as a Factor in Ethnic Conflict.”

³² James and Özdamar, “Religion as a Factor in Ethnic Conflict”; Haqqani, “Prophecy and the Jihad in the Indian Subcontinent,” 2015.

³³ Haqqani, “Prophecy and the Jihad in the Indian Subcontinent,” 2015.

³⁴ D’Souza and Routray, “Jihad in Jammu and Kashmir.”

can be invoked to extend the significance of the conflict beyond Kashmir itself. The narrative thereby transforms a particular political struggle into part of a divinely sanctioned historical trajectory. Such usage is important to distinguish from the broader category of Islamist interpretation: the claim that contemporary warfare against India constitutes the prophesied *Ghazwah al-Hind* belongs to particular actors and ideological networks, rather than to Muslims or Islamist groups as a whole.

The contemporary circulation of the narrative also demonstrates how its political meaning is reproduced beyond formal militant organizations. The ḥadīth has appeared in religious lectures, media discourse, and other popular forms of communication, where it can be presented as evidence that confrontation with India is religiously predetermined.³⁵ A particularly illustrative case is the public discourse of Zaid Hamid, who has repeatedly connected *Ghazwah al-Hind* with a future confrontation between Pakistan and India. His 2025 discussion of the prophecy illustrates how the narrative can be reactivated during periods of heightened India–Pakistan tension.³⁶ Earlier reports likewise documented the appearance of *Ghazwah al-Hind* in Pakistani political and cultural discourse, indicating that its circulation cannot be reduced exclusively to underground militant propaganda.³⁷

The broader political environment also matters. During the Islamization of Pakistan under Zia ul-Haq in the 1980s, Islamic ideology acquired a greater role in state and military discourse, while militant proxies were subsequently involved in the Kashmir context.³⁸ This history did not automatically produce the politicization of *Ghazwah al-Hind*, but it created an environment in which religious vocabulary could more readily intersect with national security, military struggle, and the Kashmir cause. The connection is therefore better understood as a process of political-religious framing: an existing and contested ḥadīth was selectively interpreted, detached from its unresolved textual and historical questions, and connected to a specific contemporary conflict.³⁹

The critical problem lies precisely in this transition. The ḥadīth does not by itself establish that the Kashmir conflict is the *Ghazwah al-Hind* foretold by the Prophet, nor does its transmission constitute an automatic mandate for contemporary armed action. That conclusion requires an additional interpretive operation: identifying contemporary India with the *al-Hind* of the reports, identifying Kashmir as the location of the prophesied expedition, and converting the report's eschatological or historical imagery into a present political obligation. The contested status of the reports discussed above makes such a transition particularly problematic. As D'Souza and Routray demonstrate, militant jihad in Kashmir has involved changing agendas and expanding transnational dimensions; the religious framing of the conflict therefore needs to be examined alongside its organizational and political conditions rather than treated as a self-evident consequence of the ḥadīth.⁴⁰

³⁵ D'Souza and Routray, "Jihad in Jammu and Kashmir"; Farhana Ali and Mohammed Shehzad, "Lashkari-Tayyiba Remains Committed to Jihad," *CTC Sentinel* 2, no. 3 (2009): 13–15.

³⁶ *Ghazwa-E-Hind | Nuclear War Starts? | Zaid Hamid Podcast | PAK vs IND | Yasir Rasheed | 92 Podcast*, directed by 92 News HD, 2025, 52:15, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5BEu1395qSM>.

³⁷ *Ghazwa-E-Hind | Nuclear War Starts?*

³⁸ Vidya Kakra, "Islamisation in Pakistan: An Attempt to Establish a New Identity and Its Consequences," *International Journal of Law Management & Humanities* 4 Issue 4 (2021): 877.

³⁹ Haqqani, "Prophecy and the Jihad in the Indian Subcontinent.," 2015; Rasheed Kidwai, "Everyone Misinterprets Ghazwa-e-Hind, but a Jamiat Scholar Explains What It Really Means," in *ThePrint*, October 2019.

⁴⁰ D'Souza and Routray, "Jihad in Jammu and Kashmir."

This politicization has also generated significant scholarly resistance. Critics have challenged the direct application of *Ghazwah al-Hind* to Kashmir and questioned whether the reports should be understood as predictions of a future war against contemporary India. Some interpretations locate the reports within earlier Muslim incursions into the Indian subcontinent, while others retain an eschatological reading but disconnect it from present political conflicts.⁴¹ The 2024 publication *What Is the Reality of Ghazwa-e-Hind?*, for example, represents a more systematic effort to contest militant appropriations and to recover the tradition through historical and ethical interpretation.⁴² These counter-readings are significant because they demonstrate that the politicization of the ḥadīth is not an inevitable consequence of its textual existence. Its contemporary meaning is produced through competing acts of interpretation.

Thus, the politicization of *Ghazwah al-Hind* should be understood as a process of interpretive transformation rather than as a direct effect of the ḥadīth itself. A contested prophetic report is first connected to the historical memory of India–Pakistan conflict, then framed as a prophecy concerning Kashmir, and finally used by particular actors to give religious legitimacy to armed struggle. The effectiveness of this process, however, depends on more than textual interpretation: it requires networks capable of circulating the narrative and political circumstances that make such framing persuasive. This relationship between religious framing, organizational networks, and political conditions provides the basis for the following analysis through Social Movement Theory.

Politicization and Mobilization of *Ghazwah al-Hind*: A Social Movement Analysis

The politicization of *Ghazwah al-Hind* cannot be explained simply by the existence of a prophetic report concerning warfare. Its contemporary political efficacy emerges from the interaction between interpretive framing, mobilizing structures, and political opportunity structures. Social Movement Theory is therefore useful not merely to categorize the phenomenon, but to explain how a contested religious tradition can acquire political force when particular actors reinterpret its meaning, circulate that interpretation through organizational and media networks, and connect it to moments of political crisis.

The first mechanism is framing. In the Pakistani context, militant actors have reframed *Ghazwah al-Hind* from a contested prophetic tradition into an immediate religious mandate. Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), for example, have associated the Kashmir conflict with jihad and with the fulfillment of prophetic expectations.⁴³ This framing performs an important interpretive transformation: a complex territorial and political conflict is presented as a sacred confrontation between believers and unbelievers. The ḥadīth consequently functions not merely as a description of a future or past event but as a legitimating frame through which participation in the conflict can be understood as religiously meritorious and even connected to martyrdom.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Observer Research Foundation, “The Complex Narratives of ‘Ghazwa-e-Hind,’” Orfonline.Org, accessed July 9, 2025, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/complex-narratives-ghazwa-e-hind-56257>; Kidwai, “Everyone Misinterprets Ghazwa-e-Hind, but a Jamiat Scholar Explains What It Really Means.”

⁴² Hafeezur Rahman, *What Is the Reality of Ghazwa-E-Hind?* (Khusro Foundation, 2024).

⁴³ Haqqani, “Prophecy and the Jihad in the Indian Subcontinent,” 2015.

⁴⁴ D’Souza and Routray, “Jihad in Jammu and Kashmir.”

The significance of this framing lies precisely in its selectivity. The contested status of the reports and the diversity of their possible historical referents are displaced from the center of interpretation, while the elements of warfare, divine promise, and salvation are foregrounded. The result is a form of sacralization in which political claims are presented as religious obligations. In this process, the ḥadīth does not itself produce mobilization; rather, actors actively construct a particular meaning from the ḥadīth and attach that meaning to an existing political struggle. This distinction is crucial because it prevents the analysis from treating the prophetic text as inherently violent or automatically mobilizing.

The framing is also visible in the forms through which the narrative is circulated. The *Ghazwah al-Hind* motif appears not only in organizational propaganda but also in religious lectures, *khutbah*, sympathetic media broadcasts, patriotic songs, books, news reports, and digital platforms. Such circulation repeatedly associates the conflict with divine sanction, martyrdom, and an allegedly inevitable confrontation with India.⁴⁵ A striking contemporary example is the video circulated by Zaid Hamid in May 2025, in which he presented *Ghazwah al-Hind* as imminent and connected developments in Kashmir to an impending religious confrontation. The video reportedly received more than one million views, illustrating how digital media can transform a previously specialized eschatological narrative into a highly visible public discourse.⁴⁶ The medium is therefore not incidental to the politicization of the ḥadīth: digital circulation accelerates the repetition, emotionalization, and normalization of the frame.

Yet framing alone does not explain how a narrative becomes socially actionable. Its mobilizing potential depends upon mobilizing structures, the networks, institutions, and communication channels through which interpretations are reproduced and translated into collective action. In Pakistan, religious seminaries, militant organizations, media platforms, religious networks, and transnational Islamist connections have historically provided infrastructures through which jihadist discourse can circulate.⁴⁷ Organizations associated with militant movements have also developed social and humanitarian activities that enable religious networks to penetrate everyday social life, while media figures such as Zaid Hamid have extended the circulation of eschatological narratives through digital platforms.⁴⁸ The significance of these structures is not simply that they disseminate information; they provide social credibility, repeated exposure, networks of recruitment, and channels through which an ideological frame can be converted into collective orientation.

This explains why the *Ghazwah al-Hind* narrative cannot be understood as a textual phenomenon alone. The ḥadīth becomes politically consequential when it is embedded in networks capable of repeatedly presenting one interpretation as authoritative and connecting that interpretation to a community of potential participants. In other words, framing supplies the meaning, while mobilizing structures supply the social capacity to reproduce and act upon that meaning. The two processes therefore reinforce one another: the more extensively the narrative circulates through organizational networks, the more familiar and plausible its political interpretation may become.

⁴⁵ James and Özdamar, “Religion as a Factor in Ethnic Conflict.”

⁴⁶ *Ghazwa-E-Hind | Nuclear War Starts?*

⁴⁷ Tarrow, *Power in Movement*.

⁴⁸ *Ghazwa-E-Hind | Nuclear War Starts?*

The third element is the political opportunity structure. The mobilization of *Ghazwah al-Hind* has developed within a political environment in which religion, nationalism, and the Kashmir conflict have historically intersected. Pakistan's formation around a Muslim political identity created an important ideological context for connecting national interests with Islamic discourse.⁴⁹ This relationship became more pronounced during the Islamization policies of General Zia-ul-Haq in the 1980s, when Islamic ideology acquired a stronger presence within state and military institutions.⁵⁰ The subsequent use of jihadist proxies in Kashmir further complicated the boundary between national security discourse and religiously framed militancy.⁵¹

The political opportunity structure becomes particularly significant during periods of crisis. Escalations in Kashmir, terrorist attacks, military confrontation, and political instability create moments in which established narratives can be amplified and reinterpreted as signs of an unfolding historical or prophetic struggle.⁵² The 2025 escalation between India and Pakistan illustrates this dynamic. The Kashmir attack, Indian military strikes, and subsequent Pakistani responses generated an environment of heightened insecurity in which references to *Ghazwah al-Hind* could acquire renewed visibility. Thus, political crises do not create the religious narrative; rather, they increase the opportunity for existing ideological frames to become politically salient. The relationship among these three dimensions can therefore be formulated as follows:



Figure 1. The Flow of Transformation from Religious Text Contestation to Political Mobilization

The relationship is not linear, however. Political crises can intensify the circulation of a frame; increased circulation can strengthen organizational networks; and established networks can themselves contribute to the interpretation of a crisis as confirmation of the prophetic narrative. The three dimensions consequently operate reciprocally rather than sequentially. This is what explains the transformation of *Ghazwah al-Hind* from a relatively marginal and contested eschatological tradition into a politically resonant symbol within parts of the Kashmir discourse.

The role of the Pakistani state further complicates this process. The relationship between the state and jihadist actors has not been uniformly supportive or uniformly oppositional. Rather, periods of tolerance, strategic accommodation, and subsequent attempts at containment have produced an ambivalent political environment. Such ambiguity may

⁴⁹ "Pakistan and Islam."

⁵⁰ Ayesha Jalal, "India's Partition and the Defence of Pakistan: An Historical Perspective," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 15, no. 3 (1987): 289–310, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03086538708582743>.

⁵¹ Ian Talbot, "India and Pakistan," in *Routledge Handbook of South Asian Politics* (Routledge, 2010), <https://api.taylorfrancis.com/content/chapters/edit/download?identifierName=doi&identifierValue=10.4324/9780203878187-3&type=chapterpdf>.

⁵² D'Souza and Routray, "Jihad in Jammu and Kashmir."

create what Social Movement Theory conceptualizes as an opportunity structure in which non-state actors can exploit ideological and political openings. Accordingly, the persistence of *Ghazwah al-Hind* discourse should not be attributed solely to militant organizations; it must also be situated within the broader historical relationship between Islamization, nationalism, state policy, and the Kashmir conflict.

At the same time, mobilization through *Ghazwah al-Hind* is contested rather than hegemonic. Islamic scholars and institutions have challenged the reduction of the Kashmir conflict to a prophetic war and have sought to separate the ḥadīth from contemporary political violence. The 2024 publication *What is the Reality of Ghazwa-e-Hind?*, for example, represents an explicit scholarly effort to challenge militant interpretations and recontextualize the tradition within historical and ethical Islamic discourse.⁵³ Such counter-interpretations are significant because they demonstrate that religious texts do not possess a single predetermined political effect. The same textual tradition can become a resource for militant mobilization or an object of critical theological re-reading, depending on the interpretive actors, institutional networks, and political circumstances through which it is received.

The Social Movement Theory perspective therefore leads to a more precise conclusion. The political power of *Ghazwah al-Hind* does not originate automatically from the ḥadīth itself. It emerges when a contested text is selectively framed as a divine mandate, circulated through organizational and media infrastructures, and activated within political circumstances that make such a frame socially persuasive. The process of politicization is consequently a relationship between text, interpreter, institution, and political context. This also explains why critical ḥadīth scholarship is important: questioning the authenticity, historical referent, and interpretive scope of the reports interrupts the process through which a contested tradition is transformed into an unquestionable mandate for contemporary conflict.

From this perspective, the problem is not the existence of *Ghazwah al-Hind* within the Islamic textual tradition, nor the mere fact that Muslims interpret it eschatologically. The critical problem arises when one particular interpretation is absolutized, detached from the ḥadīth's contested scholarly status, and converted into a political imperative for violence. A responsible reading therefore requires maintaining the distinction between prophetic narration and contemporary political claims. Such a distinction provides an important basis for resisting the instrumentalization of religious texts without denying their place within Islamic intellectual and eschatological discourse.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the *Ghazwah al-Hind* tradition requires a distinction between its textual status and its contemporary political appropriation. The two *al-Nasā'ī* narrations examined in this study do not have identical levels of authentication. The Abū Hurayrah report is assessed as *ḍa'īf*, while the Thawbān report has received differing evaluations, ranging from *ḥasan* to *ṣaḥīḥ* on the basis of corroborating chains, including al-Albānī's assessment. The reports also do not explicitly identify modern India, Pakistan, Kashmir, or a particular contemporary conflict as the fulfillment of the narrated expedition. Accordingly, identifying the Kashmir conflict as the prophesied *Ghazwah al-Hind* cannot be

⁵³ Rahman, *What Is the Reality of Ghazwa-E-Hind?*

derived from the ḥadīth text alone but constitutes an additional interpretive claim. At the social and political level, the study finds that the politicization of *Ghazwah al-Hind* occurs through the interaction of religious framing, mobilizing structures, and political opportunity structures. Particular militant and ideological actors selectively foreground the themes of warfare, divine promise, martyrdom, and salvation while connecting them to the Kashmir conflict and confrontation with India. This framing is reproduced through organizational networks, religious discourse, books, media, and digital platforms, while periods of heightened India–Pakistan tension create opportunities for the narrative to gain renewed political visibility. Social Movement Theory therefore shows that the political efficacy of the ḥadīth does not originate automatically from its textual content; rather, it emerges through processes of interpretation, circulation, and mobilization within specific historical and political contexts.

The study consequently argues that critical engagement with *Ghazwah al-Hind* should neither reduce the tradition to an extremist narrative nor treat its contemporary political application as an unquestionable fulfillment of prophecy. Its textual transmission, contested authentication, interpretive plurality, and subsequent political mobilization must be analytically distinguished. Such a distinction enables ḥadīth scholarship to examine how religious traditions acquire political meanings while avoiding the attribution of contemporary violence to the prophetic text itself. This study is limited by its reliance on textual and documentary sources concerning ḥadīth interpretation, political discourse, and the circulation of *Ghazwah al-Hind*. It does not include interviews, ethnographic observation, or audience-reception research among communities exposed to the narrative, nor does it directly examine the perspectives of militant or political actors themselves. Further research could therefore investigate how *Ghazwah al-Hind* is received, negotiated, rejected, or reinterpreted by Muslim communities and religious scholars in Pakistan, India, and other contexts. Such research would complement the present textual and social-movement analysis by examining the relationship between political narratives and their reception among actual audiences.

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