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The different trajectories of Jamaat-e-Islami in India and Pakistan; Ideological 'compromises' shaping the politics and 'violence' of their student bodies

Abstract: The Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) is a major Islamic organisation formed in undivided India by Maulana Abul Ala Maudoodi. After Partition, they developed as Jamaat-e-Islami (JIP) in Pakistan and Jamaat-e-Islami-Hind (JIH) in India. This essay will dwell upon the personality of Maulana Maudoodi and spell out the differences with other religious groups. It will draw on the way the parent bodies in both the countries defined their existence in the public sphere. A primary aim of this work is to look at how JIP and JIH took divergent routes while continuing to share the same ideological framework. As the JIP and JIH have very different surrounding situations, they have evolved in different ways that helps us understand the brand of 'violence' and language of extremism the student bodies have indulged into. This paper will trace the development of their student organisations and the violent turn that they took. Crucial to underlining their different path is to understand how and why Islami Jamiat Talaba (IJT) in Pakistan and Student Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) took to 'violence' and indulged in inflammatory discourse. This essay will draw upon personal interviews with individuals associated with SIMI and JIH and will elaborate on the genesis of violence and the causative factors which have more bearing in present time. Major works on Jamaat have concentrated on Pakistan and while there has been an interest in JIH/SIMI, there is not much work on a comparative evaluation of Jamaat in India and Pakistan which this essay explores.

Keywords: Jamaat-e-Islami, Maudoodi, SIMI, IJT, violence

On August 26, 1941 Maulana Abul Ala Maudoodi (1903-1979) established Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) in Lahore with few of his followers. Unlike the other Muslim religious groups at that time, the JI was not a party of theologians belonging to any particular school of thought or institution (Haqqani, 2005:21) Maudoodi and JI were close neither to Congress nor to the Muslim League.

In the 70 years of its existence the JI has undergone several changes, much of which happened during the lifetime of Maudoodi. After Partition, the Jamaat was trifurcated into Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan (JIP), Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JIH) and Jamaat-e-Islami Kashmir (JIK). In 1974, a unit in the Pakistan occupied Kashmir was also established. The Jamaat units in both the sides of Kashmir are politically closer and more aligned to JIP. The Jamaat also has good presence in Bangladesh and UK (Jamal, 2009:107-108).

This essay will look at the politics and policies of JIP and JIH. Though bound together ideologically, the trajectory of development of JIP and JIH has been different. I will use these differences to demonstrate the indigenisation of both which is important to understand their current position.

I will briefly talk about its founder Maudoodi to place it in context with the existing Islamic religious groups in terms of its thinking and ideological moorings. This is important to understand the violent undercurrents of the student bodies associated with them.

Maudoodi was born in Aurangabad (now in the Indian state of Maharashtra) and moved between Hyderabad, Delhi and Bhopal. The family was culturally close to the Muslim elites of Delhi. He was related to Sir Sayyed Ahmad, who established the Aligarh Muslim University, from his paternal grandmother's side. His elder brother was a journalist and went on to work as professor at Osmania University (Nasr, 1996:10-14).

The traditional ulemas (Deobandis¹ as well as Barelvis²) criticised Maudoodi for his call to place personal individual piety below religion as a social order. For Maudoodi, establishment of political order was necessary and hence took precedence as only that could ensure that a man could be true to Islam and be pious.

¹ Known for anti-British activities, the Deobandi ulemas supported Congress and established the Jamiat-Ulama-i-Hind (JUH) as a political and social arm. However, some like Maulana Shabbir Usmani sided with Mohammed Ali Jinnah's Muslim League. Usmani headed the Jamiat-Ulama-i-Islam, which was the breakaway group in 1945 (Binder, 1961:30-31)

² The Barelvi ulemas who went to Pakistan established the Jamiat-Ulama-i-Pakistan led by Maulana Abdul Hamid Badauni in 1948.

Central to Maudoodi and JI's key objective was the establishment of the government (*nizam*) based on the sharia. It was based on this key concept that JIP and JIH spelled out their policies and decisions.

In the first section I will briefly lay down the key concepts that differentiate Maudoodi and Jamaat-e-Islami from the Deobandi school of thought. It is important to remember that the Jamaat-e-Islami, Deobandis and the Barelvis follow the Hanafi school but have different views on certain issues. I will talk about the importance that Maudoodi gave to the political and social order which the ulemas concurred undermines the importance of personal piety and good conduct. Though there are other differences I will limit myself on this key difference as it is relevant to this essay.

In the second section I will dissect how after Partition JIP and JIH in their seemingly same pursuit took contradictory steps. I argue that these contradictory steps were gradually fashioned in the wake of a sense of realism that seeped in. A primary aim of this work is to look at how JIP and JIH took divergent route while continuing to share the same ideological framework.

In the third section I will trace the development of their student organisations and the violent turn that they took. Crucial to underlining their different path is to understand how and why Islami Jamiat Talaba (IJT) in Pakistan and Student Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) in India took to violence and indulged in inflammatory discourse. I will elaborate on the genesis of violence and the causative factors which have more bearing in present time.

Jamaat-e-Islami: A party with a 'difference'

For Maudoodi the Prophet (PBUH) was not only an ideal Muslim but also the first and foremost Muslim political leader who was also 'a source of emulation in political matters' and a 'guide to the ideal political order' (Nasr, 1996: 62).

This particular interpretation perhaps culminated in Maudoodi's belief that several Muslim organisations and bodies were un-Islamic as they did not talk of an Islamic state (Ahmad: 2009: 70). The Jamiat-Ulama-i-Hind (JUH) and Muslim League were, according to Maudoodi, interested in the installation of 'secular' government run on man-made rather than 'ideal religious laws'.

This interpretation according to Maulana Sayyed Abul Hasan Nadwi (Ali Miyan), a leading Deobandi scholar and rector of Nadvatul Uloom, Lucknow, was more in tune with reducing Islam to make it suitable for politics ignoring its rich spirituality aspect. He was one of the ulemas who participated in the meeting when Maudoodi formed the Jamaat, only to desert it soon.

Another prominent Muslim religious scholar Maulana Manzur Numani, who was also present in the first meeting, later wrote that Maudoodi had misunderstood the purpose of Islamic revelation which was not the establishment of a government but the promotion of faith and piety (Nasr, 1996:59).

Maudoodi's importance on nation-state and the rejection of the authority of traditional interpretations of Quran were some of the defining differences with the other ulemas. His nation-state would reflect the 'Islamic worldview based on God's sovereignty which was ethically and morally superior than any other civilisation' (Jalal, 1996:248). It was for these reasons that he was despised by the orthodox ulemas and the 'liberals'.

Maudoodi was not a religious scholar in the strictest sense. He was not an *alim* (Binder, 1961:80). He had his education at home and not in a traditional *madarsa*. He did not issue fatwas nor was he involved in imparting religious teaching or training.

Maulana Ahmed Riza Bareilvi (1856-1921) the revered leader and guide of the Bareilvis was a prominent writer of fatwas (Sanyal, 1996), the Deobandi scholars active in that period like Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi, Maulana Hussain Madani, Maulana Mahmudul Hasan were aligned with the nationalist Congress, running the affairs in different madaras or acting as spiritual guide to their numerous followers. None of this can be said of Maudoodi.

A prolific writer and journalist, Maudoodi³ started as editor of the Al-Jamiat, an organ of the JUH, the body of pro-Congress, Deobandi ulemas. For Maudoodi and the Jamaat, modern educational institutes were not for Muslims. Even the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) was described as 'qatalkhana' (slaughterhouse) - a position that the JIH continued to take in India till the late 50s (Ahmad, 2009: 93). It is on these settings that I will compare the JIP and JIH and discuss how they evolved in the next few decades.

JIP and JIH: Moving away from Maudoodi?

Scholarly work and studies on Jamaat-e-Islami have so far tended to concentrate only on one of the countries -majorly Pakistan because of its much larger influence there. If we look at recent works, Irfan Ahmad (2009) tracks the transformation of JIH and the radicalisation of SIMI but doesn't draw upon the scenario in Pakistan. For example while he touches upon the fact that some SIMI leaders were in contact with JIH leaders he doesn't elaborate on the reasons for the same.

Humeira Iqtidar (2011) looks at JIP and Jamat-ud-Dawah both based in Pakistan and Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr (1996) has concentrated on Pakistan which was where Maudoodi lived. Some earlier authors like Leonard Binder (1961) have too concentrated on Maudoodi and the JIP.

³ He edited a journal called Tarjuman, translated the Quran *Tafhimul-Quran*. Few of his famous works are Tahfimat (Understandings, 1940-65), Purdah (1939), Islami tahzib aur uski isul'u mabadi (Islamic culture and its norms and foundations, 1955), Risalah-i-diniyat (Treatise on Religion, 1932). When he read the first instalment of Tafhimul Quran Maudoodi's elder brother told him: "You do not have the profundity to be a commentator on the Quran." Nasr (1996:130).

If we look at the JUH, the faction (known as Jamiat-Ulama-i-Islam) led by Shabbir Usmani was in direct confrontation with the JUH leadership in India over the Pakistan issue. Usmani sided with Muslim League while the bulk of the JUH leadership had made common cause with Congress. In the case of Jamaat, there was no such division or an inherent contradiction. Thus a comparison between JIP and JIH appears apt to lay bare the notions of uniformity and deep links that some commentators think comes naturally to Islamic parties. There was some sharing of concerns between JIP and JIH but their discourse and rhetoric shaped by the different environment they were placed set them wide apart.

Before I discuss some of the key processes and decisions, which will reveal the seemingly contradictory steps taken by JIP and JIH from their stated objectives, I will first lay down the situation and environment which fashioned them.

After the Partition, Maudoodi settled in Lahore along with the majority of members.⁴ In April 1948, the JIH organised a 'reconstruction' meeting in Allahabad regarding its future course of action but 'remained close to Maudoodi's works' (Nasr, 1996:41).

The JIP and JIH faced two different sets of environment. In Pakistan, Maudoodi and JIP sought to establish their hold and influence by seeking to help Pakistan evolve as an Islamic nation. However, their earlier opposition to Pakistan meant Maudoodi was below the pecking order.

The JIP had to fight for attention and prominence against the Deobandi theologian Shabbir Usmani who was a favourite of the ruling establishment, and the ulemas representing the numerically stronger Barelvis.⁵ His opposition to the use of the term 'Jihad' in Kashmir in 1948 did not go down well with the Pakistani government. According to Maudoodi, as the state had officially declared ceasefire with India, the war in Kashmir could not be termed 'Jihad', which by its very nature meant a direct confrontation. This undermined the government's effort to mobilise people for its covert operations (Nasr, 1996:42).

Maudoodi and the JIP did make common cause with the other ulemas to push Pakistan into accepting an Islamic constitution. The anti-Ahmadi agitation and the decision to take part in the 1951 provincial election worked to bring JIP into Pakistan's mainstream political discourse.

JIP's advent in the political arena had a bearing on the way members started defining and viewing it. A poster on the wallpapers section of the IJT website proclaims 'Jamiat and Pakistan- Twins of 1947'⁶. Maudoodi's opposition to Pakistan and Muslim League was consistent and deep and the

⁴ Of the 625 members, 240 were in India and 385 in Pakistan. Rudad, *Jamaat-i-Islami*, part vi (Lahore 1954) p135 as cited in Bahadur (1977:139)

⁵ For a detailed account of the competing ulemas see Binder (1961) and Nasr (1996)

⁶ <http://jamiat.org.pk/new/index.php?func=wallpapers> accessed on Dec 2, 2012

description of IJT and Pakistan as twins would only hold if they meant ideological opposites, which is not what the poster wants to convey.

Maudoodi's decision to let the JIP take part in the 1951 elections resulted in opposition from several of its prominent leaders. They were concerned that politics would interfere with the core activities and affect their 'moral standards'. Several leaders left the JIP and Maudoodi's 'style began to change from scholar to politician' (Nasr, 1996:43). Cohen (2004:179) has observed that JIP could be compared with India's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) before the latter came to power.

The concept of 'Jihad was modified' and several 'authoritarian features' were 'toned down' by Maudoodi (Jalal, 2006:262). In a clear departure from his long held and established view that the head of a state should be a male and his articulation of the role of woman in the social order, Maudoodi endorsed the candidature of Fatima Jinnah against Ayub Khan in the 1965 Presidential elections.

Maudoodi looked down upon the Barelwi practise of believing in the interceding power of saints with God. The JI has consistently held the Barelwis responsible for distorting and diluting the principles of Islam by taking up Hindu practices. However, in 1987, this did not stop the then head of JIP Qazi Husain Ahmed from starting his political tour from the famous shrine of Data Ganj Baksh in Lahore (Nasr, 1996:124).

In India, the JIH which has no electoral compulsions, a visit to a shrine has never been on their agenda. However, the most visible form of its transformation has been its gradual acceptance of and participation in the electoral process.

The JIH kept its members away from taking part in electoral politics as it could not contribute to the establishment of secular government guided not by the divine but man-made laws. Maulana Abul Lais Islahi Nadwi, the first head of JIH had banned the members to 'vote in or contest elections'. On the eve of 1967 elections, the JIH allowed its members to vote for a Muslim candidate. The ban on voting and taking part in elections was still in place (Ahmad, 2008:229).

There was tremendous pressure on the JIH from within and outside to change its outlook and take part in democratic processes. A defining moment was in 1977 when Shams Pirzada, a senior ideologue and head of the Maharashtra state unit of JIH resigned and formed a political party. Pirzada's step reflected the dissent that was rife among the JIH members who wanted to have a direct stake in the political process, rather than being a mute spectator. Indian Muslims on an individual and collective level had taken part in elections since Independence, except the JIH, isolating it.

Maulana Reyaz Ahmed, former vice-president, JIH Maharashtra had witnessed the formation of Democratic Forum. He told me:

“Several JIH leaders including me were jailed during the Emergency. The censorship and the dictatorial stance of the government had shaken everybody. There was increasing pressure among the followers and sympathisers of the JIH and common Muslims to teach the authoritarian regime a lesson. When the Emergency was lifted and elections were declared, Pirzada had asked for instructions from the Shoora (the highest decision making body) regarding the future course of action. As there was no communication, Pirzada along with Yusuf Patel formed the Democratic Front.”⁷

The formation of a political party by Pirzada was a far step from the JIH central leadership which had so far in the past only selectively allowed its members to vote for certain Muslim candidates. The emergence of BJP and the rise of Hindutva pushed the JIH towards lifting the ban on participation in elections (Ahmad, 2008:229). In 2011, senior JIH leaders who continue to be members of its shoora, along with few other individuals formed a political party - Welfare Party of India to take part in electoral processes in a secular and democratic setting.

The JIH was not in favour of its members enrolling in ‘secular’ educational institutions which were looked upon as ‘corruptible agents’. Gradually, the same ‘secular’ and ‘corruptible agents’ with substantial Muslim students became centres to attract young members influenced by JIH ideology to its student bodies.

Student bodies and politics of violence

The Islami Jamiat Talaba (IJT) was formed in 1947 and has been a key asset to the JIP as its student body. In India with the JIH choosing to keep itself in isolation, it did not have an organised youth wing or student body.

Working in two entirely different settings, a section of SIMI members and IJT embraced extremism and violence. I will argue that much of this was shaped by the conduct of their parent bodies and the prevailing political situations.

Deployment of literature and printed materials forms an important part of the marketing plan of the Jamaat. A comparison of posters and handbills helps explain the ideological framework and the goals the student bodies set for themselves.

IJT posters proclaiming, “We are the only hope of Pakistan” and “Jihad is our way” point towards the moral authority and high pedestal it has set for itself. The IJT helped the Pakistan army raise two paramilitary counterinsurgency units in May 1971 and its members were responsible for the execution of Bengali nationalists in what was then East Pakistan (Haqqani, 2005:79).

⁷ Personal Interview with Maulana Reyaz Ahmed on September 27, 2012.

The JIP has been more prominent and successful in showcasing its strength and cause on the streets and campuses rather than in electoral politics. The IJT has been an effective arm of JIP deployed to stir violence and trouble in its interest. On the university campuses it has styled itself as the protector of moral values against forces of obscenity and immorality. The IJT has attacked newspaper offices and political opponents of JIP and has taken ‘advantage of its complicity with army rulers’ (Joshi, 2003: 102,123).

Iqtidar (2011:4), sees IJT as a ‘contender for power operating within the electoral system’ and not as a ‘militant organisation’. According to Bahadur (1977:154), the IJT has been a ‘militant right wing’ organisation that has targeted progressive and democratic students in Karachi, Dhaka and Lahore.

IJT cadres have also been the force behind the Hizbul Mujahideen (HM), a terror group involved in violence in Kashmir. With the help of ISI they established crucial links with the Jamaat-e-Islami units in the Indian controlled Kashmir and Pakistan occupied Kashmir as stated in Cohen (2004), Swami (2007) and Jamal (2009).⁸ This stems from JIP’s assertion that Kashmir needs *azadi* (freedom) from the clutches of Indian state and protection from her army and must merge with Pakistan.

Thus the violence indulged in by the IJT can be seen as an extension of the policies espoused by the JIP. The IJT has stayed away from the anti-Shia violence, which reflects upon the JIP’s comparative lack of belligerence towards Shias (though this is changing). Lieven (2011), Cohen (2004) and Jamal (2009) have also shown that JIP members have been found to have nexus with al-Qaeda members. Several al-Qaeda members were given shelter by IJT and JIP members.

The IJT model had been a source of inspiration – especially the degree of autonomy it has from the JIP– for students seeking to form a similar body in India. A full-fledged student body did not materialise as the JIH was not ready to give the degree of freedom and independence as desired by the student leaders who had IJT in mind (Ahmad 2009).

The official student body of JIH, the Student Islamic Organisation (SIO) was established in 1956. However, its presence was limited and centred in Aligarh. As a student body it was active only on the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) campus, which too was minimal.

The non-existent ‘action agenda’ kept the youngsters away from it. “The SIO agenda was rather woolly - for instance, not very clear what to do about communal riots which were rife in 1960s. The youth pined for actual activities rather than endless discussions and maintaining an Islamic way of

⁸ Stephen Cohen (2004), Praveen Swami (2007) have discussed the involvement of JIP in Kashmir. Arif Jamal (2009) has given a detailed account of the politics and violence of the two units of Jamaat in Kashmir.

life,” said an AMU alumnus.⁹ The JIH itself had stayed away from the electoral process, which worked in different ways to limit the avenues available for SIO.

The JIH was always worried that the student organisation (SIO) might take a ‘violent turn and get out of control’ (Ahmad, 2008: 285). In the aftermath of the Emergency JIH-linked student leaders came together and formed SIMI. Ahmadullah Siddiqi the founding member told me that SIMI was not the student body of JIH but some commentators like Christine Fair have observed that SIMI was established to revitalize the SIO. The formation of SIMI was looked upon by JIH as an act of ‘defiance’ without waiting for its formal consent. However, some of the JIH leaders like Maulana Syed Hamid Ali played a crucial role in the establishment of SIMI (Ahmad, 2008: 286).

Differences between SIMI and JIH cropped up and the Delhi visit of Yasser Arafat in 1981 led to further distancing. The young SIMI activists showed black flags to Arafat who was a ‘Western stooge’ for them in contrast to JIH for whom he was a prominent leader fighting for the Palestinians (Gupta, 2011:19).

The JIH established (revived) Student Islamic Organisation (SIO) as its official student body in 1982. Bereft of any supervision and operating within a framework set by itself, SIMI prided itself on its independence compared to SIO whose members had to constantly seek advice and guidance from JIH leaders in New Delhi (Ahmad, 2009:146).

There is no scholarly work on the formation of SIMI and what happened to Student Islamic Organisation (SIO) during that period. This will be crucial to understand the future developments within SIMI.

The JIH had moved beyond the ideological trappings of Maudoodi to accept democracy and secularism, while the genesis of SIMI’s existence lay in the desire to have a more interventionist role.

A section of SIMI members grew increasingly disenchanted with JIH and established contact with the JIP. The rhetoric of JIP leadership castigating India for failing to ‘protect minorities and oppressing Kashmiris’ appealed to the radical set of SIMI members. According to them, the JIH leaders were perceived to have compromised on several key concepts. Some SIMI members also went to Pakistan where they received training in arms in the late 80s and early 90s.¹⁰

Indian security agencies have charged SIMI with involvement in blasts across the country and for preaching jihad against the Indian state. Several commentators have spoken of SIMI as India’s indigenous *jihadists*. According to the hardline members of SIMI, the JIH had abandoned the path of

⁹ Telephonic Interview with an AMU alumnus on Aug 29, 2012. He wishes to be anonymous.

¹⁰ Personal interview with Sayeed Khan, SIMI Mumbai unit president (1990-1991), on May 11, 2008

Jihad and was only presenting the Prophet as *rahmatul lil alamin* (a mercy to mankind) while deliberately ignoring that he was also *nabiul malahim* (the prophet of wars) (Ahmad, 2009:164).

SIMI's posters and literature that were used by the Indian investigative agencies to nail them seek to 'support violence'. These posters would be in the backdrop of the razed Babri masjid, or atrocities against Muslims.

SIMI also sees itself as following the real teachings of Maudoodi from which perhaps the JIH strayed. Dr Shahid Badr Falahi, a former president of SIMI said, "We draw upon the Jamaat and Maulana Maudoodi. SIMI has no literature of its own."¹¹

The Hindutva surge in 1980s and the appointment of CAM Basheer as the SIMI president had put it on the radical path. A crucial point for SIMI's turn to violence was the 1991 Iqdam-e-Ummat conference in Mumbai. The jihadi pronouncements and the anti-national rhetoric at the conference made a JIH-linked seminary Jamiatul Falah in Azamgarh ban SIMI members from its campus. (Ahmad 2009). This was a decade before the government banned SIMI.

Maulana Reyaz Ahmed was instrumental in apprising the JIH central leaders of the need to completely distance from SIMI. He told me: "The then chief of Jamaat, Maulana Sirajul Hasan was supposed to attend the conference. However, when I saw the provocative posters and literature I advised him to skip it."

In an interview to Yoginder Sikand in 2008, JIH chief Maulana Jalaluddin Umari said: "Prior to this (the 1991 conference), we were trying to make SIMI realize that their immature approach was wrong...and not in accordance with Islamic temperament."

Sayeed Khan who was present in the 1991 conference opposed the vitriolic 'anti-national rhetoric' and after a few months led a group of 300 members that left SIMI. In 2001, SIMI was banned which remains in place till now. Falahi told me that the missing SIMI members need to be traced as they 'could be dangerous', but large number of SIMI members were being 'framed and harassed'.

Conclusion

This essay has tried to demonstrate the notion of 'different' and 'authentic' that seem to have guided the formation, existence and early days of Jamaat-e-Islami and the subsequent choices JIH and JIP made.

Reviewing Irfan Ahmad's book *Humera Iqtidar* has noted that Ahmad should have addressed why, while the JIH resisted electoral politics, JIP and Maudoodi took part in it. This, as I have tried to put

¹¹ Telephonic interview with Dr Shahid Badr Falahi on March 2, 2012

in context, was partly due to the fact that other Islamic religious bodies and ulemas were playing a key role shaping the politics of Pakistan and Maudoodi did not want to be left behind.

In India, Muslims being a minority and under a secular constitution, JIH felt confused about its role. This 'identity crisis' made it hard for JIH to justify its existence to its cadres which I have shown has been a crucial factor that led to the emergence of SIMI. Unlike SIMI, the tacit support to IJT from a section of the establishment explains its overt violence.

This essay has demonstrated that the divergent routes set upon in motion a process that drew the JIP and JIH to become active players in their respective spheres in response to the differing political and social realities. Theoretically, they might be bound by 'Maudoodism', but it only loosened to make space for pragmatism as a reaction to their different concerns.

An apt example to sum up the defining difference between IJT and SIMI would be particular wallpaper on the IJT website. It says: "We are the only hope of Pakistan." It will be far-fetched for SIMI (and perhaps even SIO) to have a poster proclaiming: "We are the only hope of India."

This reiterates my argument for the need for more comparative study of Jamaat's transformation in India, Pakistan, and Jammu & Kashmir.

Lieven (2011), Jamal (2009) and Ahmad (2009) have written about the concern and fear of the Jamaat leadership in Pakistan, Jammu & Kashmir and India of the youngsters turning to violence crossing the boundaries set by them.

In such a situation, it becomes all the more important to undertake studies of Jamaat for the emergence of nuanced framework for better understudy. This I believe will be instrumental in creating a roadmap understanding the future of its student bodies and the use of violent expression.

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