

## **Pakistan's terrorism gone global**

### **Brief Description:**

This brief acts as an explainer on how Pakistan and Pakistani nationals fueled by radicalism continue to be the reason behind global rise in terrorism. From the 9/11 plot to terror financing, facts lay established and Pakistan cannot refute these.

In addition to Pakistan's obvious involvement in terrorism, its political class and its society defend such actions in a way as if terrorism is an intrinsic part of Pakistan's social fabric.

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## 1) Pakistan at the forefront of terrorism:

- Whenever a terrorism related incident takes place, one country most definitely makes it to the list either because of the terror groups proactively acting from within its borders or because of the active support from its own populace supplying manpower to the terror groups within and abroad: Pakistan.
- The problem has assumed a social and cultural nature. Crux of the matter is Pakistan has a problem of radicalism and from it originates terrorism which has become an international issue for national security for every big and small state.
- Consequently, we find the most radical factions of Taliban and dreaded terrorist groups like Al Qaeda and ISIS finding 'safe havens' in Pakistan, and not just with the backing of Pakistan's military establishment but also the popular support they receive among the most radical sections of the Pakistani society.
- There is also a money trail that binds Pakistan to major terror plots of recent times including 9/11. The evidence is irrefutable.

## 2) Relevance in the light of recent events:

- Pakistan, and most importantly, Pakistani nationals, in recent times have been linked to some serious high profile terrorism plots. Some plots have been averted while other successful plots have become cases of indictments.

### Recent examples:

- I. A Pakistani man, **Muhammad Shahzeb Khan** aka **Shahzeb Jadoon**, 20, was arrested in Ormstown, Canada (near US border) in September 2024 for planning mass shooting of Jewish New Yorkers on the anniversary of 7<sup>th</sup> October Hamas attack on Israel. He was charged with attempting to provide material support as well as resources to ISIS.
- II. **Asif Merchant**, 46, a Pakistani man with alleged ties to Iranian govt. according to US sources, was charged with seeking to carry out political assassinations on American soil. Merchant said that he wanted to target individuals in the United States who are "hurting Pakistan and the world, [the] Muslim world."

- III. Even the Taliban regime (post 2021), which is still in a bid to gain legitimacy, has accused Pakistani Citizens of plotting and organizing many attacks in Afghanistan. The regime’s acting defense ministry in January 2024 claimed that more than 20 Pakistani citizens were killed in Taliban operations and “dozens of others” captured.
- IV. A Pakistani doctor, **Muhammad Masood**, aged 28, was arrested by The Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) of the FBI’s Minneapolis Division at Minneapolis St. Paul International Airport (MSP) in 2020. He was holding an H-1B US Visa and a Pakistani passport. He was planning to carry out lone wolf attacks in support of ISIS.

**The photos of some of the terrorists involved in the recent plots:**

Muhammad Masood and his Pakistani passport:



Asif Merchant:



### **3) India warned the world before:**

- Terrorism has become a core policy of Pakistan, used as a tool of leverage and war. Since Zia-ul-Haq's era, Pakistan's embrace of Islamism has fueled terrorism, impacting South Asia and beyond. Initially targeting India in the 1990s, these strategies now threaten global security. The deep-seated hatred within Pakistani society has made its citizens, diaspora, and sympathizers more prone to committing acts of terror than any other nationality.

### **4) Relevance in the context of 9/11:**

On September 11th, 23 years ago, the U.S. faced its deadliest terror attack, with 2,750 killed in New York, 184 at the Pentagon, and 40 in Pennsylvania. Four aircraft were hijacked by 19 militants; two hit the Twin Towers, one the Pentagon, and another crashed in Pennsylvania. Evidence suggests Pakistan's deep involvement in this and other acts of international terrorism.

### **5) Pakistan's direct links to 9/11:**

#### **5.1) Testimony from FBI:**

- On July 31, 2003, **John S. Pistole**, FBI Deputy Assistant Director of Counter-terrorism, testified to the U.S. Senate on terrorism financing, highlighting links between the 9/11 attackers and Pakistan. This testimony sparked global media speculation, particularly in India, where it was believed that Pakistani terrorist elements, ISI, and the Army were involved in the 9/11 attacks.

#### **5.1.1) The terror money trail: Karachi Link and Hotel Embassy Plot:**

The planners and financiers of 9/11 terror plot, under the leadership of **Mohammad Atta**, frequented around Pakistan and Afghanistan. The structured group emerged in November 1999:



**Mohammad Atta** piloted the first plane, American Airlines Flight 11, into the World Trade Center. Investigators say that he was the ringleader of the Sept. 11 plot.

- **Said Bahaji**, a German of Moroccan origin, was one of them. He flew into **Karachi's Qaid-e-Azam International Airport** on a Turkish Airlines flight from Istanbul a week before September 11, 2001.



Said BAHAJI

- There were other accomplices with him. 3 stayed at **Hotel Embassy**. 2 stayed at a house in **Gulshan-e-Iqbal**. In all likelihood, the meeting in Hotel Embassy a week before the attack was for coordinating the attacks. This **Karachi Cell** also took care of the funding.

- **Bahaji** later disappeared into Quetta, Pakistan.
- Some funds were provided by **Syed Omar Sheikh** who was involved in Daniel Pearl Murder case and considered a dreaded terrorist by Indian authorities for his association with Jaish-e-Mohammad. Sheikh used his contact in India, **Aftab Ansari**, a don from Mumbai, to collect funds, who in turn order one of his henchmen to kidnap a biz tycoon from Kolkata, India. About \$100,000 from ransom was transferred to Atta who returned \$15,600 through hawala channels a few days before he dive-bombed the WTC towers in Manhattan.



*Daniel Pearl, Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh*

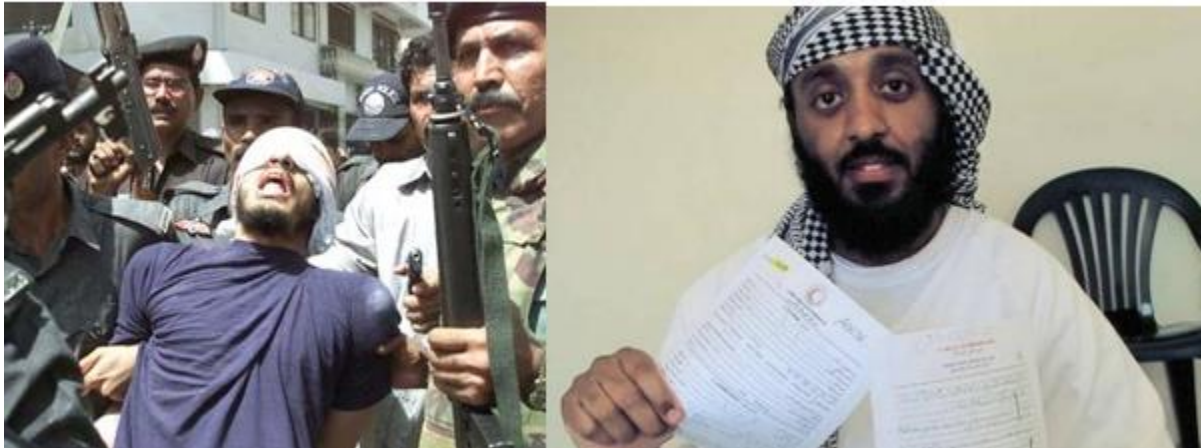
Other coordinators and accomplices who appeared in Pakistan during the fateful week of 9/11:

- **Mustafa Ahmed al-Hawsawi:** A Saudi national, he was the finance manager of the 9/11 operations. He moved several thousand dollars from a Standard Chartered Bank account in the UAE to Florida's SunTrust account operated by Atta and others. Operating from Dubai, he sent ATM and credit cards to **Atta's** group in the U.S. to fund flight training, simulators, equipment, and book flights for September 11. He landed in Karachi a few hours before the 9/11 attack and withdrew the \$15,600 sent by Atta.

**Mustafa Ahmed Adam al-Hawsawi**



- **Ramzi Binalshibh:** He coordinated all the activities from Karachi by activating a dormant Al Qaeda cell with the help of **Lashkar-e-Jhangvi**.



- **Khaled Mohammed Sheikh:** He conceived the idea of hijacking aircraft and dive-bombing them into tall buildings. **Ramzi** was his nephew.



ABACA PRESS © KRT/ABACA. 42866-1 Islamabad-Pakistan. 01/03/2003. Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, suspected of organizing the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States and on the FBI's 22 Most Wanted Terrorists list, was arrested today, March 1, 2003, near Islamabad, Pakistan.

The terrorist groups which can be held responsible for aiding Al-Qaeda:





## **5.2) Pakistan as safe haven for Al Qaeda and Osama Bin Laden:**

### **5.2.1) The provision of safe haven in Federally Administered Tribal Areas:**

- After the U.S.-led coalition attacked Al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2001, the "epicenter of global terrorism" shifted to Pakistan's tribal areas. Al Qaeda, dislodged from Afghanistan in 2002, rebuilt in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). A 2007 video release by Al Qaeda showed Osama bin Laden alive, confirming the group's continued activity. Al Qaeda was based in Pakistan from 1988-1991 and again from 2002 onward.

### **5.2.2) The Al-Qaeda leadership protected in Pakistan:**

Al Qaeda leadership had to flee Afghanistan as Northern Alliance, supported by the U.S.-led coalition forces, had moved to Southern Afghanistan:

- I. **Osama bin Laden, al-Zawahiri, and Sheik Saeed al Masri** moved to Pakistan.
- II. Al-Zawahiri, and possibly Osama bin Laden fled to the area between Nuristan, Konar Province in Afghanistan and the area around **Chitral** and **Bajaur Agency** in **Pakistan**. (No exact confirmation)
- III. Osama Bin Laden was also in Peshawar and Haripur.
- IV. Interrogation of one of Osama's wives revealed that at least two of his children were born in Pakistan Govt Hospitals.

### **5.2.3) Abu Faraj al-Libi:**

- I. Abu Faraj was a communications conduit for al-Qaeda managers to Bin Laden from August 2003 until his capture. He was the recipient of couriered messages and public statements from Bin Laden and passed messages to Bin Laden from both senior lieutenants and rank-and-file members.
- II. A letter written by Al Qaeda's number two, al-Zawahiri, dated 9 July 2005, indicates close contacts between Al Qaeda's leadership and Abu Faraj.



(Abu Faraj)

#### 5.2.4) When Osama was found:

- From 2005 onwards, Osama bin Laden lived in a fortified mansion in Abbottabad, just a short distance from a Pakistani military academy. This raised suspicions that Pakistan's military or intelligence were either aiding him or were incompetent. On May 2, 2011, U.S. SEAL Team Six killed bin Laden in Abbottabad during Operation Neptune Spear.

Osama Bin Laden and his compound:



## 6) A closer look at Pakistan's regional terror outfits and their links to Al Qaeda:

The terrorist groups that have disrupted peace in India before also acted in tandem with other international terrorist groups like the aforementioned Al Qaeda.

### 6.1) Jaish-e-Muhammad & Al-Qaeda Links: Bahawalpur Connection:

1. **Masood Azhar** founded Jaish-e-Muhammad in March 2000. It was announced at a large gathering at a stadium in Bahawalpur, Pakistani Punjab.
2. **Ayesha Siddiq**a, ex-Pakistani military, a former civil servant former director of naval research, and a researcher at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, interviewed a number of Jaish members.
3. Jaish had close links with Al Qaeda from its inception and received early funding from **Osama bin Laden**, money that it used to take over seminaries and training camps outside Bahawalpur.

The HQ of Jaish was based at a Seminary in **Kausar Colony**.

### 6.2) Full Impunity:

- I. The entire Jaish enterprise is owned by Azhar family that has occupied the entire compound.
- II. Inside Bahawalpur, Jaish expanded its headquarters by buying up adjacent plots of land and adding new buildings to the compound.
- III. According to a 2007 dossier prepared by the Bahawalpur Police, the site includes residential quarters for housing students and fedayeen.
- IV. It was clear to residents of Bahawalpur that the group had state support, as acknowledged years later by Pakistan's ex-president Musharraf.

## **7) Cultural and Political acceptance of terrorism in Pakistan:**

Be it Jaish-e-Muhammad or Al-Qaeda, the political and public sympathy with such radical elements is apparent:

- I. A senior North Western Frontier Minister Sirajul Haq showed solidarity with militants that were targeted in an air raid on Bajaur in October, 2006.
- II. Ex- Pakistan PM Imran Khan called Osama bin Laden a 'martyr' in Pakistan's Parliament back in 2020.
- III. Imran Khan also once stated in an interview that he would "absolutely not" allow the US to have the CIA in Pakistan to conduct cross border counter-terrorism missions against al-Qaeda, the Islamic State group, and the Taliban.
- IV. When Pakistan tried to conduct operations against two radical Islamic clerics at Lal Masjid, it turned an entire subset of population against Pakistan itself. The event spawned a new terror group in the form of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan.
- V. The Pakistani media coverage of the IC-814 hijacking and prisoner exchange transformed Masood Azhar from an 'obscure radical' into a household name. It was once witnessed at Liberty Market in Lahore how the middle class and shopkeepers were excited by Masood Azhar's lecture on a megaphone carried by some men.
- VI. Pakistan keeps a distinction of good and bad terrorists. Essentially, as long as the Pakistani establishment isn't hurt, the terrorists are allowed to have a free reign. For instance, according to Punjab Police records, in 2011, three JeM operatives - Haroon Akbar Khan, Muhammad Tayyab and Mati-ur-Rahman Aarin – who were involved in the attack on a Pakistan Air Force bus in 2011 and other attacks were listed as terrorists. However, JeM is no longer on the list of terror organisations maintained by Pakistan's authorities.

## **8) Consequences:**

Pakistan always portrayed itself as an 'ally' of the West since the days of cold war especially since the Western countries like UK and the US, considered it an essential asset to contain Soviet Russia. It pretty much facilitated anti Soviet factions in Afghanistan. A hub of terrorism as it always was, its involvement in global terrorism came to fore in a much clearer manner post-Cold War days as it played a double game with United States.

Should Pakistan be made to face the consequences of its actions?

It is clear that Pakistan's military and intelligence agencies as well as general public have unapologetic support for terrorism.

Can Pakistan as a country be trusted ever again by the international community?

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