

# PAKISTAN AS BOTH TERROR PERPETRATOR AND VICTIM

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - Pakistan

The recent [encounter, at Handwara](#) in northern Kashmir, where Indian security forces took on terrorists, left five security personnel, including a colonel, dead. This has once again brought to the fore the terrorist threat emanating from Pakistan. Analysts of terrorism are well aware of the paradox that Pakistan is both possibly the leading perpetrator of terrorism and a major victim of the same menace.

This contradiction can be traced to the deliberate policy of the Pakistani state to create and foster terrorist groups in order to engage in low intensity warfare with its neighbours. Pakistan first operationalised this strategy in regard to Afghanistan following the overthrow of Zahir Shah by his cousin Daud Khan in 1973 and intensified it with the cooperation of the U.S. and Saudi Arabia after the Marxist coup of 1978.

Also read | [Pakistan's experience shows why instrumentalising religion is dangerous](#)

The Soviet withdrawal in 1989 left the Pakistani military with a large surplus of Islamist fighters that it had trained and armed. Islamabad decided to use this “asset” to intensify the insurgency in the Kashmir Valley. However, the decade-long Afghan “jihad” had also radicalised a substantial segment of the Pakistani population, especially in the North-West Frontier Province and Punjab, as well as augmented sectarian divisions not only between Sunnis and Shias but also among various Sunni sects — especially between the puritanical Deobandis and the more syncretic and Sufi-oriented Barelvis.

In the process, a number of homegrown terrorist groups emerged that the Pakistan Army co-opted for its use in Kashmir and the rest of India. But, it soon became clear that Pakistan had created a set of Frankenstein’s monsters some of whom turned against their creator especially after the Musharraf government, under American pressure, decided to collaborate with the latter in the overthrow of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.

But not all terrorist groups acted in this way. Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), the group involved in the latest terrorist encounter in Handwara, is a classic example of a “loyalist” terrorist organisation that has played by the rules set by the Pakistani military. It only launches attacks on targets outside Pakistan, primarily in India. As the evidence in the case of the Mumbai carnage of 2008 clearly indicates LeT operations are coordinated with the Inter-Services Intelligence that provides it with intelligence and logistical support in addition to identifying specific targets.

This is why the LeT and its front organisations have continued to receive the military’s patronage and unstinting support. Consequently, its leader, Hafiz Saeed, was until recently provided protection by the Pakistani state despite being designated an international terrorist by the UN and the U.S. putting a \$10 million bounty on his head. A Pakistani court finally sentenced Saeed to 11 years in prison in February for terror financing activities in order to stave off the global anti-terror watchdog, Financial Action Task Force (FATF), blacklisting Pakistan as a terror financing state.

Comment | [The mixed signals from Pakistan](#)

At the other end of this good-bad spectrum lies the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which

has ideological affinity with the Afghan Taliban. The TTP and its affiliates have fought pitched battles with the Pakistan Army in the Federally-Administered Tribal Areas and parts of the NWFP (now Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa). While both the LeT and the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) have been engaged in attacks on Indian targets identified by Pakistan's ISI, the latter has not hesitated to launch terrorist attacks on targets within Pakistan as well, especially against the Shias and Sufi shrines.

Leading Pakistan watcher Christine Fair in her book, *Fighting to the End: The Pakistan Army's Way of War*, explains that the difference between LeT and JeM lies in the fact that while the former is more pragmatic and less ideological, the latter is highly ideological and sectarian. JeM draws its ideological inspiration from a very extreme form of Deobandi puritanism that considers all those who do not believe in its philosophy beyond the pale of Islam and, therefore, legitimate targets of attack. For many JeM diehards, these include not only Shias and Barelvis but also the Pakistani state and the Pakistani military.

LeT on the other hand does not consider Muslims of different theological orientations as non-believers and therefore legitimate targets of attack. According to Ms. Fair, this relatively "liberal" interpretation is related to the fact that LeT draws its ideological inspiration from the sect called the Ahl-e-Hadis, which composes only a small proportion of Pakistan's Muslim population and cannot afford to engage in sectarian conflict. Moreover, it draws its membership from different Muslim sects including the Sufi-oriented Barelvis and the puritanical Deobandis. Both these factors drive LeT toward greater tolerance in sectarian terms and to eschew intra-Islamic theological battles. Its primary goals are political; above all, driving India out of Kashmir. This jells well with the objectives of the Pakistani military and makes LeT and Hafiz Saeed, favourites of the Pakistani establishment.

Comment | [Muslim, Islamic, Indian, or all of the above: on Pakistan's identity crisis](#)

This narrative makes one thing very clear. Many of the terrorist groups were deliberately created by the Pakistani state to serve its purposes. However, its ability to control the various terrorist outfits is uneven and some of them have turned against their creator. It establishes the fact that using terrorist outfits for state objectives is a highly risky business whose blowback cannot be predicted and can have very negative consequences for the stability of the state itself.

*Mohammed Ayoob is University Distinguished Professor Emeritus of International Relations, Michigan State University*

You have reached your limit for free articles this month.

Already have an account ? [Sign in](#)

Start your 14 days trial now. [Sign Up](#)

Find mobile-friendly version of articles from the day's newspaper in one easy-to-read list.

Enjoy reading as many articles as you wish without any limitations.

A select list of articles that match your interests and tastes.

Move smoothly between articles as our pages load instantly.

A one-stop-shop for seeing the latest updates, and managing your preferences.

We brief you on the latest and most important developments, three times a day.

\*Our Digital Subscription plans do not currently include the e-paper ,crossword, iPhone, iPad mobile applications and print. Our plans enhance your reading experience.

Dear reader,

We have been keeping you up-to-date with information on the developments in India and the world that have a bearing on our health and wellbeing, our lives and livelihoods, during these difficult times. To enable wide dissemination of news that is in public interest, we have increased the number of articles that can be read free, and extended free trial periods. However, we have a request for those who can afford to subscribe: please do. As we fight disinformation and misinformation, and keep apace with the happenings, we need to commit greater resources to news gathering operations. We promise to deliver quality journalism that stays away from vested interest and political propaganda.

Please enter a valid email address.

Subscribe to The Hindu now and get unlimited access.

Already have an account? [Sign In](#)

Start your 14 days trial now [Sign Up](#)

To continue enjoying The Hindu, You can turn off your ad blocker or [Subscribe to The Hindu](#).

[Sign up for a 30 day free trial.](#)

**END**

Downloaded from **crackIAS.com**

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com

Crack