

# Terrorist Groups in India: A Case Study

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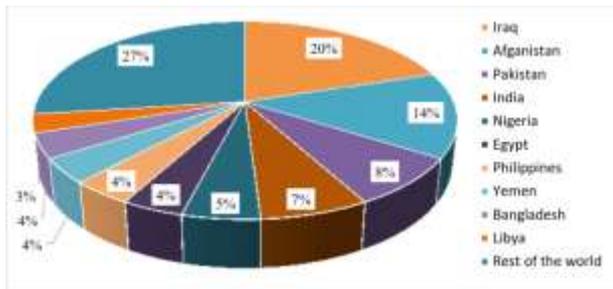
**Abstract** – The former National Security Advisor of India, M. K. Narayanan had made disclosure of as many as 800 terrorist cells operating in India with “external support” (Times of India, 12 August 2008) which reflects the extent to which terrorism has made inroads into the country as a result of outside country exporting and sponsoring terrorism to India. India continues to experience terrorist attacks launched by transnational groups based in Pakistan. (Government of United States of America 2016) According to the Country Reports on Terrorism 2012 by US, India was ranked amongst the top ten countries in world with most terrorist attacks, i.e. total 557 terrorist attacks in the year 2012. (Government of United States of America 2013)

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## 1.1 TERRORISM A NATIONAL SECURITY PROBLEM IN INDIA

According to the Global Terrorism Index report, in the year 2015 nearly half of all terrorist attacks occurred in four countries, viz. Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India (Table 1). (Institute for Economics and Peace 2016)

**TABLE 1: SPREAD OF TERROR ATTACKS AROUND THE WORLD, 2015**



Source: *The Global Terrorism Index, 2016: Measuring and understanding the impact of terrorism*, Institute for Economics and Peace, 2016.

Terrorism in India increased after the Soviet-Afghan war ended in the late 1980s. Islamic terrorism was the “bye-product” (Ramon 2002) of the jihad conducted by the United States against the Soviets in the 1980s with Pakistan serving as the frontline state in the war. The United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Pakistan’s Intelligence Services of India (ISI) encouraged Islamic fundamentalists and unemployed Muslim youth all over the world to fight the jihad war in Afghanistan. The ISI received funds from CIA and other countries such as Saudi Arabia to religiously motivate, train and arm these mujahideens to fight the Soviet

forces. B. Ramon points out that a small number of these fighters were from Jammu and Kashmir of India who were indoctrinated by the ISI and religiously motivated to start jihad war in India. (*ibid.*) This led to sprouting of Islamic terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir and other parts of the country. Ramon mentions of Israeli agencies warning India in the early 1990s of possible Islamist extremist cells hibernating in Tamil Nadu as a lead given by a Palestinian student picked up from south India. (*ibid.*) The ISI and some Islamic fundamentalist parties of Pakistan worked to create extremism and alienation amongst the sections of Muslim youth of India with the objective to create jihadi network in Jammu and Kashmir and other parts of India. Some of these religious fundamental political groups in Pakistan have publicly announced liberating Jammu and Kashmir from ‘Indian occupation’ and Muslims from other parts of India as their goal. After the 2001 terror attacks on United States and subsequent ‘war on terror’ in Afghanistan, some of the organised militant groups escaped to Pakistan. The ISI re-located these groups in the Northern areas of Gilgit and Baltistan and Pakistan Occupied Kashmir to source them jihad war in Kashmir and other parts of India.

## 1.2 PAKISTAN SPONSORS TERRORISM IN INDIA

Pakistan has been supporting insurgency and sponsoring terrorism in India as part of state policy. The military and Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI)[1] of Pakistan trained and funded the mujahideens to fight the Soviets during the Afghan-Soviet war and were later diverted to fight a proxy-war against India in Kashmir. The militant groups based in Pakistan organized themselves under patronage of the state to carry out terrorist activities in India.

Pakistan supports state-sponsored terrorism in India as part of state-policy to achieve 'strategic depth' in the region. Terrorism in Pakistan and state sponsored terrorism has politico-security implications for India. They carry out terror attacks in India causing threat not only to its internal security but also distempering its democratic and secular structure. In reaction to fight terrorism the state has committed political violence termed as state terrorism, further aggravating the tender security situation. Hence, the paper focuses on the means and tools employed by Pakistan state to export and sponsor terrorism in Pakistan. It also describes various Pakistan-based militant organisations that target India.

In South Asia, the involvement of foreign powers like US, former USSR, Saudi Arabia and others in Afghanistan during the decade long Soviet-Afghan war in the 1980s led to rise of indigenous armed groups in the region with Afghanistan and Pakistan being the main theatres for these groups. Jayant Prasad, the Indian Ambassador on changing nature of terrorism in the region commented: "Today, terrorist groups are operating beyond the natural boundaries and are drawing support from many sources including the States in many cases". (Prasad 2010) India's grave concern is the national security threat posed by Pakistan based militant groups and training camps. India has persistently demanded Pakistan to take serious action against the terror groups based on their soil which carry out terror attacks in Kashmir and other parts of India. Based on the evidences India accuses Pakistan's intelligence agency, ISI of supporting the terror attacks in India such as the Indian Parliament attack (2001) and the Mumbai attacks (2008). India has been a target of terror activities for long but it was after the Mumbai terror attacks in 2008 that the international community recognised the grave threat posed by the Pakistan based terror groups to India and the region. Pakistan is soil to plethora jihadi militant groups that pose security threat to the South Asia region including India. Most of the terror groups had been formed by late 1980's after General Zia's programme of Islamisation of Pakistan over a decade (1977-88) which created domestically conducive environment that provided for the training, funding and most importantly support of state to the mujahideens left behind after the end of the Soviet-Afghan war.

### 1.3 TERRORIST GROUPS IN INDIA

For better understanding, Christine Fair has broadly categorised these groups into three: (a) Anti-Pakistan groups, (b) Sunni sectarian groups, and (c) Kashmir-centric groups. (Fair 2014: 243) Tehreek-e-Taliban-e-Pakistan (TTP) is Pakistan's Taliban which falls under the category of militant groups that are anti-Pakistan in nature. TTP is an umbrella organization that includes all anti-Pakistan militant groups that spread across the Pashtun belt in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). In 2007 about 13 groups

united under the leadership of Baitullah Mehsud to form TTP. The objective is to fight Pakistan army on one hand and NATO-led forces in Afghanistan on the other. They ultimately want to establish *sharia* (Islamic Law). (Abbas 2008: 02) The Sunni sectarian groups mainly target the Shia and other religious minorities community in Pakistan. The two important groups that fall under this category are Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) and Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) which are funded by Saudi Arabia.

The Kashmir-centric militant groups are the most important in relation to the security threat to India. It can be clustered into three, viz. the Deobandi groups like Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) and Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HuM); the Ahl-e-Hadith groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and the Jamaat-e-Islami supported groups like Hizbul Mujahideen (HM) and Al-Badr. (Fair 2014: 243) Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HuM) is a Pakistan-based Deobandi jihadist group operating in Kashmir. It was originally formed in 1985 to participate in the jihad against the Soviet forces in Afghanistan. After the withdrawal of Soviet from Afghanistan in 1989, the group turned its operation to Kashmir. HuM merged with another terror group, Harkat-ul-Jehad-al-Islami (HuJI) in 1993 to form Harkat-ul-Ansar (HuA). But it failed as an effective instrument due to arrest of three of its top leaders, viz. Nasrullah Mansur Langrayal, Maulana Masood Azhar and Sajjid Afghani by Indian security forces. Due to reports of HuA's link with Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda, United States declared it as a terrorist outfit in 1997. Post-ban, HuA changed its name back to Harkat-ul-Mujahideen. After the 9/11 attacks, the group was banned by US in September 2001 under its Harkat-ul-Mujahideen moniker. The HuM outfit has been designated as terrorist organization by India and Canada also. Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) is another Deobandi jihadi group active in Kashmir. HuM hijacking of Indian Airlines Flight 814 in December 1999 led to release of Maulana Masood Azhar by Indian Government. Masood Azhar after returning to Pakistan formed Jaish-e-Mohammed instead of joining HuM. The primary objective of the group is to liberate Kashmir by engaging Indian security forces in proxy war and integrate into Pakistan. JeM is credited to pioneering suicide attacks in Kashmir in 2000 at Badami Bagh. (Baweja 2001) JeM has supporters in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK) and India's Southern Kashmir and Doda region. Many them are also recruited from 'Jihad factory' of Punjab province of Pakistan with large percentage from Multan, Bahawalpur and Rahim Yar Khan districts. (IPCS 2005) JeM had training camps in Afghanistan until 2001. They were relocated to Peshawar, Balakot in North West Frontier Province and Muzaffarabad in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK). It has several cells operating in Jammu and Kashmir and other cities across India. Like HuM, JeM had been banned in Pakistan since 2002 but it has been operational under different names with the support of the state. JeM is said to have been formed by Masood Azhar

with the help of Pakistan's ISI to fight proxy-war in Kashmir. (Jaffrelot 2015: 520) After his release, Azhar was taken on a public victory tour throughout Pakistan by the ISI to raise funds for jihad against India and Azhar announced formation of JeM. JeM received weapons and training from the ISI. JeM terrorists along with another ISI backed group, LeT attacked Indian Parliament in December 2001 at New Delhi. Under the US pressure, JeM was officially banned by Pakistan but it continued to enjoy the patronage of the ISI. ISI is accused of assisting JeM in conducting an attack on Pathankot Indian Airbase in January 2016. After a long dormant period of JeM post-2001 split reflects its resurrection as a strategic pawn by ISI not only for Pakistan's regional strategy but also domestic security strategy. (*The World Post*, 7 January 2015) This means that Pakistan army has bigger role for JeM in future which poses bigger threat to the security of India.

Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM) is Kashmiri separatist militant group founded by Muhammad Ahsan Dar in 1989. The group is the militant wing of Jamaat-i-Islami, the Islamist political party of Pakistan. It is said to have been set up at the behest of ISI of Pakistan to counter pro-independence Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF). (South Asian Terrorist Portal) The objective of the group is liberation of Kashmir and its accession to Pakistan. The group is primarily composed of ethnic Kashmiris and targets the Indian security forces in Kashmir. The current leader of the group is Sayeed Salahudeen who resides in Pakistan-Occupied-Kashmir (PoK). India has designated HM as a terrorist group along with European Union and US. (Government of India) The US designated HM as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO) in 2017. (*The Indian Express*, 16 August 2017) India has been pushing for ban on HM by United Nations but has been vetoed by China. In 2016 (08 July), killing of HM commander, viz. Burhan Wani by Indian security forces caused mass protests and widespread unrest in the Kashmir valley. Kashmir valley remained under 53 days of consecutive curfew post-death of Burhan. Burhan Wani was ethnic Kashmiri who belonged to Tral area in Kashmir. He joined HM in 2010 and came to be called "poster-boy" of militancy in Kashmir. He used social media like Facebook to reach out to Kashmiri youth and urged them to join HM militant group. This led to increased number of recruitments of local Kashmiris in the militant group. HM is one of the largest and oldest militant group operating in Kashmir. It poses grave threat to India's internal security especially after the unrest amongst the radical local Kashmiris in the valley who are increasingly joining the militant group of HM. Al-Badr is an active terror group in Jammu and Kashmir with the objective to strengthen the 'Kashmir freedom struggle' in order to liberate the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir and merge it with Pakistan. Al-Badr operated under the banner of Hizb-ul-Mujahideen but with the support of Pakistan's ISI it began to operate independently from the year 1998.

It is headquartered at Mausehra in Pakistan. India banned the militant group in 2002 while the US designated Al-Badr as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO). Bakht Zameen is the present commander of the group. The group is active in Anantnag, Baramullah, Budgam, Srinagar and Kupwara districts of the Kashmir valley as well as its presence in the Poonch and Rajouri districts of Jammu region. Al-Badr is part of United Jihad Council (UJC). UJC is a coalition of Pakistan-based terrorist groups which operates in Jammu and Kashmir. The members of Al-Badr are reported to have taken part in the Kargil conflict in 1999. It targets the Indian military and government officials in Jammu and Kashmir.

Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) is one of the most active terrorist organization in South Asia region. It was founded in 1987 by Hafiz Saeed, Abdullah Azzam and Zafar Iqbal as the armed wing of the Markaz Dawat-ul-Irshad (MDI). The group aims to liberate Kashmir with ultimate objective to introduce an Islamic state in South Asia. Its operations were restricted to Kashmir during the 1990's which expanded to other parts of India by 2000. Its headquarters is in Muridke in Punjab province of Pakistan with several training camps in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). LeT trains many recruits at its camp under a structured programme. (Fair 2014: 253) All recruits go through a basic training course called as Daurra-e-Aam after which about one in ten recruits are selected for an advanced training course called as Daura-e-Khas. Few amongst this are advanced to higher level courses like intelligence, driving and swimming. Ultimately even fewer are further sent for missions to other countries like India. Majority of the trainees go back home who help in propagating group's ideology and motivating others to go for the training. JuD is different from other Islamists terrorist groups operating from Pakistan which are mostly Deobandi interpretative tradition of Islam like the Pakistan Taliban, LeJ, JeM etc. JuD is from Ahl-e-Hadis interpretation tradition of Islam. Unlike Deobandi groups which have turned against the state itself, JuD has remained loyal to the state and insists that jihad outside of Pakistan is legitimate. LeT is the most favoured state-supported militant group by ISI as an instrument of war against India due to a number of factors. Firstly, group is dominantly composed of Punjabi which matches the ethnicity of most of the Pakistan Army and ISI. Secondly, the group has loyalty to its state-sponsors. Thirdly, LeT is the only militant organization to challenge Deobandi groups which are causing sectarian violence in Pakistan and have turned against the state itself, posing grave threat to the internal security situation. (Tellis 2010) LeT thus is supported by Pakistan state due to its dual utility of countering Deobandi groups and promoting regional strategic goals. According to Christine Fair, LeT is also part of ISI's strategy "to orchestrate maximal antipathy towards the United

States so that it can resist pressure to cooperate with the US and extract a higher price when it does cooperate whether on drone strikes, arresting or eliminating terrorists of mutual interests to the United States and Pakistan, or facilitating logistical efforts to sustain the US war in Afghanistan". (Fair 2013) LeT receives support from ISI in form of operational funding, specialized weapons, communication equipment, training, safe havens for the leadership, intelligence on targets and infiltration assistance.

After the 9/11 attacks, the United States designated LeT as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO) in 2001. It is believed that ISI had already alerted LeT about the ban which allowed its leader, Hafiz Saeed to plan for restructuring of the organization. A militant component of the organization was created to be headed by Maulana Rehman Lakhvi while a political wing of the organization, viz. Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD) was also created. LeT transferred its assets and personnel to JuD. The JuD began to be known for its relief work like during the 2005 earthquake in PoK where it conducted relief and rescue operations. The Pakistan state allowed and supported the LeT organization "to rebrand itself as a domesticated philanthropic organization in order to maintain itself in the face of US pressure on Pakistan to crack down on terrorism". (Fair 2013) After the role in Mumbai terror attacks in 2008, LeT received international attention which until now had been of little interest to international community. US was preoccupied with Al-Qaeda after the 9/11 attacks but after 2008 attacks saw LeT as a potent threat to its security. As a result, JuD was also banned by US although India had banned LeT as a terrorist organization under Unlawful Activities (Presentation) Act 1967 after its involvement in the 2001 Indian Parliament Attack. After the ban, it operated under a new name of Falah-e-Insaniyat Foundation (FIF). Under this new name, it continued its philanthropic work. In 2009, the organization provided relief to the internally displaced people of Swat valley which was affected by the Pakistan's military operations. The organization has expanded its base in Pakistan with its philanthropic operation and support of the ISI which makes it more difficult for international community to pressurize Pakistan to clamp down on the group. Its leader Hafiz Saeed, the mastermind of Muslim terror attacks has rose to become influential figure in Pakistan despite being internationally designated as terrorist under UNSC Resolution 1267. The United States announced a bounty of \$10 million on Saeed in April 2012 for his role in the Mumbai terror attacks of 2008 which led to killing of 164 civilians including 6 American citizens. Hafiz Saeed has been put under house-arrest by Pakistan's authorities a member of times due to international pressure but to be released by the courts. Hafiz Saeed launched a new political party, Milli Muslim League (MML) ahead of general in Pakistan in the year 2018.

## REFERENCE

1. ISI is the intelligence agency of Pakistan with headquarters at Islamabad. It provides intelligence with the purpose of national security for the government of Pakistan.

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