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Associate professor, Georgetown University; Author, *Fighting to the End: The Pakistan Army's Way of War*

Bringing back the Dead: Why Pakistan Used the Jaish-e-Mohammad to Attack an Indian Airbase

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Bringing back the Dead: Why Pakistan Used the Jaish-e-Mohammad to Attack an Indian Airbase

C. Christine Fair

January 7, 2015

Most analysts contend that the recent Jaish-e-Mohammad attack on an Indian military base in Pathankot was primarily aimed to derail a nascent peace process between India and Pakistan following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's surprise visit to Lahore, in Pakistan's Punjab, last month. While in the tactical sense this is true; there can never be any meaningful peace process with Pakistan because Pakistan's military cannot abandon its baseless claims on Kashmir or accept India as the dominant power in the region. This interpretation of the attack as "peace spoiler" misses the strategic element of the ISI's revival of Jaish-e-Mohammad (usually referred to as "Jaish"), which has been long dormant following a split in the organization in 2001 when the rump of the outfit decided to focus their weapons on the Pakistani state. As I have argued elsewhere, Pakistan's refurbishing of this outfit is not only about prosecuting Pakistan's regional strategies, but it is also a critical component of Pakistan's domestic security strategy.

Jaish-e-Mohammad is a Deobandi Islamist terrorist group with close ties to the Deobandi Afghan Taliban, the Pakistani Taliban, anti-Shia groups such as the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi/Sipah-e-Sahaba-e-Pakistan, and al Qaeda. Pakistan's Inter-Service Intelligence Directorate (ISI) created Jaish by working with several Deobandi terrorists associated with Harkat-ul-Mujahideen to hijack Delhi-bound Indian Airlines flight 814 after it departed Kathmandu in late 1999. The aircraft eventually landed in Kandahar, the base of Afghanistan's Taliban, where terrorists agreed to free the surviving passengers upon the release of three Pakistani terrorists incarcerated in India: Mushtaq Ahmed Zargar, Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh and Maulana Masood Azhar.

Indian officials delivered these terrorists to Kandahar from which they traveled to Pakistan reportedly ISI escort. After the ISI paraded them about Pakistan as celebrities, Azhar resurfaced in Karachi in January 2000 when he announced the formation of the Jaish from the remnants of other Deobandi terrorist groups. Pakistan's ISI the Jaish to up the ante in Kashmir and to serve as a competitor to Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), which the ISI also raised and deployed to Kashmir in the early 1990s to escalate the violence in the state. While LeT pioneered the "high risk mission," the Jaish pioneered the use of suicide attacks in Kashmir in April 2000 in Badami Bagh.

Unlike the Lashkar-e-Taiba which has remained largely intact over the years, the Jaish split in late 2001 when its leadership disagreed on whether the organization should stay loyal to the Pakistani state under President and General Musharraf or begin attacking it in retaliation for Musharraf's aiding the Americans to oust the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. After all, the Afghan Taliban shared the Jaish's Deobandi ideological orientations and represented the only regime that enforced the version of sharia they all espoused. Moreover, many Jaish

members previously fought alongside the Taliban when they served in other Deobandi militant groups. Jaish confederates were not alone in their outrage. In fact, numerous Deobandi militants that the ISI had nurtured were furious that Pakistan's military had seemingly turned their back on the Afghan Taliban and were assisting the American kufars to oust their confederates from Kabul.

Despite the pressure from Jaish commanders and members alike to defect, Masood Azhar remained loyal to the state and reported the developments to the ISI. In doing so, he demonstrated his value to the ISI. The rump of the organization he founded launched attacks under the name of Jamaat ul Furqan and initiated a series of deadly suicide attacks against military targets, including Musharraf himself. This was the opening salvo in a realignment of militant groups that would produce Tehreek-e-Taliban-e-Pakistan (TTP or Pakistani Taliban) in 2007.

Even though the Jaish and its leader Masood Azhar are explicitly proscribed by the United States and the United Nations Security Council, among other entities, Pakistan adamantly continued protecting the organization. Azhar freely operated in his home town of Bahawalpur in Southern Punjab. Despite being technically proscribed even in Pakistan, the organization actually expanded in recent years. Since at least 2011 if not earlier, Pakistan's ISI has been resurrecting the Jaish under Azhar's leadership as a part of its strategy to rehabilitate those assets who defected to the Pakistani Taliban.

By 2013, I learned during fieldwork in both Pakistan and Afghanistan, that Pakistan had resolved to take the Pakistani Taliban seriously partly due to international pressure and partly due to domestic imperatives. After numerous months of incessant warning, Pakistan's military formally commenced a selective campaign against those militants in the tribal areas attacking it in June 2014 under the operational name of Zarb-e-Azb. Prior to the onset of these operations, Pakistan's military and intelligence agencies sought to persuade elements of the TTP to abandon the fight against Pakistan by either rejoining the fight in Afghanistan to help the Taliban or to rejoin the JeM to kill Indians. Those members of the TTP who could not be so reformed to fight the external enemies and remained committed to fighting Pakistan were deemed enemy combatants who must be eliminated.

Enervating the Jaish is a cornerstone of Pakistan's strategy of managing its own internal security challenges as well as a cornerstone of its policy of nuclear blackmail to achieve ideological objectives in Kashmir. Individuals from international organizations tasked with monitoring these groups told me over a year ago that Jaish activists have long been poised for infiltration into India, along the so-called Line of Control in Kashmir. Given that the Jaish is Pakistan's program for bringing errant terrorists back into the fold of "good terrorists," the only thing surprising about this Jaish assault is that it did not happen sooner. The India and the United States must understand the strategic imperatives that motivate Pakistan to keep organizations like the Jaish in its vast stable of terrorists. Pakistan does so not merely to "disrupt peace" with India; rather, to prosecute the Pakistan army's endless war on India within its borders and across South Asia.

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Sana Rahman · Los Angeles, California

Baseless & propaganda., She has no proof on this baseless article, Pakistan itself is a victim of Terrorism, Last year at least 3-Pakistan's Military bases have been attacked killing hundreds of innocents, so I ask her who is responsible for supporting terrorism in Pakistan.?

Like · Reply · 33 · 21 hrs



Bharat Suraiya

Sana - answer to your question "who is responsible for supporting terrorism in Pakistan?": The Pakistani Army and ISI. They are the source of funding and support to terrorists who are used locally for political gain and are exported regionally to keep the Army relevant and occupied.

Like · Reply · 10 · 19 hrs



Sana Rahman · Los Angeles, California

Bharat Suraiya Are u telling me that last year an attack on Mehran Naval Base in Karachi, an attack on SSG Army base in Kamra and an attack on Airforce base in Peshawar were conducted by ISI and Army to kill its own military personnel!!!! Nonsense, so; now an Indian and

American would tell me that the prestigious institutes of Pakistan are involved in the killings of its own people....it doesn't make any sense!!

Like · Reply ·  19 · 19 hrs



Vir Gupta

Sana Rahman I am always amused by Pakistanis who never do any research and accept any nonsense. If you question them, they will completely bypass your question and confuse you with something not even related to your question.

Sana, please do some research before writing anything. Attack on Mehran Base in Karachi was by TTP and al Qaida and both terrorist organizations have no link with India. TTP's spokesperson Ehsanullah Ehsan said "It was the revenge of martyrdom of Osama bin Laden. It was the proof that we are still united and powerful,". Hamid Gul of ISI blamed USA (not India) for the ... See More

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Muhammad Saleem · Burtonsville, Maryland

The writer calls Kashmir Dispute as Baseless and denies the fact that it is one of the oldest resolutions passed by the UN Security Council in 1949. India and Pakistan both are signatories besides its permanent members of that time. US continues to acknowledge it as a dispute and its fate needs to be determined by the people of Kashmir via referendum.

Like · Reply ·  17 · 18 hrs



Jai Khosla

The resolution demands that Pakistan first withdraw all its armed forces and the non-Kashmiri Pathan thugs Pakistan sent into Kashmir's Baltistan, Azad Kashmir, all under Pakistani Occupation. Pakistan has failed to abide by the Resolution. Why did Jinnah refuse to hold referendum in Punjab and in Sindh. Because he knew they would want to stay with India.

Like · Reply ·  6 · 12 hrs



Suhaib Faiz · Islamabad, Pakistan

Jai Khosla Lora mera

Like · Reply ·  2 · 11 hrs



Manik Verma

Suhaib Faiz shows your culture well.

Like · Reply ·  1 · 11 hrs

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Red Dee

Not surprised in the least bit. The US needs to completely stop funding this terrorist State. But that will never happen !! Instead we have a package of F-16's waiting to be delivered in the guise of humanitarian aid !! What a dystopian world we live in !!

Like · Reply ·  17 · 23 hrs



Holly Jadoon

Of course you are not surprised! you have not even bothered to check the facts but to start typing nonsense.

Like · Reply ·  13 · 19 hrs



Tar TwoGo · Châu Phong, An Giang, Vietnam

What makes you think Pakistan cannot survive without US aid. Do Taliban have F16 or US aid? Why did USA get a bloody nose and got kicked out of Afghanistan? Probably this is what media is telling and so the USA govt. All lies!!!!

Like · Reply ·  6 · 17 hrs



Bobby Kumar · Stanford University

Holly Jadoon DID YOU?

Like · Reply · 1 · 16 hrs

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Andy Jan · Bronx, New York

Sorry to hear the views of this author. It's totally baseless she can write a better article then this .even the Indians are admitting that Pakistan has nothing to do with it.im surprised she is an associate professor at such a prestigious institution? ??????Re ally disappointed by her lack of knowledge.

Like · Reply · 17 · 21 hrs



Red Lion

Even though Pakistani Government is not considered as part of it, there is a proof that Pakistani military and ISI are complicit in this. The dry run was carried out at Pakistani air base.

Like · Reply · 9 · 20 hrs



Holly Jadoon

Red Lion Seriously??? you seem to know more then anyone else about this! Where is the proof?

Like · Reply · 5 · 19 hrs



Andy Jan · Bronx, New York

Red Lion , i saw you the otherday in GHQ , When they were discussing this plan (smiles)

Like · Reply · 7 · 19 hrs

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Vivek Menon · Boston, Massachusetts

Funny part is I have gotten along fine with every single Pakistani I have encountered in the US. At a personal level Indians and Pakistanis have no problem. If we could peacefully resolve the Kashmir issue too, I think the mutually beneficial trade and the money saved on war, would be extraordinary. With so many starving kids on both sides, our money can be better spent in feeding them than fighting each other.

Like · Reply · 9 · 16 hrs



Javed Iqbal · University of Peshawar

Now this is what I call sanity. Vivek where are other people like you? We need people like you on both sides of the border to bring sanity back and do away with the extremist mentality on both sides

Like · Reply · 6 · 15 hrs



Jai Khosla

We do not need trade with Pakistan. Pakistan needs to trade with India. But the aid given by the West and by Saudi Arabia keeps the geenrals and the politicians rich, so there is no incentive to trade with India.

Like · Reply · 1 · 12 hrs



Red Dee

Javed Iqbal

Everywhere Javed. My best friend in the US is Pakistani from Lahore. Im South Indian. we are like brothers. My pakistani friend is much closer to me than my Indian friedns. None of this changes facts on the ground though.

My best friends growing up in India were all Muslim. I even listen to Zikr sometimes at night. growing up in cosmopolitan Bangalore allows us the privilege of respecting every religion and culture except terrorism and imperialism !!

Like · Reply · 1 hr

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Che Mir

First Nawaz Sharif is a weak leader, irrespective of what his personal beliefs are he has no backbone, no capacity to neutralize those elements in Pakistani army and ISI who are against friendship with India. For any substantial improvement to happen what is needed is to make the price of this path so costly for Pakistan that either it is forced to leave this path of terror or buckles under its pressure and country is split. The only way Pakistani army and its intelligence learns its lessons is when they are militarily hurt. Stop funding their economy, they are against the humanity no matter how many trillions you burn through their throat.

Like · Reply · 8 · 22 hrs



Jai Khosla

The Pakistan Army rules Pakistan because the US wants it to. Then the US rules Pakistan via the Army.

Like · Reply · 1 · 12 hrs



V Kumar Tandon · Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

All that said by the writer, one wonders why then the U.S keeps rewarding Pakistan army with tens of millions of dollars in the name of security and nation building over India's repeated objections that this money largely finances terrorism against India!

Like · Reply · 8 · 19 hrs



Muhammad Javed Iqbal · Consultant at Self-Employed

Because Pakistani army has fought US war in Afghanistan and bore thousands of casualties! Public is against fighting for USA, but the army generals do it for money! USA has used her black army in Pakistan, killing dozens of innocent citizens. That secret US force should be thrown out of the country!

Like · Reply · 7 · 18 hrs



Krishna Upadhy · Karnataka University

Whole world knows that Pakistan has multiple power centers and the civil government has the least power. So the good intentions of the civil government cannot work unless endorsed by the military. Pakistani military is holding their own country hostage, and India by 'proxy' using the good militants. Shamelessly, they couldn't keep their own country together (Bangladesh) but goes extra miles to grab Srinagar by back door.

Like · Reply · 5 · 18 hrs



Sundas Zulfiqar · National University of Sciences and Technology

Shamelessly India intervened in our internal affairs and got what it wanted. It intervened then, it is intervening now. Who can deny Indian hand in flaming up insurgency in Balochistan? Even your own officials have admitted this

Like · Reply · 7 · 13 hrs



Taimoor Iqbal · Indiana University – Purdue University Indianapolis

Can I attend one of your lectures, it boggles the mind that Georgetown gave you a job. "Baseless claim on Kashmir," you have got to be joking.

Like · Reply · 6 · 19 hrs



Bill Thomas · www.chtiouroyal.canalblog.com

Because C. Christine Fair is the best, she earned the job - it was not given.

Like · Reply · 4 · 18 hrs



Paul Setra · University of Texas at El Paso

Without Pakistan Army on board, no agreement will hold. Civil administration has only about 30 percent power in running of that unfortunate country. And as long as that situation persists there can be no lasting peace with India.

Like · Reply · 4 · 21 hrs

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