

Tracking the British Role in 2006 Mumbai Bombings

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The seven synchronized serial bombs that tore through suburban trains in Mumbai, India on July 11, taking at least 207 lives, and injuring more than 600 others, indicate that the international Islamic jihadis have found a soft target in the country. So far, New Delhi's investigation has little to show, beyond indicating a Pakistani involvement in this dastardly act. No group has claimed responsibility, and the initial arrests carried out by the Mumbai police have revealed virtually nothing.

As of now, the Indian authorities have named the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) and India's banned Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) as being behind the bombings. Reports indicate that several teams from LeT and SIMI were arrested, and that huge amounts of explosive materials, including RDX, were recovered during raids at various places in Aurangabad, Nasik, and Nagpur in the last two months. It is evident that if the Indian authorities do not succeed in widening the investigation to get a glimpse of the broader picture, the cut-outs arrested so far will not be able to reveal anything, and the country will continue to be vulnerable to such massive attacks.

In the aftermath of the incident, India postponed foreign secretary-level talks with Pakistan scheduled for July 20-21. The negotiations were a part of the third annual round of dialogue between the two countries, in their attempt to build confidence, while working towards agreement on a variety of disputes.

While there is no question of far-reaching Pakistani involvement in the attack, the investigation must seek to find out how exactly the network functions. Behind the cut-outs that have been put behind bars, there remains, hidden from public sight, a vast and sophisticated killing machine. In this context, the Indian authorities have pointed out that Pakistan Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) has strengthened its base in Nepal and northern Bihar. Investigators have also reportedly ques-



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The partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, orchestrated by the British, led to huge migrations of people to escape violence against their ethnic or religious group. Some 17.9 million people left their homes (shown here are Sikhs heading toward India), and 3.4 million were never known to have reached their destination. There was massive bloodletting by both sides, with an estimated 500,000 to 1 million deaths.

tioned several Islamic clerics in India's northeastern state of Tripura in connection with the bombings.

India has also urged Pakistan to hand over the self-exiled Mumbai mafia-don Dawood Ibrahim, who shuttles between Dubai and Karachi. Dawood, an underworld hood, had long been a Pakistani ISI asset. Long before he fled to Dubai in the 1990s, Dawood, who dealt in opium, heroin, and smuggled goods, had built up a strong underground network in Mumbai, Nepal, northern Bihar, and possibly within the Muslim community of West Bengal. Subsequently, these networks carried out terrorist acts within India. Although the planners of these terrorists' acts have realized that violent acts have little effect on the daily life of the Indian people, their objective is to trigger wide Hindu-Muslim rioting. If they succeed in achieving this goal, by carrying out such acts from time to time, then India can be brought to its knees, the masterminds believe.

'Londonistan'

Credit belongs to Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, for the only serious effort that Indian authorities have made so far. According to the *London Times*, during

a discussion between Prime Minister Singh and British Prime Minister Tony Blair, at the G-8 summit in Russia, after the Mumbai bombings, the Indian leader reminded Blair of a detailed dossier that had been handed over, three years ago, which identified 14 men suspected of involvement in the Mumbai bombings, as living in Britain. Blair is said to have assured Singh that the suspects would be investigated.

Another British paper, the *Birmingham Mail*, reported that a jailed taxi driver, of Pakistani origin, and now from the British Midlands, is also being questioned in connection with the Mumbai blasts. The man is currently serving a nine-year sentence for raising funds and buying

weapons for the Lashkar-e-Toiba.

It is widely acknowledged that the origin of most of the international Islamic jihads, lies in London. To those who are aware of the huge number of Islamic militants harbored by British authorities, London is known as "Londonistan." Camille Tawil, a terrorism expert at the Arabic daily *Al-Hayat*, told the *New Statesman*: "The Islamists use Britain as a propaganda base, but wouldn't do anything to a country that harbors them and gives them freedom of speech." What Ms. Tawil did not mention is that these Islamists, perhaps to maintain their bases and prosper, carry out murderous activities against other nations when they are ordered to do so.

For instance, more than 600 Islamists from Britain had gone to join the Afghan mujahideen in the 1980s, to fight the erstwhile Soviet Army. Most of them remained there to join the Taliban and al-Qaeda. Even today, when Anglo-American troops battle insurgents in Iraq, Islamists from Britain are showing up in Iraq.

To get a glimpse of the hidden picture which may clarify why London is such an Islamic headquarters, one has to take a look at the British mosques, and their role in various geopolitical activities. In the 1950s,

Muslims from the Indian subcontinent's disputed state of Jammu and Kashmir began to arrive in Britain. They came mostly from Mirpur, a part of Jammu and Kashmir, to work in the textile industries in Britain. Mirpuris came in droves, because part of their land was submerged by the dams built by the Pakistani authorities. Using their compensation money, the Mirpuris came to Britain to work.

Within a few years, it became evident that these Kashmiri immigrants, who were not only anti-India, but were also seeking an independent Kashmir, somehow got control of the British mosques, from which anti-India Kashmir policies were proclaimed.

Today, Britain has about 2 million Muslims. Of these, about 1 million are of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin. The most prevalent sect that controls the mosques is Sunni, and its adherents belong to the subcontinent's Islamic school of Deoband. Others are Wahhabis. It must be noted that the Deobandis are considered close to the Wahhabis in their orthodox religious outlook. At the time of the migration, the Pakistani ISI was in the process of finding its feet, and these political immigrants were largely under the wings of British intelligence.

Bastard Child of a Brit

The Directorate for ISI was founded in 1948 by an Australia-born British army officer, Maj. Gen. R. Cawthorne, who was then Deputy Chief of Staff in the Pakistan Army. Field Marshal Ayub Khan, the President of Pakistan in the 1950s, expanded the role of ISI in safeguarding Pakistan's interests, monitoring opposition politicians, and sustaining military rule in Pakistan. It is evident that the British MI6 and MI5 had then begun working with Pakistani intelligence to bring about this control. This was primarily done by London to maintain British leverage in the Kashmir quagmire, and encourage the emergence of a "Third Force" in the Kashmir milieu that would not want to be part of either Pakistan or India, but India, in particular.

One of the least understood themes of the partition of India in 1947 by the departing British Raj, is what led the British to do it. Run-of-the-mill analysts point out that the British did not want a unified India which could be strong and anti-British. Some others say the British saw that the minority Muslims were in danger in the hands of the majority Hindus, and that that is why they moved in to form Pakistan. While the British did not want the emergence of a strong India, the formation of

Pakistan hardly helped the Muslims, who felt that they were a threatened minority. To begin with, those provinces that became a part of Pakistan were those provinces where the Muslims were in majority. Hence, the Muslims there were not in danger. The provinces where Muslims were a minority, and ostensibly "in danger," became a part of the Hindu-majority India.

But the British objective in breaking up India was simply not to divvy up the country. The British wanted two things out of it: They wanted a weak nation (Pakistan, that is), which would depend on Britain for its defense. And they wanted that newly-formed weak nation to border the oil wells of Central Asia (part of the Soviet Union, then) and to be close to the Muslim-majority, oil-rich nations of the Middle East.

Corollary to the objective was that India, the larger of the two nations then in the subcontinent (now, with the emergence of Bangladesh in 1972, the subcontinent has three nations) must not have any common border with either Afghanistan (the buffer state) or the Soviet Union.

The British objective to control the oil wells was part of the Great Game to prevent the mighty Russian empire from having access to the oil fields. The former British governor of the North West Frontier Province during the British Raj days, Olaf Caroe, used to say the shadow of the North must not extend over the wells of power. Britain realized during World War II that the one who controls the oil fields controls the destiny of many nations. As a result, beginning in 1940, South Asia was important to imperial Britain for the protection of oil fields of Arabia. Nothing more, nothing less.

The Replay

The 1947 partition pretty much allowed the British to pursue the Great Game. But there remained a small hitch: the disputed state of Kashmir, which borders Afghanistan. Once Britain, with the help of a willing and weak Pakistan, and aided by a vacillating Indian leadership, managed to create a major conflict between the two fledgling nations of India and Pakistan, British intelligence moved in to house and finance the Kashmiris in the mosques in Britain. The advantages of controlling the mosques are manifold. Mosques provide a religious color to a secessionist movement. Mosques also direct the faithful to vote en-bloc for particular politicians, and in the process, virtually own them. This created a number of Members of Parliament in Britain demanding independent Kashmir.

But the scene changed in the 1980s, with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Jihadis and mujahideen were organized from far and near to battle the Godless communists. It was at that time that the CIA and the British MI6 became extremely dependent on the Pakistani ISI. Although the CIA and the MI6 helped the mujahideen with cash and arms, all the ground operations were done under the aegis of the ISI. At the time, the ISI had a very capable director, Lt. Gen. Hamid Gul. Later, in the 1990s, Washington sought and received assistance from Gul to cobble together a Punjab-based political party, the Islami Jamhoori Ittehad (IJI), to defeat the Benazir Bhutto-led Pakistan People's Party (PPP). The party, led by Mian Nawaz Sharif, was an alliance formed by the ISI out of nine mainly rightist parties under Gul. Gul denies this, claiming that the ISI's political cell created by Bhutto only "monitored" the elections.

With Gul at the helm of the ISI, a closely knit network among these intelligence agencies, CIA, MI6, and ISI, with some involvement of the Israeli intelligence agency, Mossad, was set up. Subsequently, when Washington chose to walk away from Afghanistan in 1989, it was British intelligence and the ISI that later oversaw the Afghan civil war (1989-95) and the emergence of the Taliban (1996). It was also the time when the MI6 and the ISI were sending "committed" Muslim youths from Britain to fight standing next to the al-Qaeda militia, who were seeking no territory, but the establishment of an Islamic Caliphate.

With the Soviet Union decimated and Washington showing scant interest in Afghanistan, the Great Game was back in the hands of the British. They were helped by the ISI and the al-Qaeda/Taliban militia. But this phase changed again following 9/11. With the United States moving into Afghanistan, and building bridges with India to counter al-Qaeda and the Taliban, new players emerged on the Great Game canvas.

The emergence of India as an ally of the United States has brought India right into the line of attack of those Islamic zealots who would not allow foreign shadows to fall on the oil wells of Arabia and Central Asia. These zealots, however powerful or committed they are, need organizational support to operate in a foreign land which is hostile to Islamic jihadis. That is where the MI6 and the ISI provide the jihadis the organizational and intelligence support. The Mumbai massacre was the outcome of such an organizational "success."