



Why
The New York Times
is wrong again about
Pakistan

Why The New York Times is Wrong about Pakistan

Briefing Paper
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REPORT AUTHORS

“Why The New York Times is wrong about Pakistan” was researched, compiled and written by **Khalid Muhammad**, Director General.

ABOUT COMMANDELEVEN

CommandEleven is a research organization focused on Pakistan’s national security aspects and enhancing global understanding and collaboration opportunities for the nation.

Founded in 2015, CommandEleven provides situational awareness to facilitate a better understanding of the key dynamics that effect Pakistan from a national security perspective, especially in relation to terrorism, insurgencies and extremism.

CommandEleven seeks to inform and guide public policy and decision makers in government, business and military through a rigorous program of publications, conferences, digital medias, policy briefings and recommendations.

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PREFACE

On the morning of 12th May, Pakistan was treated to another scalding editorial¹ from The New York Times, this time demanding that the US put the squeeze on Pakistan. However, it is again clear to those who aren't casual observers in Pakistan, that the Western media has little to no understanding of facts on the ground.

While the editorial board of The New York Times would like to paint Pakistan as the aggressor in the Indian sub-continent, as they have in the past, that is simply not the truth. Starting off an editorial with the words "the war in Afghanistan is raging and Pakistan deserves much of the blame" shows the lack of balance on the editorial board's position.

¹ "Time to put the squeeze on Pakistan," The New York Times Editorial Board, May 12, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/12/opinion/time-to-put-the-squeeze-on-pakistan.html>

THE NEW YORK TIMES AND PAKISTAN

Let's be clear on background before discussing the article itself.

The New York Times has long considered itself an expert on Afghanistan and Pakistan, based on the sheer number of articles and books that have been published by staffers. Having said that, let's also be clear that these same staffers have no influence on the editorial board, who have written nothing of substance on the same topics. Everything has been opinion, colored with manipulations of facts.

Let's look at some articles and editorials on Pakistan from this newspaper of record:

October 2015: Is Pakistan Worth America's Investment?²

Nov 2015: Pakistan Military Expands Its Power, and is Thanked For Doing So³

Nov 2015: The Pakistan Nuclear Nightmare⁴

Feb 2016: Pakistan's Hand in the Rise of International Jihad⁵

Apr 2016: Afghan President Demands Pakistan Take Military Action Against Taliban⁶

Let's also understand that repeated under democratically elected governments, journalists from The New York Times have been declared persona non-grata and asked to leave the country. Many on the desks of the NYT will say that it was Pakistan's "powerful army and intelligence services" that have forced them out, but that's just not the case.

Readers will recall the international outcry when the front page of Pakistan's Express Tribune published a blank page where Carlotta Gall's book, *The Wrong Enemy*, excerpt was to appear. Pakistan's premier intelligence service was again blamed for attempting to control journalistic freedom of speech.

Let's not forget the fact that this same newspaper ran a story a few months prior to Carlotta Gall's book release that pointed the finger right at Kabul and Karzai for the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), responsible for over 80,000 deaths in Pakistan. When Latif

² "Is Pakistan Worth America's Investment?", The New York Times Editorial Board, Jan 9, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/10/opinion/is-pakistan-worth-americas-investment.html>

³ "Pakistan Military Expands Its Power, and Is Thanked for Doing So," The New York Times Editorial Board, Nov 17, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/18/world/asia/pakistan-military-expands-its-power-and-is-thanked-for-doing-so.html>

⁴ "The Pakistan Nuclear Nightmare," The New York Times Editorial Board, Nov 7, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/08/opinion/sunday/the-pakistan-nuclear-nightmare.html>

⁵ "Pakistan's Hand in the Rise of International Jihad," The New York Times Editorial Board, Feb 6, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/07/opinion/sunday/pakistans-hand-in-the-rise-of-international-jihad.html>

⁶ "Afghan President Demands Pakistan Take Military Action Against Taliban," The New York Times Editorial Board, Apr 25, 2016. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/26/world/asia/afghanistan-pakistan-taliban.html>

Mehsud, a senior commander of the TTP, was arrested in Afghanistan by ISAF forces, it was Kabul that went crazy, not Islamabad.⁷

Mehsud was later handed over to Pakistan.

Here's how that story started:

"A bungled attempt by the Afghan government to cultivate a shadowy alliance with Islamist militants escalated into the latest flash point in the troubled relationship between Afghanistan and the United States, according to new accounts by officials from both countries.

The disrupted plan involved Afghan intelligence trying to work with the Pakistan Taliban (Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan), allies of Al Qaeda, in order to find a trump card in a baroque regional power game that is likely to intensify after the American withdrawal next year, the officials said. And what started the hard feelings was that the Americans caught them red-handed.

Tipped off to the plan, United States Special Forces raided an Afghan convoy that was ushering a senior Pakistan Taliban militant, Latif Mehsud, to Kabul for secret talks last month, and now have Mr. Mehsud in custody.

Publicly, the Afghan government has described Mr. Mehsud as an insurgent peace emissary. But according to Afghan officials, the ultimate plan was to take revenge on the Pakistani military."

Seems that the editorial board doesn't read their own newspaper.

US FAILURE IN AFGHANISTAN

While most journalists in the Western media understand that Afghanistan, much like Iraq, has been an absolute failure in terms of nation-building, even to the point of British Prime Minister David Cameron this week saying that "Nigeria and Afghanistan are the two most corrupt nations in the world." Cameron has backtracked on his statement.⁸

From the appointment of the Karzai government to the regular reports of massive corruption within the country, Afghanistan continues to be an experiment in US foreign policy. At no point could it be said that Afghanistan was on the path to stability, even with 130,000 ISAF troops on the ground.⁹

⁷ "U.S. Disrupts Afghans' Tack on Militants," The New York Times Editorial Board, Oct 28, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/29/world/asia/us-disrupts-afghans-tack-on-militants.html>

⁸ "David Cameron calls Afghanistan, Nigeria 'fantastically corrupt'", Don Melvin, May 11, 2016. <http://edition.cnn.com/2016/05/10/europe/cameron-corrupt-countries-nigeria-afghanistan-queen/>

⁹ International Security Assistance Force. Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Security_Assistance_Force

You can't blame that on Pakistan, unless you want to also accept that Pakistan has beaten both the Soviet Union and the United States, both superpowers, in Pakistan's backyard.

Karzai's anti-Pakistan position was reinforced with the influx of Indian investments into all sectors of the Afghanistan economy. Karzai has a very colored history with Pakistan and its armed forces from prior to becoming "President of Afghanistan." Many alliances were formed between New Delhi and Kabul that gave the Indians the impression that they were a key player in Afghanistan now.

If the Indian government was so heavily invested into Afghanistan, why were they not able to bring peace and stability during the Karzai government, which was money friendly?

The answer again quite simple. India has been working for decades to gain a foothold in Afghanistan that could be leveraged against Pakistan. Karzai gave them that foothold and it was used to create the TTP and heavily arm the Baluchistan insurgents.

Afghanistan itself has shown no serious interest in being a partner for peace with Pakistan. From providing safe havens in Khost and Nuristan to Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan fighters and commanders¹⁰ to assisting in the execution of terrorist attacks in Pakistan, Kabul has shown Pakistan they are not interested in helping stabilize the region. Pakistan's military leadership traveled to Kabul the day after the brutal attack on Army Public School in Peshawar to deliver one message - take action or we will. Islamabad is still waiting for Afghanistan to make good on Pakistan's demand.

Let's be honest, the joint US and Kabul promise to never allow Afghanistan's soil to be used for terrorism is hollow. There has been the exponential rise of ISIS in the region, uncontested by ISAF or Afghan Army forces. Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who seems to align with anyone who will take him, joined forces with ISIS and now The New York Times celebrates him as an "exiled Afghan Insurgent, nearing a comeback."¹¹

You'll find mentioned in the Hekmatyar article that:

"Mr. Hekmatyar is exceptionally divisive. He is accused of causing the deaths of thousands during the civil war, including the indiscriminate shelling of Kabul — much like rival warlords who are now allied with the government or have positions within it. After receiving copious cash and weaponry from the Americans during the war against the Soviets, he threw in his lot with remnants of the Communist government, then

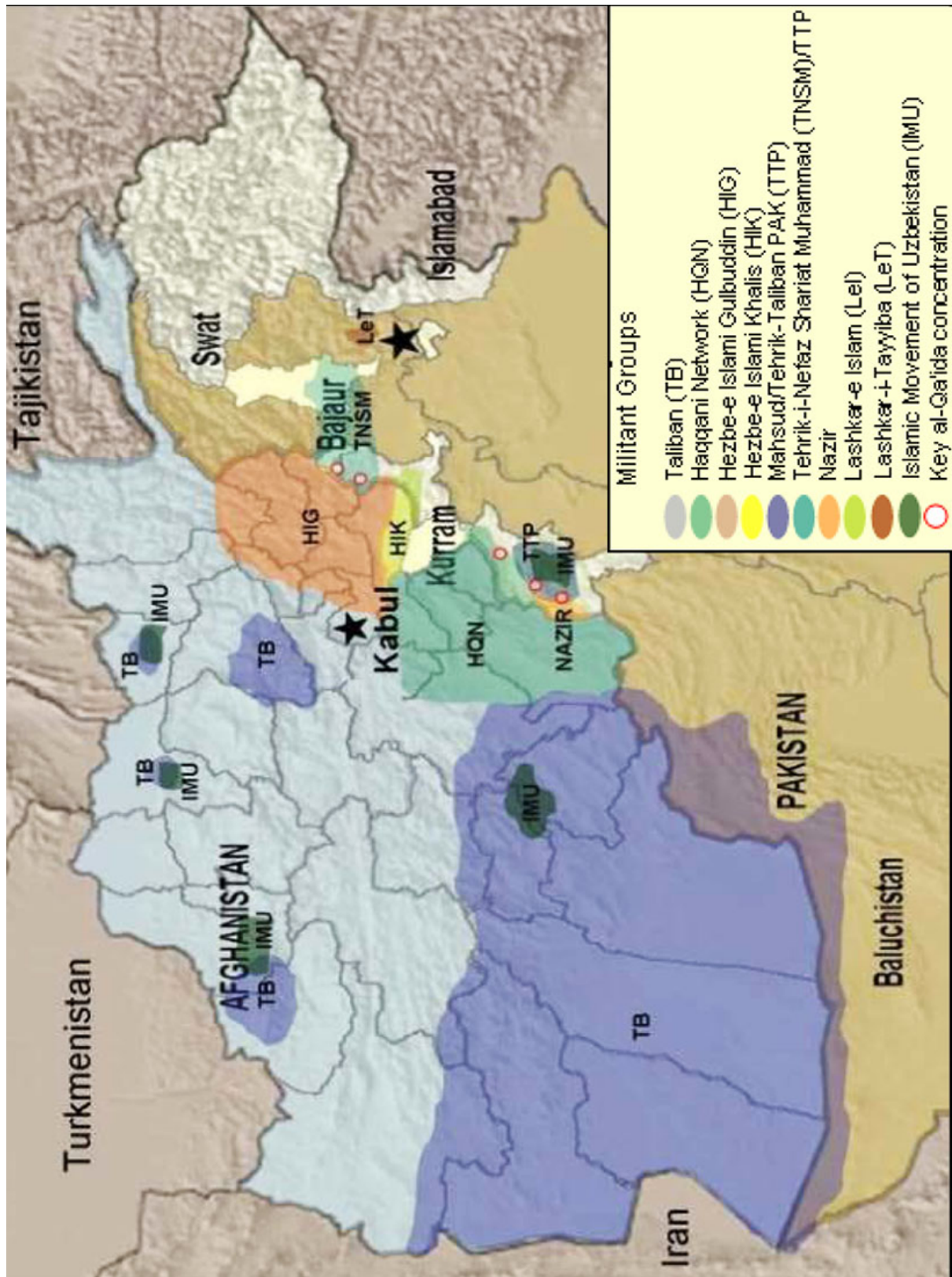
¹⁰ "Operation Zarb-e-Azb: TTP sets up new sanctuaries in Afghanistan," Kamran Yousaf, Sohail Chaudhry, Oct 27, 2014, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/781704/operation-zarb-e-azb-ttp-sets-up-new-sanctuaries-in-afghanistan/>

¹¹ "Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Exiled Afghan Insurgent, Nears a Comeback," Mujib Mashal, Jawad Sukhanyar, The New York Times, May 11, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/12/world/asia/afghanistan-gulbuddin-hekmatyar.html>

briefly with Taliban, and then Al Qaeda. In July last year, he was even rumored to have pledged allegiance to the Islamic State¹², though his aides later denied it."

The New York Times is celebrating a man as a partner in peace, while the organization he heads is on the US terrorist organizations list.

¹² "Hekmatyar's party to support ISIS in fight against Taliban," Mirwais Adeel, Khaama Press, Jul 05, 2015, <https://www.khaama.com/hekmatyars-party-to-support-isis-in-fight-against-taliban-1250>



PAKISTAN'S INTERESTS

The New York Times, along with many other media outlets in the United States, have coined a phrase against Pakistan - "duplicitous partner." This duplicitous partner is considered such because Pakistan takes care of its interests before considering the interests of any foreign nation. While many would say that is unfair, most Pakistanis would disagree.

When Pakistan played a key role in defeating the Soviets in Afghanistan, the United States quickly pulled out of the region, leaving Pakistan to deal with the fallout from the Mujahideen and training camps that were crafted to supply them.

The immediate pullout by the United States let Afghanistan slip into civil war because they were unable to negotiate with the remaining factions and craft a national government. Pakistan was forced to create a force to bring the civil war to an end and establish some semblance of peace on the border. Again, Pakistan was left to stand alone.

When Pakistan joined hands with the international community after 9/11, it was regularly blamed for a non-serious attitude towards combatting terrorism in Pakistan or Afghanistan, forgetting again the massive ISAF troop deployment. Pakistan, since the start of the War on Terror, has sacrificed over 80,000 innocent lives, including a former Prime Minister and current Provincial and Federal Ministers.

And all of the attacks are planned and executed from Afghanistan soil.

Is that Pakistan's fault as well?

As a nation, Pakistan's first responsibility is to its citizens and residents of Pakistan. What happens in Afghanistan is Afghanistan's problem, until it spills across the border. Pakistan has shown amazing restraint in not carpet bombing the terrorist safe havens in Khost and Nuristan, after 144 children were massacred in Peshawar. Pakistan again showed restraint when the attack on Bacha Khan University in Charsadda¹³, was traced back to a former NDS chief sitting in Kabul.

Pakistan is dealing with its own internal security issues as required. The result has been a massive decline in terror attacks within its borders. They have not all ended, but comparatively with previous years, the decline has brought a long-needed dose of peace to the country.

THE TALIBAN AND THE HAQQANI GROUP

US media and analysts have long been critical of Pakistan's relationship with the Taliban and the Haqqani group, but still expect Pakistan to use that influential relationship to bring peace to the region. If the public accepted the position of the Musharraf

¹³ "Bacha Khan University attackers vow to target schools in new video," AFP, The Express Tribune, Jan 22, 2016, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1032278/bacha-khan-university-attackers-vow-to-target-schools-in-new-video/>

government, Pakistan's military ended its relationship with the Taliban and Haqqani group when they joined the War on Terror. It's also been stated in various media outlets that Pakistan's own relationship with the Taliban went sour prior to that.

Based on reported accounts, the Pakistan Army send a senior officer to Mullah Omer to negotiate the handover of Osama bin Laden to either the United States or Pakistan for prosecution. Throughout the negotiations, Mullah Omer continued to demand that either the evidence be shown to the Taliban prior to handover or the prosecution be cared out in an Afghanistan court of law. Neither was acceptable to Pakistan or the United States.

To understand Pakistan's military relationship with the Taliban, we only need to look at any CIA led counter-insurgency operation. The Taliban was created as a stabilizing force for Afghanistan. They won the hearts and minds of the people. They were able to bring the civil war to an end and form a government of the people.

Is this not the CIA textbook model for counter-insurgencies and regime change? The Syrian rebels that were created by the CIA to topple Assad's government? The Syria rebels that morphed into ISIS? The Syrian rebels that are sharing US arms with al-Qaeda?

It should also be clear that while the Taliban is an enemy to the United States forces in Afghanistan, it is not a threat to Pakistan. Since the 1980s, the Taliban have ruled Afghanistan and Pakistan never had a security threat. It was only after the Karzai government came to power that Pakistan began having terrorist attacks inside its borders. Even with all the claims of alliances between the TTP and Afghan Taliban, Mullah Omer, until his death, never accepted any affiliation with the Afghan Taliban.

The Haqqani Group, on the other hand, was never a creation of Pakistan, the Pakistan Army or the ISI. The Haqqani Group was created in the 1970s by the CIA and used in the 1980s by the ISI against the Soviets in Afghanistan, financed by wealthy Arab private donors. Pakistan is only using what the CIA created, nothing more, nothing less.

Having said that, we should also remember that the CIA has a history of creating monsters, whether they be insurgent groups or tin pot dictators, that get out of control and destroy what they were meant to protect.

Jalaluddin Haqqani was invited by President Hamid Karzai to serve as Prime Minister to bring a "moderate" Taliban into government, but Haqqani refused.¹⁴

It should also be clear to all our readers that when Operation Zarb-e-Azb was launched, it targeted all insurgent and militant organizations, including the Haqqani network.

We should also clarify that prior to Operation Zarb-e-Azb's initiation, the Pakistan Army had included the US military and Pentagon in a plan to neutralize the militants and

¹⁴ "Part 3: Through the eyes of the Taliban," Ghulam Khan, Asia Times Online, May 5, 2004, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Central_Asia/FE05Ag02.html

terrorist camps, but that plan was halted due to the Government of Pakistan seeking negotiations¹⁵ instead of military action. The negotiations, as expected, failed miserably.

Our readers should also be clear that Pakistan's military and government have brought the Taliban to the negotiating table with the Ghani government. The negotiations are taking place with the full support of China and the United States, who are counting on Pakistan to bring the peace. There have already been 3 meetings, including a visit from the Taliban leadership based in Qatar last week.¹⁶ Thus, the editorial's position that Pakistan has not brought the Taliban to the table is factually incorrect.

THE F-16 BREAKDOWN

Since this organization has already released a detailed assessment of the breakdown and implications of the F-16 deal between the US and Pakistan¹⁷, we will not go into great detail here.

The New York Times states that Senator Bob Corker, a Republican from Tennessee and Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, has "wisely barred the use of American aid" for the purchase of these same F-16s until Pakistan takes action against the Haqqani network.

If the good Senator from Tennessee would indulge us, Operation Zarb-e-Azb, celebrated by the US military and Congress, has been a resounding success thus far.

The Pakistani armed forces have eliminated all safe houses, factories and munitions depots throughout FATA. The expansion of the operation had brought Karachi back to a relative peace that it had not seen in decades. This same operation has expanded into Baluchistan, crushing the insurgencies that were foreign sponsored and resolving disputes with the local fighters. The operation has also been expanded to Punjab to eliminate all extremism and jihad groups from the province so that Pakistan can achieve peace

These successes facilitated the arrest of Kulbhushan Jadhav¹⁸, an Indian Navy commander, and the destruction of an intelligence network operational in India, Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan. While India continues to deny that he was working on an espionage operation, from the information that he has given Pakistani intelligence, multiple RAW

¹⁵ "Government, TTP negotiators chart roadmap for peace talks," DAWN, Feb 6, 2014, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1085278/govt-ttp-negotiators-chart-roadmap-for-peace-talks>

¹⁶ "Afghan Taliban may return to negotiating table," Kamran Yousaf, The Express Tribune, May 2, 2016, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1095476/afghan-taliban-may-return-to-negotiating-table/>

¹⁷ "Congressional U-Turn on F-16s Jeopardizes COIN Operations in Pakistan," Khalid Muhammad, CommandEleven, May 05, 2016, <https://www.commandeleven.com/analysis/congressional-u-turn-on-pakistans-f-16s-jeopardizes-coin-ops-in-pakistan/>

¹⁸ "Here's how Indian newspapers covered Jadhav's arrest," DAWN, Apr 5, 2016, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1249308>

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operatives have been arrested in Pakistan and hundreds of Pakistanis have been swept up as well.

In Pakistan, and most of the world, this would be considered operational successes, and reasons to continue the support to Pakistan's military.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

While the editorial starts out attempting to place all the blame at Pakistan's doorstep, they finally admit that Ghani's government "is crippled by political infighting, endemic corruption, a budget crunch and an unsustainable troop casualty rate." The position that the "American government needs to find a way to convince Pakistan to stop fueling the war" is irresponsible and factually incorrect.

Pakistan has been a valued partner in the global War on Terror. Pakistan has protected its interests because they will continue to live in this region, the ISAF forces will return to their native countries, least bothered by what happens in Afghanistan. Pakistan doesn't share that privilege.

With the success of Operation Zarb-e-Azb and General Raheel Sharif's commitment to cleanse Pakistan of terrorism and extremism before his retirement in November, Pakistan seems to be on course for military success. What the political government does after that success is in the hands of the politicians the US, UK, and Saudi Arabia have groomed and returned to power for decades. With corruption now being linked to terrorism, the potential of corrupt politicians being arrested and prosecuted also gives hope to the nation of progress, rather than regression.

The fight against terrorism in Pakistan goes very deep into the fabric of this nation. Being a Muslim country, emotions are high when religion is discussed, making the elimination of the ideology of hate that has been fostered very slow and tedious at times. Inroads will be made, but they will not happen overnight, as the US expects. If we take the 2007 military operation against Lal Masjid (the Red Mosque) as any indication, the fallout in Pakistan is bloody and brutal.

For the US, Pakistani lives may be meaningless and worthless, but to every Pakistani mother and father, those lives are their futures, and as a nation, it is our national duty to protect them.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

As Director General of **CommandEleven**, Khalid Muhammad takes over 26 years of international experience to guide and drive his team to deliver accurate, reliable and actionable analysis for private organizations, institutions, government policy and media outlets. He provides tactical and comprehensive analysis into terrorist and extremist groups operating in the Indian sub-continent and Middle East, including recruitment, financing, operations and warfare strategies. His experience and vision guide the growth and expansion of **CommandEleven** into new opportunities.

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