**The Support of Terrorist Organizations from North Korea and Pakistan**

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627 Principles of Terrorism

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**Abstract**

Among the numerous terrorist attacks that have plagued society, there have been instances where government bodies have supported this violence to achieve political objectives. Throughout this case study, North Korea and Pakistan will be analyzed in their support for terrorism, exposing any possible patterns that emerge. North Korea’s terrorist involvement has been predominantly aimed at the political structure of South Korea, always trying to seize dominance and power. Similarly, Pakistan has funded the training and resources to external militia groups who carry out violence directed at India. Comparisons between both North Korea and Pakistan show important differences in the process of recruiting terrorists and the overall clarity of motives, leaving for further research to be conducted.

*Keywords: Political objectives, militia groups, recruiting, motives*

**Introduction**

In recent history, both North Korea and Pakistan have supported terror organizations that carry out substantial acts of violence, constituting as terrorism. The North Korean government has funded training facilities, weapons, and logistics to terrorists. Almost all North Korean-sponsored terror attacks were directed at South Korea, resulting in the 1986 Gimpo International Airport bombing, the 1983 Rangoon bombing, the 1987 Korean Air Flight 858, and the 1969 Korean Air Lines YS-11 hijacking. Throughout these attacks, the common theme was that all acting agents were traced back to the strong support of the North Korean government. Each one of these attacks had a clear political motive that North Korea was attempting to capitalize on.

Similarly, Pakistan offered support for Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), an Islamic militant group that operates against India. Author and scholar Christine Fair explains, “Most contemporary media and academic accounts assert that Pakistan first began using militants as a tool to prosecute its foreign policy objectives during the anti-Soviet jihad” (Fair, 2011). Even though their government has asserted that LeT is a known terrorist organization, Pakistan’s *Inter Service Intelligence Agency* (ISI) has funded and protected its members to achieve political gains. As a result, serious terrorist attacks have played out such as the 2008 Mumbai attacks where 166 people were killed and over 300 injured (Rabasa, 2009). The importance of comparing the differences between North Korea and Pakistan’s support for terror groups will help determine if there are distinct patterns that sovereignties follow when backing terrorist organizations to obtain political control.

**North Korea’s Terror History**

Focusing on some of the more significant terrorist attacks carried out with the support of the North Korean government, the Rangoon bombing and Korean Air Flight 858 led to a combined 136 deaths. The Rangoon bombing was a failed assassination attempt on the President of South Korea in 1983, where 21 civilians died and over 45 were seriously injured (Selth, 2020). One of the many hypotheses behind the bombing was to weaken the Republic of Korea (ROK) from within, crippling military logistics and presenting the opportunity for North Korea to launch a conventional invasion (Tan, 2022). In the same light, the Rangoon bombing was used as a tool to expose the weaknesses in the ROK during its time of growing prosperity compared to North Korea. As such, the perpetrators to the bombing were agents acting upon the requests of North Korea, even receiving aid in a safe house from a North Korean diplomat in Rangoon minutes before the bombing (Tan, 2022). Once captured, one of the agents admitted to being an officer in the North Korean military, exposing how the North Korean government recruits from its own military to carry out terrorism.

On course to South Korea, Korean Air Flight 858 was an attack to carried out by two North Korean agents to destroy life and strike fear into foreigners from traveling to Seoul for the upcoming summer Olympics, which killed 115 people, everyone on-board (Boyan, 2017). From this, it can be seen how the North Korean government’s attempt to protest the Seoul Summer Olympics was again to stop the prosperity of South Korea, wanting to weaken the political and societal structure while blocking off the western world. Upon their capture, one of the agents killed himself while the other was sentenced to life in prison, later being pardoned by the South Korean President. The bomber, Kim Hyon-hui, pleaded that the North Korean government brainwashed her, and she was specifically told by Kim Jong-il to execute the terrorist attack (Bishop, 2022). Referencing an interview conducted with Kim Hyon-hui by *NBC News*, Kim explains, “North Korea is using the Olympics as a weapon. It’s trying to escape the sanctions by holding hands with South Korea, trying to break free from international isolation” (Bishop, 2022). Kim Hyon-hui’s insight highlights how North Korea recruits terrorists to train at espionage schools that are ran, funded, and protected by military officials to insure a high level of strategy and success.

**Pakistan’s Support of Lashkar-e-Taiba**

Pakistan’s history stems from relying on nonstate actors to prosecute foreign policy objectives since Pakistan’s inception in 1947. Pakistan has mobilized many *Lashkars* (tribal militias) to invade neighboring territories and advance on political agendas (Fair, 2011). One of the most notorious lashkars that still operates in present-day is the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), responsible for the 2008 Mumbai attacks. With the support of Pakistan behind them, “LeT’s assets included a 190-acre campus in Muridke, outside of Lahore, complete with 500 offices, 2,200 training camps, 150 schools, 2 sciences colleges, 3 hospitals, 34 dispensaries, 11 ambulance services, a publishing empire, garment factory, iron foundry, and woodworks factories” (Pakukone, 2011). This exposes the depth at which Pakistan was supporting LeT, establishing monumental safe havens and training facilities for an extremist militia group operating within Pakistan’s jurisdiction.

The 2008 Mumbai attacks were 12 coordinated terrorist acts that took place over a four-day period, killing 166 civilians and wounding over 300. The agents were receiving guidance from informants operating inside of Pakistan, which led India to believe that Pakistan coordinated the attacks (Basrur, 2009). Interestingly enough, Pakistan eventually denounced this act of violence and prosecuted the remaining perpetrators. “The high degree of planning, training, and organization of the Mumbai attacks shows that terrorist groups in the region, with their networks of external support, are capable of taking unanticipated initiatives that take the international community by surprise…There is as yet little room for confidence that they will not do so again” (Basrur, 2009).

**Comparison of North Korea and Pakistan**

After analyzing the support of terrorist organizations from both North Korea and Pakistan, major differences can be found. Starting with the methodologies for recruitment, the North Korean government trains and funds its own members from the *Korean People’s Army* to execute its acts of terrorism, seeking higher-ranking soldiers with more experience. Additionally, its government has brainwashed individuals to act out direct orders and view South Korea as the primary enemy. Kim Hyon-hui explained, "I was brainwashed that giving my life carrying out a mission ordered by the Kim family is an honor” (Bishop, 2022). In contrast, Pakistan sought out the external support from Islamic militias such as the Lashkar-e-Taiba. With the extensive training facilities and financial backing from Pakistan, LeT was able to recruit at a much higher volume, even gaining recent college graduates to join. Even though Pakistan has condemned LeT for the 2008 Mumbai attacks, the previous overwhelming support for the militia group proved to be extremely effective in orchestrating severe acts of terrorism.

In the majority of attacks supported by North Korea, there was a clear political motive at play. Whether that was to assassinate the president of South Korea or scare the rest of the world from attending the Seoul Summer Olympics, it was clear that North Korea was attempting to gain leverage and power over its enemy. Comparing this to Pakistan’s motives, there is still much to unveil. Scholar Michelle Macander explains LeT’s connection with Pakistan by stating, “The group maintains a complicated relationship with its host country—while Pakistan has banned the group and its parent organizations, there is ample evidence that the state has used the group as a proxy against India since the mid-1990s” (Macander, 2021). In the case of the 2008 Mumbai attacks, Pakistan banned LeT from the country and prosecuted the remaining agents. Even though Pakistan had heavily funded Lashkars during the tensions between India, Pakistan’s motives have been murky, especially involving the attack in Mumbai.

**Conclusion**

Examining the motives and analyzing the differences between North Korea and Pakistan’s support for terrorism helps illuminate that certain countries do not follow a distinct pattern. In fact, governments will utilize any necessary resources to execute its agendas, whether that be hand-picking individuals to brainwash and send to espionage training facilities, or the hefty financial backing of external militia extremists. While North Korea displays their support of terrorism in a more evident fashion, Pakistan creates the necessity for further exploration into their motives and terrorist backing. Additionally, if it can be proved that Pakistan continues to fund Lashkars, it will open the door for additional research in the back-dealings of government-militia relations.

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