

# **How Significant was the 2008 Mumbai Terror Attack in undermining the ongoing peace-talks between India and Pakistan?**

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## SECTION 1: IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION OF SOURCES

To develop the research question “**How Significant was the 2008 Mumbai Terror Attack in undermining the ongoing peace-talks between India and Pakistan?**”, firstly, is fundamental to evaluate the main sources: “The Mumbai Terror ‘2008’ and its Impact on the IndoPak Relations”; and the “INDIA PAKISTAN RELATIONS-POST MUMBAI ATTACKS” - a collection of Indian politicians’ quotes on the event studied. The first source, as an academic article on the Indo-Pak relations after the Mumbai attacks, is vital to understand an academic interpretation on the significance of this attack to both countries diplomatic relations. The collection, by containing the responses of the Indian’s politicians to the event, is crucial to analyze the political stance of India after the attack.

The first article shows a clear limitation of origin, given that the document was written by Pakistani researchers Umbreen Javaid and Maruim Kamal. Therefore, it could contain biased analysis in favor of their country. Nonetheless, considering this study discussed the “immediate effects” that the terror attack had on the diplomatic relation, being written in 2013 - 5 years after the event - the authors were able to clearly analyze its aftermath, discussing short and medium-term effects.

With reference to purpose, as published by the Center of South Asian Studies, connected to the University of Punjab, a value is that the article intends to promote information for academic purposes, which is aligned with the goal of this investigation. However, by adopting a very broad scope of analysis, the article lacks in-depth details and specificities on the most important points to my research, creating a limitation to the use of this source.

Regarding content, the document processes a very deep historical background on the relations between both countries, which could be considered a value, since it is an important

factor to be considered for the investigation. At the same time, this means that there is a lack of in-depth analysis of the diplomatic responses to the attack from both countries.

Published less than one year after the terror attack - in 2009 -, the second document presents the immediate Indian political stance on the attack, showing a clear value of origin. Nevertheless, a limitation of origin is that the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) - publisher of this document - is a Pakistani journal with funding from Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, therefore, presenting - a possible - biased selection of quotes.

The document itself, as part of the ISSI journal, intends to be a source for other researchers in this area, gathering the selected statements, making it very valuable to this investigation. But, this could also be a limitation, as the compilation could be destined to internal affairs, as it did not present any explanations or contextualization. Therefore, making external researchers liable to misuse the information, due to not knowing its purpose.

One clear limitation of content is the fact that the document only includes samples of politician's speeches, which could be purposefully taken out of context to be misleading in order to condemn the Indian government. Nevertheless, as far as I could investigate the collection of direct quotes, show no misleading alteration of words<sup>1</sup>, which can be considered a huge value in having access to politicians' views towards the terror attack.

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<sup>1</sup> This can be proved, since the first quote of the document, which is a quote of a public speech by India's Prime Minister, show no alterations of words, seen that the whole speech was also used as a source in a Reuters article and the quote provided in the document is exactly the same as the one in the other source.

Source: <https://www.reuters.com/article/india-mumbai-singh-idUSSP4177420081127/>

## SECTION 2: INVESTIGATION

Throughout the 20th century, there have been tensions between India and Pakistan, due to disputes of the Kashmir region<sup>2</sup> (Javaid and Kamal 2013, 26). After the first war in 1948, failed diplomatic talks resulted in wars in 1965 and in 1971 that resulted in the independence of East Pakistan. After such conflicts, in 1972, Pakistan and India's Prime Ministers, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Indira Gandhi signed the Simla Accord which agreed to put an end to conflict and confrontation (Hashim 2019).

Entering the 21th century, after the 1999 Lahore Declaration - the first major agreement since the Simla Accord - diplomatic talks between both countries were advancing. However, in 2001, with a terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament, committed by Pakistani terrorist groups Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed, along with attacks on the Kashmiri assembly in Srinagar, tensions increased drastically. Indian accusation of involvement of the Pakistani government with the terrorist groups along with Pakistan's response stating that such accusations were baseless paralyzed Indo-Pak relations until 2003, after an agreement which ceased tensions on border conflicts (Adlina 2024, 842)(Hashim 2019).

With India's economic crisis in 2003 after the threat of foreign investment leaving India, the financial elite pressured for access to the Pakistani market. That, along with Pakistan's stance of a peaceful resolution to Kashmir, and UN and US policy of a diplomatic reconciliation between both countries due to their nuclear threat, made the peace-talks from 2003 onwards progress (Shaikh and Dashti 2022, 1221). However, a continuous impasse was India's concern over the cross-border terrorism, while Pakistan was fully committed to resolutions over the Kashmir border. The first setback over diplomatic progress happened in July 2008 with the Kabal Blast at the Indian Embassy, which killed 54 people and injured

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<sup>2</sup>Region in the northern part of India has generated several conflicts since its population is mainly Muslim, and, as the Indus Rivers passes through it, possesses great economic importance to both nations,

141. With evidence of the attack being linked to Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), India accuses Pakistan and the tensions start to increase again.

On November 26th, 2008 ten terrorists committed a series of attacks on different locations in South Mumbai. Beginning 22:30, two attackers opened fire at 'Chatrapati Shivaji Terminus' Railway station, while the others attacked Taj Mahal Palace & Tower and the Trident-Oberoi Hotel. In total there were 173 victims, 37 being foreigners, and 293 injured. Of the ten terrorists, only one survived, Ajmal Amir Kasab, who was caught by the Indian police, convicted to 86 charges and sentenced to death on May 6th, 2010 (Javaid and Kamal 2013, 30-31). Being planned and executed by the LeT, the goal of this attack was to undermine the Indian government's capacity to combat terrorism, cause an economic crisis in the country by damaging investors' confidence in the Indian's safe capacity (Shaikh and Dashti 2022, 1218-1219).

On the following day of the attack, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said in a public speech that attacks planned on Pakistani territory would not be tolerated, and India would demand Pakistan to take direct action on the combat against such terrorist activities (Kuncheria 2008). In December, Indian government affairs requested the extradition of Maulana Masood Azhar, Tiger Memon and Dawood Ibrahim, accused of being involved in the planning of the tragedy, but Pakistan refused the extradition of the mentioned individuals, resulting in an increase in tensions between both countries (Javaid and Kamal 2013, 33).

With tensions rising, during December of 2008, the Ministry of External Affairs of India Pranab Mukherjee, through letters and interviews pressured Pakistani officials to take action against the LeT, and called for international cooperation to solve the matter. In news channels such as "The Hindu" and "Times of India" politicians kept making updates and pressuring the Pakistani government, as Singh accused Pakistan of "deflecting the blame and responsibility" and called out the International community to "use its influence to urge the

Pakistani Government to take effective action.”. This resulted in a bad international view on Pakistani authorities, and increased political tensions with India (Ashraf 2009).

During President Zardari’s government, Pakistan’s stance was that the attacks were carried out by non-state members and had no linkage or affiliation to the government or the ISI. Zardari, by promising the strictest action against anyone involved in the attack, organized raids on the LeT and officially banned the fundamentalist militant group on December 9th 2008, considering it an international terrorist organization. However, reports that Kasab was in fact Pakistani and that some of the attacks were planned in Pakistani territory, publicly diminished all governmental acts against terrorism and worsened Pakistan’s international image. With that, Pakistani authorities, allegedly, arrested six suspects related to the Mumbai event (Javaid and Kamal 2013, 33).

Yet, since the early 21st century, it has been believed by many Indian parties that the LeT had strong affiliations with the Pakistani government, with alleged financial assistance by the ISI, since LeT’s vision and mission are in line with the Pakistani government in seizing the Jammu and Kashmir region. Thus, Indian authorities did not trust its neighbor country and were not satisfied by its action due to the series of attacks it had been suffering in the previous decade (Adlina 2024, 843). With that the Indian government continued to create pressure for more direct actions of counter-terrorism by Pakistan, as Singh even accused the Pakistani government of being involved in the Mumbai attacks stating, during the Chief Ministers Conference in New Delhi, that “given the sophistication and military precision of the attack it must have had the support of some official agencies in Pakistan” (Ashraf 2009).

Right after the attack, the first Indian policy in retaliation was to break all talks that were being developed with Pakistan (Hashim 2019). Along with canceling all economic and secretary-level trade, the Indian government also tightened the visa issuance process for Pakistanis (Javaid and Kamal 2013, 35). Just two days after the attack, a phone call between

Mukherjee and Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, suggested bilateral negotiations would not be possible with the terrorist operation inside Pakistan, stating “[the terrorist attacks] intended to make this impossible” (Ashraf 2009). The Indian military wanted to adopt a cold start strategy, launching several coordinated offensives in Pakistan to avoid a nuclear retaliation. However, as Singh said that India did not want to go to war, but wanted to unify the countries against terrorism, the Indian government opted to conduct the multilateral diplomacy strategy.

By aiming to push Pakistan in their desired direction, India's multilateral Diplomacy strategy consisted of calling for international support over the war on terrorism, especially US support, and pressuring Pakistan's authorities to act on it. Since Pakistan had suffered internal political and economic instabilities, the goal of this strategy was to create such a pressure on the Pakistani government, that it would not have another choice but to act upon the terrorist groups operating inside the country (Javaid and Kamal 2013, 36). In that year, continuation of peace talks through the Composite Dialogue Process were attempted by Pakistani Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani, but Singh denied the resumption of this process (Hashim 2019).

Due to general mistrust and dissatisfaction of Indian authorities towards the Pakistani government's actions of counter-terrorism inside its country, Indo-Pak relations completely broke off. All economic deals that were canceled right after the Mumbai attacks were not reopened for negotiation, since, according to India's judgment, Pakistan's actions were insufficient and the consistent terror attacks against the Indian population would make a good relation between both countries impossible.

In conclusion, the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attack had a great importance in undermining Indo-Pak relations. With prior terrorist attacks on the Indian parliament and in the Indian Embassy in Kabul, setting the precedent for the Indian government to suspect Pakistan's counter-terrorism actions, the event in Mumbai served as the last drop for India to

sever all economic and diplomatic relations with Pakistan, until its government cooperated in the War on Terror, combatting the LeT and other terrorist groups. Even though, Zardari banned the organization and arrested alleged suspects of planning of the attack, a lack of Pakistani action to bring justice to the victims of the attack and make sure that no more attacks would happen in the future, resulted in the stagnation of all economic cooperations that both countries developed throughout the 21st century.

### SECTION 3: REFLECTION

During its initial stages, I understood one of the biggest challenges of the historian's method which is the selection and evaluation of the sources in order to make your analysis. My initial research question was too narrow and thus, finding sources became much more difficult, along with the language barriers. After re-establishing my research question, within the topic, that better stated the purpose of my investigation, I was able to find other sources that helped enrich my work. With that, I learned that having a clear direction of where you want your research to go is fundamental prior to it, as it will be clearer to state what information is needed, facilitating the selection of sources.

Another difficulty was to evaluate the sources used, since pondering the source's values and limitations instead of just considering the information as truthful was counterintuitive. To overcome such difficulties, the OPCVL method was essential to understand which information was more reliable. For example, primary quotes on India's politicians' views served as more reliable to understand India's reaction to the attack, than the Pakistani academic article, since there is a clear limitation of purpose. Furthermore, discussing perspectives was also fundamental in validating the information used as the basis for my analysis. Different sources gave me different reasons behind the actions of both nations, which, based on the evaluation of each source, made it easier to validate which information is more reliable. So, I learned that evaluating the sources used and discussing perspectives are an essential part of the historian's job, since it strengthens the knowledge produced in the work.

Lastly, regarding the writing of this investigation, the duality between my own analysis and analysis of secondary sources taught me a lot about History as an area of knowledge. During the investigation, evaluating if my work was analytical enough or only descriptive was a very challenging task, especially on sections based only on secondary

sources. To overcome this, the approach used was to again discuss perspectives. Not only it strengthened the information used, but also made my investigation more complex, and as it had two clear perspectives, comparing and contrasting both of them was the best way to improve my work, making it more analytical.

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