

# Terrorism in South Asia: The Origins of Pakistan's "Non-State Actor Policy" in Afghanistan

So in addition to this Indian theater of non-state actors, it's also really important to know that Pakistan has been very active in Afghanistan as well. Now again, many people think that Afghanistan drew Pakistan in only as a result of the Soviet invasion, which happened on Christmas Day, 1979. That's actually a very big misunderstanding.

From the beginning of Pakistan's independence, there was exactly one country that did not want to approve of Pakistan's admission to the United Nations and that was Afghanistan. Afghanistan also rejected the British era agreement that separated Afghanistan from Pakistan and Afghanistan also laid claims to large swaths of Pakistani territory. So the relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan wasn't exactly pleasant.

So one of the ways in which Pakistan tried to dampen Afghanistan's ability to interfere negatively in Pakistani domestic politics, is that it also began supporting an array of Islamists in Afghanistan itself. And as it turns out, the organization that it supported, Jamaat-e-Islami, would in a few decades from the beginning of this policy, form the backbone of the very organizations that would form the different jihadi groups that would fight the Soviet Union, when the Soviets finally invaded in December of 1979.

One final caveat, it's often believed that Pakistan began this, really only in response to the Soviet invasion. Pakistan actually began this policy as early as 1973. Due to internal events that were taking place in Afghanistan, many Islamists were actually leaving the country, and they fled to variously, Iran and into Pakistan. At the time Pakistan was being governed by the civilian autocrat, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and it was under his initiative that Pakistan set up the Pakistan intelligence cell to manage these events in Afghanistan. So long before the Soviets crossed the Amu Darya in Afghanistan, Pakistan had already done much to assemble the basic militant groups that would become the workhorses of the jihad.