



Center for Global & Strategic Studies Islamabad

INDIAN FALSE FLAG OPERATIONS

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Terminology and Genealogy

The term false flag has been used symbolically and it denotes the purposeful misrepresentation of an actor's objectives or associations. The lineage of this term is drawn from maritime affairs where ships raise a false flag to disguise themselves and hide their original identity and intent. In this milieu, the false flag was usually used by pirates to conceal themselves as civilian or merchant ships and to prevent their targets from escaping away or to stall them while preparing for a battle. In other cases, false flags of ships were raised to blame the attack on someone else. A false flag operation can be defined as follows:

“A covert operation designed to deceive; the deception creates the appearance of a particular party, group, or nation being responsible for some activity, disguising the actual source of responsibility.”

These operations are purposefully carried out to deceive public about the culprits and perpetrators. This phenomenon has become a normal practice in recent years as rulers often opt for this approach to justify their actions. It is also used for fabrication and fraudulently accuse or allege in order to rationalize the aggression. Similarly, it is a tool of coercion which is often used to provoke or justify a war against adversaries. In addition, false flag operations could be a single event or a series of deceptive incidents materializing a long-term strategy. A primary modern case of such operations was accusation on Iraqi President Saddam Hussain for possessing weapons of mass-destruction 'WMD', which were not found after NATO forces, waged a war on Iraq. A similar case is of the global war on terror.

Contemporary Connotation

Presently the false flag operations also include attacking their own land and blaming their adversaries or terrorists for carrying out these offensive attacks, which may also act as a ground for inland or foreign aggression. Not only covert agencies but civilian organizations also conduct such operations. In the case of civilian organizations, they tend to conceal the identity of an actual organization behind such operations. Cases of Non-governmental and Non-profit organizations are evident where agendas of a government or business are served behind the

cover of other organizations. Currently, false flag operations is an arrangement which serves a range of purposes such as acting as a tool of covert operations, war tactics, and espionage. It also embraces elements of psychological warfare and for fabricating the historical incidents and staging a conspiracy. Furthermore, false flag operations are also known as pseudo-operations or artificial operations which do not have any ground realities in actual.

Indian False Flag Operations against Pakistan

A number of pseudo-operations executed internationally in past but there are ample cases of Indian false flag operations and its fabricated accusations on Pakistan which were proven wrong and exposing India's agenda to malign the image of Pakistan in the international arena. Those accusations were always based on flimsy grounds and even rejected by Indian judicial systems and international investigative bodies. Pakistan was accused of being the perpetrator of violence for almost every act of terror in India, irrespective of their complex and prolonged internal factors, but Indian government failed to provide any evidence of Pakistan's involvement in these terror attacks. As India is a melting pot of cultures and religions; therefore, the country always remained in a dire need of nation-building. Its far-right political parties and antagonistic forces created a perception of a common or false enemy to unite its culturally despaired population to serve the purpose,

India endorsed this agenda in front of International Statuary platforms with an aim to label Pakistan as a terrorist-sponsoring country but failed to prove it on all forums. Another objective of Indian fabricated accusations on Pakistan is to sabotage and isolate Pakistan in international diplomacy. India is still trying to construct a narrative to declare Pakistan as a troublemaker in the region; however, by doing so the Indian government is itself jeopardizing the stability of the South Asian region to serve this purpose. A security dilemma between both nuclear-armed countries, where Pakistan is also capable of the second strike, is to push the whole globe under the threat of nuclear Armageddon. Following are the few examples of cases which were proven wrong through investigations carried out by local or international authorities.

Case Studies

1. 1971 Airplane Hijacking

The Indian Intelligence agency Research & Analysis Wing (RAW) plotted a False Flag operation on January 30, 1971, when an Indian airplane (type: Fokker) known as Ganga was hijacked and flown to Lahore airport, Pakistan. The names of two alleged hijackers Hashim Qureshi and Ashraf Butt were highlighted. Both of them were labeled as Kashmiri freedom fighters by Indian the government. Pakistan was immediately blamed and was prohibited to use Indian airspace; consequently, Pakistan could no longer fly to East Pakistan which is now known as Bangladesh. It was reported on February 1, 1971, that passengers and crew who were present in the Ganga were not confined and reportedly burned the aircraft. Later on, it was revealed that Ganga was already out of service but was made operational only one day before the incident of hijacking was staged. It was a clear example of False Flag Operation as this incident was later used as an excuse to put a ban on Pakistani flight operations over Indian airspace which as a result led to war between Pakistan and India.



Pakistan was unable to maintain a quick supply line for the forces which were deployed in East Pakistan. Pakistani flights had to take a longer route via Colombo causing substantial delays in supply for the Pakistani forces. The Indian armed forces took full advantage of this situation to bolster insurgency led by Bengali political leader Mujeeb ur Rehman.

2. Chittisinghpura Massacre (2000)



The mass killing of around thirty-five Sikhs took place in Anantnag, district of Jammu and Kashmir on March 20, 2000. This massacre is still remembered as “Day of Bloodshed” by the entire Sikh community living in Chittisinghpura. Initially, the Lashkar-e-Taiba and Pakistan were accused of carrying out this operation. In

this regard, Muhammad Sohail Malik was blamed as a leader however his name was later omitted from the list by a court in New Delhi. The New York Times and many other well-known agencies had also accused Lashkar-e-Taiba however; a New Delhi court and other synchronized strategists noted that the entire massacre was portrayed as a False Flag operation for exploiting and to defame the image of Pakistan in the global politics. In an interview of Sikh News Express, a Retired Lt. General spoke to Jasneed Singh that it was planned propaganda. Moreover, the interesting part was that the massacre had occurred during US President Bill Clinton first visit to Pakistan and India in 20 years. Even Madeleine Albright an attributed US politician and diplomat, mentioned in her book known as 'The Mighty and the Almighty: Reflections on America, God and World Affairs (2006) that Hindus extremist mindset is at work with atrocious conspiracies. Furthermore, US President Clinton referred to the massacre as hostile and asked to refrain from blaming the Islamic religious groups.

3. India Accused Pakistan being the mastermind of hijacking (2000)

The Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee impugned Pakistan for backing the hijackers and forced the US and other major countries to declare Pakistan a terrorist state after receiving criticism from the government and Indian community for negotiating with the hijackers. Pakistan had denied its involvement in the hijacking and insisted that the ongoing cold war between the two nuclear states is the result of Indian engineered hijacking to disrepute Pakistan. The Indian foreign minister Jaswant Singh further escalated the tension between the two states claiming that India has a proof of Pakistan's involvement arguing that the hijackers wanted to free the jailed Pakistani militants but he had failed to provide any proof in this context.

4. Indian Airlines Flight 814 Kabul Hijacking (1999)

An Indian Airlines airbus flying from Kathmandu to New Delhi was hijacked just before the planned visit of the United States President Bill Clinton to Pakistan and India. A group under the name of Harkat-ul-Mujahideen was accused of this hijacking with the support and active assistance from Pakistani premier Intelligence agency



ISI. The hijacked airplane was re-routed to Pakistan but the Pakistani authorities had denied the landing in Lahore. The airplane had touched down in Dubai, Amritsar, and Lahore but due to the refusal of respective governments, the hijacked airplane had finally landed at Kandahar Airport which was already under the command of the Taliban.

The re-routing of flight had also raised the questions as apparently, it could serve two purposes, first was to release few passengers at Dubai while other was to assert that Pakistan and Taliban were behind this hijacking. The Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee openly blamed Pakistan and asked all major powers to declare Pakistan as a terrorism-sponsoring country. India had engineered this hijacking to malign Pakistan's image and to portray India as a victim of cross-border terrorism. The Indian Foreign Minister, Jaswant Singh had also stated that hijacking of Flight 814 was Pakistan's hidden agenda and India has evidence of Pakistan's involvement. The hijackers had demanded to release captive militants which were Pakistani nationals but later Mr. Jaswant Singh had failed to furnish any evidence of Pakistan's involvement.

5. 2001 Indian Parliament Attack

The Indian Parliament was attacked in New Delhi on December 2001. The Indian authorities accused Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) without any investigations. They referred to this terrorist attack as a Pakistani agenda against India. This attack had caused the death of 14 people but the situation had escalated to the military stand-off at borders of both



countries. The Indian Media had mentioned this attack as a breach of national security due to the negligence of concerned authorities. A former home Ministry Officer Mr. RVS Mani stated that members of investigating committee claimed that the Indian Parliament attack was orchestrated by the government. However, Mr. Satish Verma, a member of the Central

Bureau of Investigation-SIT probe team, said that "Attack on the Indian parliament in 2000 and the Mumbai attacks in 2008 were set up with the objective of strengthening the counter-terrorism legislation and to get extra funds. Mr. Sukumar Muralidharan from International Federation of

Journalists stated that “The media failed to act as were supposed to even after the High Court verdict. The investigation police officers had to revisit the case to find new evidence.

Another false flag operation of India was exposed by their own media persons and officers holding senior positions in public offices. Afzal Guru was used as a Scapegoat by Indian agencies in their orchestrated terror plan whereas he wasn't provided a lawyer at the crucial stage of his trial. The Special Cell of the Delhi Police, which was appointed as investigation in-charge of this case used the media to brand Mr. Guru as guilty even before the trial. The New Delhi High Court although acknowledged that the investigating agency had fabricated the evidence against the accused but upheld the verdict. Mr. Guru's trial did not meet the international standards for a fair trial as he was denied due process, legal counsel and the presumption of innocent until proven guilty.

6. 2001 Jammu and Kashmir legislative assembly car bombing

The Jammu and Kashmir legislative assembly was attacked on 1st October 2001 in which 38 people were killed and numerous injured. In addition, three “Fedayeen” (Kashmiri Freedom Fighters) were killed. An explosive-laden vehicle was rammed into the main gate of the building located in Srinagar. The question arises that was it a mere coincidence or a pre-planned execution that no legislator was killed besides that many senior leaders had already left the building.



7. Military Camp Attacked in occupied Kashmir (2006)

India had alleged Pakistan of attacking the military camp in Indian Occupied Kashmir in Sep



2016 despite lack of substantial evidence. This attack was executed before the Pakistan Prime minister's address in the United Nations General Assembly on the human rights violations in Indian Occupied Kashmir (IOK). It was a desperate attempt to dilute the effects but India once again miserably failed to prove any Pakistani involvement.

8. Samjhota Express train blasts (2007)

The Hindu extremists had conducted an attack on Samjhauta Express in 2007 and blamed the Muslim groups for this attack but later on; the National Intelligence Agency (NIA) arrested a worker under the name Kamal Chauhan of Hindu extremist organization Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) in New Delhi. According to the reports, Chauhan was explosives specialist and he had planted the bomb in that train. Later on, the investigations had revealed that this Hindu activist with several other persons had been involved in Ajmer Dargah blast, Hyderabad's Mecca Masjid, and Malegaon. Initially the Muslims and specifically the Pakistani banned outfits were blamed in all these incidents but later on, Hindu chauvinists confessed their involvement in these acts of terror. Inspector General Hemant Karkare of Maharashtra Police was the head of investigations. He had identified the Hindutva organizations for terrorism in India. Interestingly several political commentators had also called it "Hindutva Terror" or the "Saffron Terror". The opposition parties, including BJP and Shiv Sena, had alleged that the arrests were made under the pressure of the incumbent government to appease Indians Muslim population The Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) chief Hemant Karkare was investigating the Malegaon blast of 2006 in which the names of many Hindu hardliners



from Sangh Parivar, RSS, BJP, Jagran Munch were included. The plan was to remove ATS chief Hemant Karkare and to appoint a new ATS chief in order to protect these hardliners from prosecution. Mr. Hemant Karkare was targeted and killed during the Mumbai 2008 operation.

Mrs. Karkare earlier denied the involvement of Hindu terrorist organization saffron, in her husband's death. It was widely believed that Mrs. Karkare had received reprisal threats from the RSS just after Mumbai Attack. Later on, she had filed a case against RAW and Col. Prohit in Indian Supreme Court. She had also provided evidence of Colonel Prohit and RAW involvement in this terror attack. According to the Inspector General of Police Mr. S.M.Mushrrif, the ATS chief Hemant Karkare and other officials were not killed by terrorists but by the target killers of Hindutva parties who took advantage of 26/11. It proves that the goons of the Hindu extremist party had killed Karkare and fabricated the evidence to accuse terrorists who were allegedly involved in Mumbai 2008 attack.

It was also reported that Swami Aseemanand, a leader of the Hindu extremist group (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) was found guilty before a judicial magistrate. He was accused that he and his fellow RSS activists were involved in blasts in Samjhauta Express, at mosques in Malegaon in Maharashtra state and Andhra Pradesh's state capital, Hyderabad besides a Muslim shrine in Ajmer in Rajasthan. Col. Prohit himself had confessed during the investigation of Samjhauta express tragedy for giving training to Hindu terrorists to initiate an armed conflict between Pakistan and India. This statement clearly reflects the sick mentality of Indian Army and her overt and covert support to extremists and moreover Infiltration of Hindutva elements into the Indian army and intelligence agencies. India is exposed to being confronted with the evidence indicating increased activities of a secret Hindu terror network which is responsible for a wave of deadly attacks previously blamed on the Muslims. The opposition leader in Indian parliament Mr. Rahul Gandhi truly confirmed that the growth of Hindu extremists presents a greater threat to India than the Muslims. Pakistan had urged India to share findings of the investigation which was conducted for Samjhauta train blasts after it was disclosed that Hindu extremist outfits were behind the terrorist activities in February 2007. It is evident that the historic anti-Pakistan posture of India in general and Hindutva approach of BJP government in particular that India had used 26/11 as a propaganda tool against Pakistan.

9. Bombing in Mecca Mosque of Hyderabad Deccan

The Mecca Masjid, Hyderabad bombing occurred on 18 May 2007 in which 14 people had lost their lives. The Indian National Investigation Agency, Central Bureau of Investigation and Anti-Terrorist Squad questioned the former members of the RSS including Swami Aseemanand, a saffron-robed monk who had been linked to three terror attacks. He was among the five men acquitted in 2007 blast in Hyderabad's Mecca Masjid. The Central Bureau of Investigation produced Swami Aseemanand before the court on 19 November 2010 in connection with the Blast. The Indian Tehelka magazine had obtained a copy of 42-pages confession. According to his confession, many of those involved in the bombings were members of Rashtriya Swayamsevak



Sangh (RSS) the right-wing of the parent organization of Indian Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The NIA officer-in-charge of the case Pratibha Ambedkar was immediately removed and the judge who wrote the verdict was forced to resign.

10. Blast in a Malegaon Mosque (2006)

The Muslims of India had faced several tragic incidents in 2006 including a mosque located in Malegaon Maharashtra which was exploded with a planted bomb on September 2006. The Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) initially blamed the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) and also accused Pakistan. It was revealed in 2013 that the Hindu extremist group Abhinav Bharat was behind it. The Indian false accusations against Pakistan were exposed when it was found that fictitious inquiries had been carried out by investigative agencies and innocent Muslims were forced to confess the heinous crimes which they had never committed. The Indian court had finally ordered on 25 April 2016 to release the nine Muslims who were previously arrested on fabricated charges.



11. 2008 Ahmedabad bombings

The Ahmedabad bombing 2008 was a sequence of 21 explosive blasts that hit the same city in which more than 200 people were wounded. The blasts were identical with Bangalore and Karnataka. The free Indian media had claimed that these were false flag operations executed by India whereas the pro-government media claimed that the Indian Mujahideen were involved and



had also accepted the responsibility of these attacks. The Indian Police from Gujrat was able to arrest the mastermind Mufti Abu Bashir along with his companions. The investigation team could not find any evidence against Pakistan. It was revealed that these blasts were planned by Indian religious extremist having a background of Hindu-Muslim Communal violence,

12. 2009 Attack on the Sri Lanka National Cricket Team

The attack on the Sri Lanka national cricket team took place on 3rd March, 2009, when a bus carrying Sri Lankan cricketers as a part of a large convoy was attacked by 12 gunmen near Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore, Pakistan. The cricketers were on their way to play the third day of the second Test against the Pakistani cricket team. Six members of the Sri Lanka national cricket team were wounded and six Pakistani policemen and two civilians were killed. The attack was carried out with the involvement of Indian agencies to blame Pakistan however the Sri Lankan Police Chief Mr. Mendis clearly rejected any involvement of Pakistan and reported that this act of terror was carried out by India to malign Pakistan.



13. Pathankot Air Base (2016)

Another incident was the Pathankot Air Base attack in Indian Punjab. The Indian government promptly blamed Pakistan and Jaish-e-Muhammad was accused. The Director-General, National Investigation Agency had reported after the investigation that they didn't find any direct involvement of Pakistani agencies. It is worth to highlight the timing of this attack as this attack was executed a few days later after Modi had visited former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in his house and promised a better relationship between India and Pakistan.



14. Uri Attack (2016)



The attack on Indian army base Uri was executed in September 2016. The purpose was to instigate tensions at Pakistan-India border and to build a narrative for a pre-emptive surgical strike in Pakistan. The Indian government had claimed that the Indian army was able to destroy a militant's camp in AJK. Their superficial claim was

challenged as it was not possible to cross the Line of Control (LOC) in the presence of the Pakistani army. There is no doubt that it was pre-planned by the Indians, therefore, the government of Pakistan had demanded an international investigation. Pakistan took a stance that the attack was an attempt to divert the attention of the international community from violations committed by Indians in Indian occupied Kashmir (IOK).

The world must take a serious note of this fact that the Indian nuclear arsenal has now fallen in the hands of Fascist BJP Government which is supported by the well-known extremist organization RSS and could be used in a false flag operation to blame Pakistan.