

## Why does the EU continue to gloss over Pakistan's state-sponsored terrorism?

Written by Heinz K. Becker on 10 April 2018 in Opinion  
Opinion

The European Union's effort to combat global terrorism has a marked discrepancy, says Heinz K. Becker.



Heinz K. Becker | *Photo credit: European Parliament audiovisual*

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Since the 2005 adoption of the EU's counter-terrorism strategy (CTS), Europe's anti-terrorism policymaking has been operating with four objectives: prevent, protect, pursue and respond. 'Prevent' refers to the European strategy for combating radicalisation and recruitment, while 'protect' denotes the policies implemented as a means of safeguarding citizens and infrastructure. 'Respond' is the element of minimising impacts on citizens after an attack. To date, it appears the EU has implemented these aspects of their CTS effectively.

Unfortunately, the 'pursue' aspect of Europe's CTS is disoriented.

Officially, the European Commission claims that the EU is pursuing terrorist organisations by "hindering their capacity," through the prevention of terrorist financing. In the spring of 2015, the European Parliament and Council voted in favour of new regulations preventing money laundering and the financing of terrorism.

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These regulations are meant to be applied to all European foreign policy strategies. The Commission has also listed cooperation with the US as "a fundamental component" of European anti-terrorism policy.

Why then, does the Commission continue to obfuscate the state-sponsored terrorism of one of its prominent trading partners, despite American pressure to the contrary?

The Islamic Republic of Pakistan has long been accused of harbouring terrorist organisations. In 2008, the Brookings Institute named Pakistan as the "world's most active sponsor of terrorist groups." From 2012 to 2015, Pakistan was placed on the Financial Action Task Force's "Terrorism Financing Watch List". In 2017, the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) placed Pakistan fifth out of 163 countries on their "Global Terrorism Index".

This information is not new. Security experts have cautioned against Pakistan's conflicting domestic counter-terrorism policies for decades.

A volatile, nuclear-armed state, Pakistani governance is split between the weak, democratically-elected representatives, and the powerful, autocratic military. While there may be forces within the government looking to bridge the gap between Pakistan and the international community, their failure to address the inefficient policies pushed by the military prevents Pakistan from complying with its international obligations.

With the government's knowledge and the military's support, Lashkar-e-Taiba (the largest Islamic militant organisation in South Asia) continues to operate and raise funds inside Pakistani territory.

Hafiz Muhammad Saeed, the group's founder, remains at large, despite significant American pressure to have him apprehended. Saeed's newly founded political party, the Milli Muslim League, demonstrates Pakistan's lack of urgency in countering extremist ideology and denying its legitimacy.

The New York Times has reported that Pakistan will be readmitted to the "Terrorism Financing Watch List" as of June 2018.

In response to Pakistan's lack of action against Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Milli Muslim League, the US froze \$1.3bn of Pakistan's security aid in January. Shortly thereafter, Britain co-signed a letter with the US, nominating Pakistan for the "Terrorist Financing Watch List". These efforts were supported by both France and Germany.

Yet, the European Commission has remained silent, or worse, has been complicit in Pakistan's abuses, for example, by omitting all reference to state-sponsored terrorism in Pakistan in their GSP+ monitoring procedures. Refraining from action in regard to Pakistan's state-sponsorship of terrorism goes against Europe's own counter-terrorism policies and contributes to global insecurity.

## About the author

Heinz K. Becker (EPP, AT) is a substitute member of Parliament's terrorism committee

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