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# Journal of Peace Studies

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# BOOK REVIEW

## JIHADISM IN PAKISTAN: AL- QA'IDA, ISLAMIC STATE AND THE LOCAL MILITANT

BY  
ANTONIO  
GIUSTOZZI

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**Syed Eesar Mehdi**



Antonio Giustozzi's book, *Jihadism in Pakistan*, stands out in the extensive literature on the subject by offering a profound analysis of the intricate relationship between the Pakistani state and jihadist groups. The book meticulously examines this relationship, which has been a focal point of scrutiny since the 1980s.

Giustozzi argues that Pakistan hosts the world's largest concentration of these groups, drawing attention to persistent criticisms spanning from the Soviet era to contemporary tensions with India and Afghanistan.

The unique contribution of the book lies in its in-depth exploration of the strategies employed by global jihadists after 9/11 and Al-Qaeda's attempts to manage the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the largest jihadist group in Pakistan. Beyond this, the book delves into broader issues in South Asian security, such as the impact of the Islamic State on Al Qaeda's power post-2014, the reasons behind Al-Qaeda's continued support for the TTP, and the dynamics of groups focused on carrying out jihad in Kashmir and India.

One of the central themes of Giustozzi's work is the examination of accusations regarding Pakistan's alleged support for local jihadist groups and the dispatch of volunteers to assist them. While some Western analysts increasingly lean towards the belief that Pakistan supports jihadist groups, the book highlights

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## BOOK REVIEW

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the lack of a consensus on this matter, especially concerning connections with global jihadist organizations like Al Qaeda. This ongoing controversy, particularly in the eyes of Western powers, remains a significant thread throughout the book.

The narrative reaches a critical juncture with the 2011 operation that led to the death of Osama bin Laden in Abbottabad. Giustozzi underscores the peak of suspicions regarding Pakistani complicity with Al Qaeda during this time but emphasizes the cautious approach taken by U.S. authorities in directly accusing Islamabad. Even after the Abbottabad incident, the book highlights the enduring nature of the debate surrounding the relationship between Pakistan and jihadists.

The book is primarily based on 114 interviews, telephone contacts, or meetings conducted from 2013 to 2020. It involves members or former members of various groups, including TTP, LeT, JeM, and others, as well as officers from NDS, ISI, and Revolutionary Guards. Local researchers in Afghanistan and Pakistan, experienced in working with insurgent groups, have facilitated these meetings. The team, with backgrounds in journalism, has established a reputation for secure handling, leveraging existing

contacts and introductions for access to jihadist groups. While secondary sources have been used, the author has heavily relied on information provided by jihadist organizations. In the absence of external confirmation, cross-referencing between different jihadist sources has been employed, prioritizing rigorous checks for sensitive information. The team has established credibility and facilitated access to otherwise elusive groups.

The book is structured into five main chapters with thematic connections. In the initial chapter, titled, *How Pakistan's Deep State, AQ, and the Jihadists Met 1980–2001*, the narrative meticulously traces the training of Afghan jihad volunteers by AQ in Pakistani camps. It unravels links between AQ, its precursor Maktba al Khidamat, and Pakistani Deobandi clerics, exploring interactions with Afghan-based jihadist groups. The launch of the World Islamic Front for Jihad in 1998 hints at a pre-existing link with Pakistani jihadism, and allegations swirl about AQ's involvement with LeT and connections with the ISI.

The second chapter, *The Second Afghan Jihad (2002–) and AQ's Expanding Role with Pakistan's Jihadists*, navigates post-9/11 global jihadist strategies in Pakistan. The U.S. invasion reshapes dynamics,

prompting a new front in Afghanistan and deepening AQ's ties with local jihadists involved in Kashmir. The emergence of the TTP takes center stage in Chapter three, *The TTP: Bastard Offspring of Global Jihad*, spawned by collaboration between pro-Taliban Deobandi groups and the US, resulting in a fragmented Pakistani Taliban with shared sympathies for the Afghan Taliban.

Chapter four, *The Sunni Supremacists: Deviant Allies of AQ*, succinctly explores key Sunni supremacist groups in 1990s and early 2000s Pakistan, particularly SSP, LeJ, and Jundullah. Jundullah's rise, collaboration with Iran, and alignment with TTP under Hakimullah Mehsud's brief leadership receive attention. The final chapter, *Global Jihad and the Kashmiri Jihad: Co-opting or Being Co-opted?* examines shifts in the relationship between Kashmiri jihadist groups and the Pakistani military post-9/11, with Musharraf's scaled-back involvement in Kashmir triggering discontent among jihadists.

While the book is well-written, it could benefit from refinement for greater impact. A deeper analysis of Pakistan's counterterrorism efforts, along with the inclusion of personal narratives to humanize the subject, could have lent further credence to the book. Expanding the regional context, especially in terms of relations with neighbouring countries, and providing an update on recent developments would have enhanced its relevance. Additionally, exploring the intersection of global jihadism with Pakistan's culture and society, and delving into the root causes of extremism, could have enriched the narrative further.

Despite the extensive literature on the subject, Antonio Giustozzi's book *Jihadism in Pakistan* provides the most comprehensive analysis of jihadism in Pakistan. It sheds light on the strategies employed by global jihadist's post-9/11 and delves into how Al-Qaeda sought to control the TTP, the largest jihadist group in the country. This publication is essential for scholars, academics, and students studying terrorism, global jihad, and violence in Pakistan. ■

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