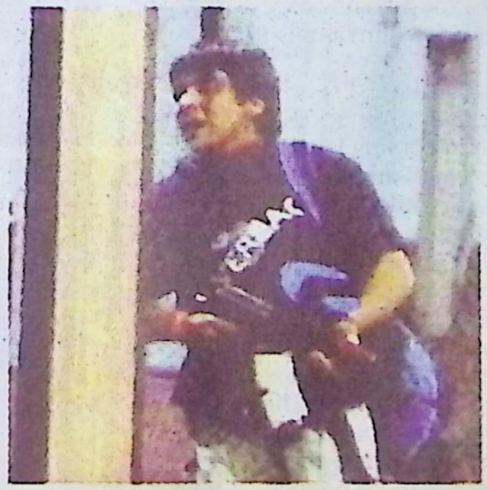
Security and Intelligence agencies. Why should an embattled government, which recently even faced a vote of no confidence, blame itself for a lack of foresight and planning when the traditional enemy is just across the border?

India has become a past master at blaming its neighbours for attacks on its soil, the attacks in Jaipur earlier in the year were pinned on Bangladesh and numerous other have been attributed to groups within Pakistan. While accusations have come thick and fast from the Indian side and they all stop just short of claiming state sponsored terrorism from Pakistan. But public perception is a whole matter altogether, by not openly claiming that Pakistan sponsors terrorism in India, the public filled in the blanks themselves. The Indian public (and to a certain extent the government) now cannot differentiate between terrorists who happen to be Pakistani and Pakistani sponsored terrorists.

The events of 9/11 are done and dusted, but a look at the 19 people who committed the crimes makes one wonder why Afghanistan of all places was attacked. Of the 19 hijackers 15 were from Saudi Arabia, two from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), one from Lebanon, and one from Egypt. Why didn't the United States attack, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, UAE and Egypt? The answer is that there was a clear differentiation between the nationality of the terrorists and group they came from. That group was found out to be Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and then America waged war. India on the other hand has hinted at a Pakistani connection, yet the only proof they can show for it now is that the only captured terrorist from the raid has claimed to be a Pakistani national and is apparently a member of Lakshr-i-Toiba (LT). Funnily enough the organisation itself has claimed not to have a hand in the Mumbai massacre. For a terrorist outfit this should be their shining hour, logically they should have immediately claimed responsibility for the attacks (as numerous others have across the world), yet they flatly denied it.



India stands to gain from this accusation, that not only were they Pakistani but they are also from an organisation that is implicitly backed the elements within the Pakistani establishment. That, seemingly is their trump card against Pakistan, some people believe that Pakistani organisations trained and then protected the LT even after it was declared illegal. Thus in a rather convoluted way, backing by some in the establishment across the border is equal to Pakistani government support.

With that awkward but believable logic behind them the Indian government has created an anti-Pakistan feeling equal to the widespread public support Bush had when he went started his illegal war with Iraq. In America Judith Miller and Michael Gordon's series of stories on weapons of mass destruction in Iraq created just the steam the Bush administration needed to push for war with Saddam. Later Donald Rumsfeld, Condoleezza Rice and Colin Powell all appeared on television and pointed to Miller's stories as a partial basis for going to war. With the media producing the 'right' news and a nation still living in the fear of terror, the people of America overwhelmingly backed Bush to enter into an invalidated war with Iraq. The rest as they say is history. Seemingly the same is being done in India as their numerous television channels and newspapers have not only pointed the finger at Lakshr-i-Toiba, but they have created an anti-Pakistan sentiment similar to affect Miller's and Gordon's stories had on the American public.

All of this glosses over the gross negligence both from Indian Security and Intelligence officials. The far larger problem of Indian militants has also become a taboo topic. From the Indian Mujahideen which has claimed five attacks in the last one year, to the Deccan Muhahideen (which claims to be behind the Mumbai attack), the Indian government seems adamant that there are no militant Islamic organisation within their own country. They want the world to believe is from no fault of their own that such organisation take root within their country, instead the blame is always on foreign shoulders.

But the simple facts point to a homegrown menace and not one from across the border, India's 150 million Muslims, who make up 13 per cent of the population, hold only 3 per cent of state posts. If they don't even have representation, then how and where will their voices be heard? The Indian Muslim has to be lifted out of poverty and given proper human rights if India wants to do away with its Islamic militancy problems. That may be oversimplifying a complex problem, but generally Muslims in India are socioeconomically disadvantaged and on more than one occasion they have been openly attacked because of their religion. The pulling down of the Babri Mosque, the pogroms against Muslims in Mumbai in 1993, the carnage of the Gujrat riots and most recently the blockade in Kashmir are still open wounds for a the second largest Muslim population in the world. Coupled with a feebly low socioeconomic standing, they are as some might say ripe for the picking. They have become disillusioned and India's home grown Islamic militancy is born out of that disenfranchisement. This is the invisible problem, India must deal with. If they keep overlooking their own problems it makes it easier to point to a foreign hand when it comes to these situations such as Mumbai.

As the Taj still smoulders so does a much larger regional problem, the tragedy has affected more than just Mumbai, Maharasthra and India. It is a regional tragedy with multiple regional implications and now one hopes the Indian reaction to their 9/11, does not mirror America's as they waltzed into Iraq. One murderous and illegal war is better than two. ■