

## **Pak policy to liberate Kashmir with jihadis has backfired: Ex-diplomat**

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**Washington:** Pakistan's former envoy to the US, Husain Haqqani, said that Islamabad's involvement with jihadi groups at the highest level aim at "liberation" of Jammu and Kashmir has backfired. The diplomat's remark holds significance as it comes in the backdrop of deadly Lahore attack that killed more than 70 people, most women and children.

“Pakistan's involvement with jihadi groups initially was primarily as a strategic investment, which was supposed to bring the benefits through influence in Afghanistan and the liberation of Jammu and Kashmir from India. That has backfired,” Haqqani said, adding that the “Pakistani establishment is reluctant to declare an all-out war against terrorist groups”.

"Now even though it has backfired, Pakistan has been very selective in going after these jihadi groups. That is the reason why the jihadis pick specific targets like Shias, Ahmadis or Christians, to improve their recruitment, playing on various kinds of polarisation, and taking advantage of that to advance in society further," he further said.

"The real problem lies in that attitude of the government of trying to protect the parties in Punjab, while going after the terrorists in other parts of the country, but not in the Punjab. That's what has come back to bite them," he added.

Haqqani said the fact of the matter is that the Pakistani military and civilian leadership easily gets distracted by delusions of fighting India and its influence in Afghanistan and allowing certain jihadi groups to pursue those objectives, not realising that they can end up having offshoots, just like the Pakistani Taliban emerged out of the Afghan Taliban.

"The Pakistani component of the Afghan Taliban ended up becoming a separate group. And now Jamaat-ul-Ahrar has broken away from the Pakistani Taliban. Pakistan has to make a decision to go after all terrorist groups, as well as the mindset that breeds these terrorists. And Pakistan has not been able to make that decision," he observed.

Jamaat-ul-Ahrar claimed responsibility for Sunday's grisly suicide attack in Lahore that killed 72 people. Haqqani said the Pakistani establishment is not taking action against India-centric terrorist groups.

"The state has not taken the measures that are necessary to isolate them all. So, there are groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed which attack India. They are spared. Once they are spared, it's very possible that some of their members will actually join splinter groups which will attack Pakistan," he argued.

- PTI