

9/11 and Pakistan's Urdu press

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On July 8, 2005, the *Nawa-i-Waqt* editorially suggested that the U.S. had orchestrated not only the 9/11 attacks but also the London bombings of July 7, 2005. Prof. Dr. Zahoor Ahmad Azhar, a retired professor of Punjab University, in his column of March 16, 2005 described 9/11 as a "drama" and Al-Qaida as an imaginary organization.

Pakistan's Urdu press is perhaps the most careless, irresponsible and demagogic in the world. It promotes conspiracy theories day in day out. Instead of expert knowledge, most editorialists and columnists rely on crude propaganda, emotionalism and prejudice. It does not let the facts stand in the way of a good story. The concept of fact checking is totally alien.

Nothing illustrates Pakistani newspapers' careless and self-contradictory attitude than their treatment of 9/11. With the exception of a handful of columnists such as Hamid Mir, Saleem Safi, Dr. Muhammad Farooq, and Ataur Rahman almost all Urdu newspapers continue to proclaim, like an article of faith, that 9/11 was a "drama" staged by the Jews. For example, Mr Majeed Nizami, the powerful owner of *Nawa-i-Waq*, *The Nation* and Waqt TV channel, believes that 9/11 was a Jewish conspiracy against the Muslim world (*The Nation*, March 7, 2004). According to him, American newspapers have written that on 9/11 no Jew went to work at the World Trade Center and no one has contradicted this story (*Nawa-i-Waqt*, June 10, 2004).

The contradiction of this story has come from no less a person than Aiman al-Zawahiri, Al-Qaida's deputy leader. On April 22, 2008, he accused Iran, and its Hizbullah allies, of trying to discredit Al-Qaida by giving credit to Israel for 9/11 (*The Economist*, April 26, 2008). According to him, the rumour of Israeli involvement originated on Hizbullah's TV station, Al-Manar. "The purpose of this lie is clear — that there are no heroes among the Sunnis who can hurt the United States." Zawahiri is not the only one who has contradicted Mr. Nizami. Dr. A. R. Khalid, a professor of journalism, wrote in *Nawa-i-Waqt* on Dec. 18, 2007 that George Bush was the architect of 9/11.

Lt. Gen. Khalid Lateef Mughal (ret) wrote in the *Nawa-i-Waqt* (July 15, 2008): "Now there is no doubt that the drama of 9/11 was staged in accordance with the script of Jewish Mossad and American CIA." This amounts to begging the question and it goes to show that people only believe what they want to believe. On June 3, 2004, the same paper editorially asserted: "The truth is that the mastermind of 9/11 was Zionist Israel and the proof of this has been produced in the analytical reports by the American media itself and by senior parliamentarian David Duke. On that day, no Jew attended office at the World Trade Center because 4,000 Jews were on leave that day. They were given an emergency message to stay away. That is why, not a single Jew lost his life when the World Trade Centre was blown up."

The editorial failed to mention that Mr. Duke is a well-known white supremacist and had served a jail term for mail fraud and tax evasion. By the way, he does not deny Al-Qaida's responsibility for 9/11. His contention is that the Mossad had infiltrated Al-Qaida. In *Nawa-i-Waqt* (Sept. 11, 2008), Mr. Tariq Majeed approvingly quoted Mr. Duke's article "How Israeli terrorism and American treason caused the September 11 attacks" in which the latter had said that "there is not iota of doubt that the Mossad has penetrated bin Laden's Al-Qaida." Mr. Majeed's translation is less than

honest. The exact words of Mr. Duke are: "Knowing these facts, there can be little doubt the Mossad has deeply penetrated one of the oldest, largest and what is considered the most dangerous Arabic terrorist organization on earth; bin Laden's al-Qaida." In contrast, Mr. Abbas Athar, the editor of *Daily Express*, declared on September 10, 2006: "In order to destroy Afghanistan, the fiction of Usama and Al-Qaida was created." Who is telling the truth here? And what was the US to achieve by destroying Afghanistan?

In its editorial on July 9, 2005, *Nawa-i-Waqt* wrote that like 9/11 the London bombings could also be the work of pro-Zionist American lobby. "The drama of 9/11 is still a mystery for the world. To date the U.S. has not presented any real, circumstantial and solid evidence against any individual or organization." According to Mian Shahid Nadeem (*N.W.*, Feb. 10, 2010), Waqt TV has convincingly proved that the 9/11 conspiracy was staged by the United States and Israel to occupy the resources of Muslim countries. In an article entitled "Jews, not Muslims, are the enemies of America," Dr. Ajmal Niazi wrote in *Nawa-i-Waqt* (July 20, 2005), that not a single Jew died in the 9/11 attacks on World Trade Center. Abdus Shakoor Abi Hasan, *Nawa-i-Waqt's* Kuwait-based correspondent, also made this claim on July 26, 2005. These claims are without any basis in fact. According to Wikipedia's article entitled "9/11 conspiracy theories", at least 270 Jews lost their lives in 9/11 attacks. This article is available on the Internet free of cost.

According to Rasheed Patel (*Jang*, July 16, 2005), 9/11 was "a deep-laid U.S. conspiracy" to pin the blame on Muslims. He also calls the 7/7 bombings a deep-laid conspiracy. It were the Americans themselves who destroyed the Twin Towers and part of the Pentagon through dynamite because from a security point of view, these buildings had to be torn down. As for the 7/7 London bombings, the railway stations that were bombed had to be rebuilt because the 2012 London Olympics. Mr. Patel did not explain as to why a bus was bombed in London.

On Sept. 19, 2001, *Nawa-i-Waqt* published a front page story stating that 4,000 Israelis stayed away from the World Trade Center on 9/11. The story had been lifted from Amman-based *Al-Watan* newspaper. Later these 4,000 Israelis were turned into 5,000 Jews (M. M. Hasan, *Nawa-i-Waqt*, Sept. 26, 2003). On July 8, 2005, the *Nawa-i-Waqt* editorially suggested that the U.S. had orchestrated not only the 9/11 attacks but also the London bombings of July 7, 2005. Prof. Dr. Zahoor Ahmad Azhar, a retired professor of Punjab University, in his column of March 16, 2005 described 9/11 as a "drama" and Al-Qaida as an imaginary organization.

On this important issue the *Nawa-i-Waqt* has been constantly contradicting itself. For example, it published an op-ed piece by Dr. Sakhawat Hussain Sundralwi on Sept. 17, 2001, saying that 19 individuals involved in the hijackings on 9/11 were so-called Muslims. And Mr. Ferozuddin Ahmad Fareedi wrote on May 10, 2005 that Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves of 13 billion dollars are traceable to those 18 Arab youngsters who on 9/11 razed two skyscrapers to the ground. Mr. Ataur Rahman, a JI-oriented supporter of the PML-N, in his column on Dec 1, 2004, praised Usama bin Laden (UBL) for exacting their revenge on the Americans by launching the 9/11 attacks. It was his *gherat* (sense of honour) that prompted him to do so. Mr. Ataur Rahman commended UBL for thoroughly defeating the might and technology of the United States. In his column on July 15, 2005, he wrote: "Arab youngsters were responsible for the destruction of the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001." Surprisingly, editorially the paper continues to wallow in a deep-seated denialism. Some columnists make a strange claim that prior to 9/11 nobody in Pakistan had heard of UBL and Al-Qaida. Javed Qureshi, former chief secretary of Punjab, wrote this in *Nawa-i-Waqt* on July 6, 2009.

Many of the Al-Qaida leaders in their video and Internet messages have claimed responsibility, in fact credit, for 9/11. These messages draw two kinds of reactions in Pakistan. First, these messages are fake and products of the American CIA. Many of such messages have been broadcast by Aljazeera, so this Qatar-based TV channel is often condemned as a CIA-funded operation. This is a

strange argument because there is hardly any media outlet in Pakistan that does not air such messages from Al-Qaida leaders. Why do Pakistani TV channels and newspapers give coverage to such messages? For example, on Aug 16, 2010, the *Nawa-i-Waqt* quoted Zawahiri as saying that the U.S., Israeli and traitor Muslim governments were responsible for the siege of Gaza. Similarly, in an exclusive interview that was aired by Geo on July 22, 2008, Mustafa Abu Yazid, a senior Al-Qaida leader, claimed credit for 9/11. Here is the link to this interview:

<http://theunjustmedia.com/clips/smay/geo/in.htm>

The other reaction is that the Al-Qaida leaders make such statements as a war tactic, but they did not have the capacity to carry out such a sophisticated operation. So Jang's columnists Irfan Siddiqi and Sarwat Jamaal Asmaee are prominent proponents of this viewpoint. Mr Asmaee justifies these tactics under the Islamic dictum that war is the name of deception. What war is Mr Asmaee talking about here if Al-Qaida had nothing to do with 9/11? So the Al-Qaida leaders lied through their teeth and provided a solid justification to the U.S. presence in Afghanistan?

According to Mr Asmaee, most Western analysts believe that 9/11 was the game of American rulers and intelligence agencies (*Jang*, July 26, 2008). However, did not name any such analysts. Are Noam Chomsky, arguably the biggest critic of the American foreign policy in the West, Lord Nazir Ahmad, the first Pakistani/Kashmiri member of the British House of Lords, and Abdel Bari Atwan, one of the most prominent Arab journalists, among them? Isn't it strange that Mr. Asmaee finds David Ray Griffin, a Christian retired professor of theology with a conspiricist bent of mind, more credible than fellow Muslims such as UBL, Zawahiri and Mustafa Abu Yazid?

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P.S.

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