

intellectual understanding of films. The book serves as an invaluable guide for students, film scholars, film practitioners and cineastes to delve into the robust scholarship of film studies and visual culture. It allows readers to familiarise themselves with ongoing scholarly debates, thus constructing a critical space for academic enquiry. This book does well to open up avenues for accessing a large and heterogeneous collection of film narratives for stimulating interpretations.

References

- Dwyer, R. (2005) *100 Bollywood Films*. London: British Film Institute.
Gopalan, L. (Ed.) (2009) *Cinema of India*. London: Wallflower Press.
Raghavendra, M.K. (2009) *50 Indian Film Classics*. New Delhi: HarperCollins.

B. Geetha

IIT Bombay, Mumbai, India

e-mail: b.geetha@iitb.ac.in

C. Christine Fair, *In Their Own Words: Understanding Lashkar-e-Tayyaba* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2019), xii + 307 pp.

DOI: 10.1177/0262728020915558

This book is a welcome addition to the literature in the field, given the dearth of concrete academic writing on terror groups based in South Asia. It provides original insights into Pakistan's Punjab-based Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT), which has been responsible for carrying out countless violent attacks in India and Afghanistan, including the 2008 Mumbai attacks. Fair draws upon LeT's in-house publications to understand the ideology and motivations governing their behaviour inside and outside Pakistan. She argues that many LeT members are never engaged in fighting, as conventional wisdom seems to suggest. Moreover, the image and approach LeT has adopted in Kashmir, and other places, appears radically different from approaches taken inside Pakistan. The book attempts to answer various intriguing questions about what attracts individuals to get associated with LeT, what benefits they seek when coming into the fold of LeT, and how it maintains its legitimacy inside Pakistan.

The book's design is appealing, as readers can approach any chapter as a free-standing analysis. Fair provides seven chapters, the introduction and two subsequent chapters being derivatives of a previous volume (Fair, 2014) that informed readers about the strategic thinking of Pakistan, particularly exploring Pakistan's relationship with India. Chapter 4 explains the organisational structure of LeT, followed by an excellent discussion in Chapter 5 on motivations and drivers prompting fighters to join LeT. Chapter 6 dwells on the domestic conduct of the LeT in Pakistan, while

Chapter 7 is more of a policy prescription document, laying out options for New Delhi and Washington to deal with LeT.

Fair's rich experience of the region and her flair for language make her an exceptional author. The most outstanding feature of this book is her collection and analysis of nearly 1,000 biographies of slain LeT fighters. These biographies, which help to understand the domestic appeal of LeT fighters, have regularly featured in LeT's publications, often to highlight the value of sacrifice (*jihad*) and to lure potential recruits. Fair conducted a qualitative and quantitative analysis of these biographies to explore the psyche of LeT recruits. Another exciting feature is her textual analysis of LeT's periodicals, books and pamphlets, published vociferously by their publishing wing, Dar-ul-Andalus. Since research based solely on interviews, at times, risks particular biases and mistranslations, the experienced author's choice to focus on her own textual analysis is an additional plus point for this book.

Fair touches on a variety of matters pertaining to LeT, but four main observations remain notable. One, the LeT recruitment process manifests strikingly similar patterns to Pakistani Army recruitment. Many recruits come from regular schools rather than *Madrassahs*, and most of those joining LeT do not end up on the battlefield. Fair also challenges the existing portrayal of LeT as an organisation under the label of *Kashmiri tanzeem*, a movement designed to ensure implementation of Qur'an and Sunna in Kashmir. Instead, she accentuates through a quantitative examination of recruits' data that the vast majority of recruits come from Punjab and Sindh, and that LeT members are often from the same family or clan.

Secondly, Fair's detailed use of biographies also explains the motivations and rewards in joining this organisation. Examining nearly 1,000 *shabeed* biographies to understand the critical role of family and society in motivating these recruits in seeking martyrdom, she shows how the men's families play a significant role in the recruitment process, as well as the enduring loyalties of individual recruits. Particularly, mothers and sisters contribute to impressing the view that a fighter who has died as a *shabeed* will lead himself and 70 of his relatives to heaven (p. 140).

Thirdly, the book examines the cordial relationship of LeT with Pakistan's security establishment. This section draws heavily on Fair (2014) to explain the Pakistani imperative for using proxies as a security bulwark against its neighbours. Fair argues that the LeT has emerged as one of the most reliable and obedient proxies of the Pakistani establishment, mainly for two reasons. Firstly, it has never carried out attacks inside Pakistan, which signals a restrained behaviour that allows the security establishment to depend on LeT more than any other group. Fair further maintains that LeT's responsibilities are not necessarily armed actions, but go beyond to conduct advocacy and support of the military's preferred policies, for example, promotion of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) or the need to build up a nuclear arsenal. In a nutshell, 'LeT is the deep state's handmaiden in prosecuting its external agenda' (p. 3), while other organisations, such as *Jamaat ud-Dawa* (JuD), an Islamist outfit focused on preaching and its Pakistan-based affiliates are assets to the state's internal

security agendas. While LeT's ability to undertake sophisticated terror attacks in India and Afghanistan makes it, externally, a lethal asset to Pakistan, its domestic restraint qualifies LeT as a responsible and trustworthy proxy for the security establishment in Pakistan. Chapter 6 vividly informs readers how through well-crafted public opinion and strategic moves, courtesy of Pakistan's deep state, LeT is able to avoid international pressure against its terrorist activities.

Finally, the book educates readers about LeT's internal functioning and elaborates on the structure, organisation and division of labour inside the organisation. The neatly defined training modules of LeT are hierarchical and restricted; not everyone has access to all stages of training. Mainly, there exist three phases of training in LeT. First, the foundational course called *Daura-e-Suffa* emphasises the doctrinal values of *Ahl-e-Hadees*, along with the importance of proselytisation (*tabligh*) and inviting to the organisation (*Dawah*). The completion of this course leads an individual into the advanced *Daura-e-Aam* course, where the earlier doctrines are expanded and internalised, accompanied by some military training. Participants are then sent back to their home area or other places, as directed by the organisation to engage in *dawah* and *tabligh* to bring friends, family and neighbours into the LeT fold. These individuals are kept under observation until their final selection for a three-month advanced training course called *Daura-e-Khaas*. This involves significantly smaller numbers, who are trained in advanced guerrilla warfare, arms and ammunition training, and survival techniques, among others. Fair cautions that individuals who passed this elite course are still most likely to be sent home to engage in *dawah* and *tabligh*.

This well-written book, an excellent addition to the corpus of security studies in South Asia, fills a significant gap in the existing literature, but does not elaborate in detail on LeT activities outside Pakistan. The author might perhaps have dedicated a chapter looking into the workings and support that LeT exercises with other groups in the region. Fair's study benefits an audience composed of students, strategic analysts and policy experts of South Asia. It is a concise resource for individuals and experts who wish to understand how LeT is able to galvanise mass support among people and the military alike. Above all, it allows readers to comprehend the internal working of this most trusted proxy of the deep state.

Reference

- Fair, C. C. (2014) *Fighting to the End: The Pakistan Army's Way of War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Prabhat Jawla

Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA)

New Delhi, India

e-mail: anantpj@gmail.com