



Review: How LeT's Ties With Pakistan & Kashmir Can Harm India

DR AYESHA RAY

UPDATED:
16.01.19

6 min read

SHARE, SAVE, COMMENT



Author C Christine Fair's new book, *In Their Own Words* (London: Hurst Publishers, 2018) is an excellent and valuable addition to the literature on terrorism, in general, and to South Asian security, more specifically.

In her book, Fair provides fresh insights and information on the genesis, organisational capabilities, and recruitment strategies of one of the most dangerous terrorist groups in South Asia, the *Lashkar-e-Tayyaba* (LeT).

In the last two decades, the LeT has launched numerous attacks against Indian civilians and security forces, including the deadly 2008 Mumbai attacks.



relationship with the Pakistani state, and the dangers this relationship presents to India's national security.



Also Read : [Pakistan Deep State's Attack on J&K Police Can't Demoralise India](#)

What Enhances LeT's Appeal To Pakistani Public?

Fair advances two specific claims about the LeT.

First, Fair claims that the LeT works as a reliable asset of the Pakistani state in conducting its wars against India and Afghanistan. In doing so, it provides domestic utility to the Pakistani establishment.



Second, LeT is different from al-Qaeda, ISIS and other Deobandi groups operating within Pakistan in that it categorically rejects violence within the country.

This distinction is important as LeT marks a clear departure from Salafi and Deobandi beliefs that uphold an extreme *takfiri* ideology directed toward both Muslims and non-Muslims. It is this unique position that enhances LeT's appeal among many sections of the Pakistani public, to the extent that in 2017, it launched a political party of its own called the Milli Muslim League (MML) to contest Pakistan's 2018 general elections.

A Well-Crafted Methodology to Decode LeT

While the LeT has been declared a terrorist organisation and banned in most countries across the world, the effectiveness and ease with which it works within Pakistan is evidence of the Pakistani state's active sponsorship of terrorism.



Fair astutely highlights both these interrelated issues in the book. Fair's methodology is also exceptionally well-crafted. Her conclusions



an analysis of nearly one thousand martyr biographies in collaboration with West Point's Combating Terrorism Center.

■ *Fair applies both qualitative and quantitative data to make her arguments.*



The key contribution of the book can be found in chapters 4, 5, and 6, which explain, in detail, the LeT's origins, functions, and strategies that make it one of the most powerful and dangerous terrorist groups in South Asia.

Wolves in Sheep's Clothing

The LeT emerged in 1986/1987 when Zaki ur Rehman Lakhvi combined his Ahl-e-Hadees militant group with the Jamaat-ud-Dawa established and led by Hafiz Saeed and Zafar Iqbal. In 2001, following the December attacks on the Indian parliament, LeT reorganised itself to be called *Jamaat-ud-Dawa* (JuD).

■ *The organisation operated in much the same way, except now its operatives outside of Pakistan (who were mainly concentrated in Kashmir) continued to serve under the banner of LeT.*



Hafiz Saeed is the *amir* of JuD and the de facto head of the LeT. Interestingly, the JuD operates as a hierarchical organisation with a series of departments, which include education; publishing (Dar-al-Andalus); resources; media and propaganda; public relations; social welfare, and others.

Perhaps, Dar-al-Andalus is key to its success in disseminating jihadist literature. In addition, the LeT successfully recruits a large number of jihadists through the promotion of philanthropic and welfare projects. In the guise of improving the lives of locals and providing them with educational opportunities, the LeT establishes even greater control over the lives of these individuals, indoctrinating them into a jihadist mindset.

Also Read : [Lashkar-e-Taiba Suffered Maximum Damage in Surgical Strikes](#)



The JuD uses funds for three purposes: *dawah* (preaching), *khidmat* (social services) and *jihad*-related activities (training, weapons procurement, etc.). It is estimated that LeT's operating budget is close to USD 50 million of which USD 5.2 million is allocated toward military operations. Several of the group's primary training centers are located in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, Sindh, Balochistan, Punjab, and Pakistan-administered Kashmir.

A particularly important part of the book is the information gleaned from numerous martyr biographies which provide insights into how these terrorists are indoctrinated into fighting and what keeps them loyal to the organisation.



Many of the fighters recruited revealed prior violent tendencies, a jihadi mindset, or were searching to lead meaningful lives towards a higher purpose. Joining the organization seemed to fulfil those goals.

LeT's Recruiting Strategies

Central to almost all the martyr biographies is the narrative of Kashmir, the suffering of Kashmiris, and the persecution of the Kashmiri masses. These narratives are built around an emphasis on the other – in this case, the brutality of Hindus. Of course, these biographies work as perfect propaganda tools.

The LeT's recruiting strategies are not just limited to fighters but their extended families, and, unsurprisingly, display an exploitative angle towards women.



The group maintains its control over new recruits and women by providing stipends and death benefits.

In explaining the domestic politics of the LeT, Fair neatly differentiates LeT from the Deobandi terrorist groups like *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi* (LeJ), *Sipah-e-Sahaba-e-Pakistan* (SSP), and others like the *Jaish-e-Muhammad* (JeM) and *Harkat-ul-Mujahideen* (HuM) that are committed to sectarian attacks within the country.



Worth noting here is how LeT acts as an important ideological competitor to these other groups. Given the LeT's infrastructure and domestic role in Pakistani society, the Pakistani state has actively kept the organisation alive by supporting its activities in instances of disaster relief and charity.

Besides highlighting new information in these chapters, the book's early chapters, namely 2 and 3, are an extension of many of the arguments made in Fair's earlier book, 'Fighting to the End: The Pakistani Army's Way of War'.



In these chapters, Fair reiterates the dangers posed to India by a nuclear-armed Pakistan where its military and intelligence agencies exercise enormous influence on domestic politics and nuclear policy.

In conjunction with their support to terrorist groups like LeT, this makes Pakistan an extremely dangerous neighbor for India and an unreliable ally of the United States. *In Their Own Words* is a must-read for terrorism scholars, South Asia researchers, and international security experts.

(Dr Ayesha Ray is an associate professor of political science at King's College, and a Visiting Fellow at the Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses, New Delhi. She tweets at @DrAyeshaRay. This is an opinion piece. The views expressed are the author's own. The Quint neither endorses nor is responsible for them.)

(The Quint is now available on [Telegram](#) and [WhatsApp](#). For handpicked stories every day, subscribe to our [Telegram](#) and [WhatsApp](#) channels)

First Published: 16.01.19

Follow our [Books](#) section for more stories.

Also Read

ISIS Is Here, And the Threat Is Real. Let's Stop Being Ostriches

Easily-available chemicals used for bombs: SL PM



SHARE, SAVE, COMMENT



5 Comments

Sign in

Newest

Share



Share your thoughts...



Anaya Shahid 18 Jan 2019 at 9:22 AM

Such biased books never analyze the Indian policy of state terrorism, either it is by genocide of innocent Kashmiris or by sponsoring terrorist organizations in Afghanistan. India has conducted terrorist attacks even on its own soil like Parliament attack, Mumbai attack, Pathan Kot attack and Uri at **See More...**

Like

Reply

Share

VIEW MORE (4)

[Terms](#) [Privacy Policy](#)



ALSO WATCH

YOU MAY LIKE

Sponsored Links by Taboola

This cheap Selfie Drone is putting large drone companies out of business

DroneX Pro



This Sad Elephant Was Found Buried, Alone

Simbaly

G4 By Golpa - Permanent Teeth in 24 Hours

G4 By Golpa

Man Notices A Strange Hole In This Lake, So He Gets A Drone to Fly Inside

Trendscatchers

Email Newsletter

SUBSCRIBE

I agree to the terms of the [privacy policy](#)