

THE INTERNATIONAL
CENTRE FOR THE STUDY
OF RADICALISATION AND
POLITICAL VIOLENCE



Developments in Radicalisation
and Political Violence

Lashkar-e-Taiba: From 9/11 to Mumbai

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April/May 2009

Developments in Radicalisation and Political Violence

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Summary

The most successful 'terrorist spectacular' against Western targets outside of Afghanistan, Iraq or Pakistan in the recent past was Lashkar-e-Taiba's sixty-hour operation in Mumbai during the final days of November 2008. Those sixty hours brought Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT or Lashkar) to the attention of the world, but the group has played a role in threatening the West for a number of years. Following 9/11 LeT remained primarily focused on liberating Kashmir and waging a wider war against India, but also waged a peripheral campaign against the West. In the early part of the decade, this was mainly in the form of training and logistical support to al-Qaeda and others waging a global jihad. Although it remains primarily committed to destroying India, LeT has begun to act more overtly against Western interests during the past several years. This includes deploying cadres to fight against coalition forces in Afghanistan and, more recently, targeting Westerners in attacks such as those carried out in Mumbai. Fighting the West remains a secondary concern for Lashkar, but one to which it has committed increasing resources during the past several years.

The Mumbai attacks thus represent only the latest step in Lashkar's progression toward al-Qaeda's global jihad. This paper aims to situate those attacks within the wider context of Lashkar's evolving threat to the West and to address the question of whether Lashkar is still working with the state apparatus, is in league with the other jihadi forces savaging Pakistan, or both. It endeavours to demonstrate that Lashkar has been playing a double game of its own for the better part of this decade. To do so it traces how the threats LeT poses to the West have evolved since 9/11. It then situates the Mumbai attacks within the context of this development, and concludes by discussing what the future may hold for LeT and the populations it threatens.

About Stephen Tankel

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Lashkar-e-Taiba: From 9/11 to Mumbai

Al-Qaeda Central has not managed a successful attack against Western targets outside of Pakistan since at least 2005, when it is alleged to have been involved in the London tube bombings. Despite its global jihadi rhetoric the al-Qaeda Organization in the Islamic Maghreb – al-Qaeda Central's most prolific branch – has not successfully perpetrated a single attack outside of Algeria since joining al-Qaeda Central. Its high-profile bombing of the headquarters of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Algiers in December 2007 killed only one Westerner. In the last three years, the most successful 'terrorist spectacular' against Western targets outside of Afghanistan, Iraq or Pakistan was Lashkar-e-Taiba's sixty-hour operation in Mumbai during the final days of November 2008.

Those sixty hours brought Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT or Lashkar) to the attention of the world, but the group has played a role in threatening the West for a number of years. Since 2001, LeT has remained primarily focused on liberating Kashmir and waging a wider war against India. However, during that time it has also waged a peripheral campaign against the West. In the early part of the decade, this was mainly in the form of training and logistical support to al-Qaeda and others in Pakistan who were actively waging a global jihad. Weakened by the West's War on Terror, al-Qaeda and its allies needed the assistance. Over time, as al-Qaeda and the Taliban grew stronger and more prolific in Pakistan, LeT's role and relevance within the jihadi movement diminished.

Simultaneously, LeT's jihad in Kashmir slowed as a consequence of improving relations between Pakistan and India even as Lashkar's above-ground parent organisation – the Jama'at-ud-Dawa (JuD) – gained traction within Pakistani society. LeT became increasingly capable of acting independently of the Pakistani state thanks to JuD's success.

Although it remains primarily committed to destroying India, LeT has begun to act more overtly against Western interests during the past several years.¹ This includes deploying cadres to fight against coalition forces in Afghanistan and, more recently, targeting Westerners in attacks such as those carried out in Mumbai. Fighting the West remains a secondary concern for Lashkar, but one to which it has committed increasing resources during the past several years.

The detailed planning and execution of the Mumbai attacks has already been covered at length in the media, which also continues to record the machinations of Indian-Pakistani sparring over how to handle the aftermath. The objective here is to situate the attacks within the wider context of Lashkar's evolving threat to the West and to address the question of whether Lashkar is still working with the state apparatus, is in league with the other jihadi forces savaging the country, or both. As this paper aims to demonstrate, Lashkar has been playing a double game of its own for the better part of this decade. To do so it traces how the threats LeT poses to the West have evolved since 9/11. It then situates the Mumbai attacks within the context of this development, and concludes by discussing what the future may hold for LeT and the populations it threatens.

The Two Faces of Lashkar

LeT's vision includes establishing a pan-Islamic Caliphate, but since 9/11 its primary objective has remained the liberation of Kashmir and the destruction of India. For this reason, within Pakistani society and in the eyes of the state Lashkar's identity has remained separate from that of al-Qaeda and other jihadi actors, enabling the group to position itself as the 'good jihadis'. Because of this the Pakistani state rewarded LeT with preferential treatment, which the group leveraged during the first several years following 9/11 to provide primarily covert assistance to al-Qaeda and other actors drawn to a global jihadi agenda.

1 The author's interlocutors in Pakistan and India were in uniform agreement that fighting against India remains LeT's primary objective. However, there was disagreement regarding the degree to which it was dedicating resources toward the secondary objective of battling the West.

Good Jihadi

At the time of the 9/11 attacks, LeT was considered the most effective, prolific, and fearsome jihadi force fighting in Jammu and Kashmir (hereafter Kashmir) against the perceived Indian occupation there. It was first among equals in the eyes of the Pakistani army, and its reputation was growing in Pakistani society. Sensing what the 9/11 attacks could mean for militant outfits operating in Pakistan, LeT kept a low profile and distanced itself from al-Qaeda. Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf was also attempting to distinguish between al-Qaeda and the Taliban, sectarian groups (notably Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) and its offshoot Lashkar-e-Jangvi (LeJ)) on which he was already cracking down, and the 'freedom fighters of Kashmir.'²

The 13 December 2001 attack on the Indian Parliament by the Jeish-e-Mohammed (JeM) made legal distinctions impossible and, facing war with India and heavy U.S. pressure, Musharraf banned all of the major jihadi outfits in Pakistan: LeT, JeM, SSP, LeJ, the Harkat-ul-Jihad-Islami (HuJI) and the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HuM). The ensuing crackdown was hardly uniform. Musharraf continued to crack down heavily on the sectarian groups and the Taliban, as well as committing resources to the fight against al-Qaeda. He moved more tepidly against JeM, HuJI, and HuM, shutting down their training camps and restricting operatives to their madrassas. However, the financial holdings of these groups were largely unaffected since they all had ample time to move their funds before any accounts were frozen.³

LeT escaped almost entirely unscathed. Like the JeM, HuJI, and HuM, its existing funds slipped through the slow-moving hands of the state. Crucially, unlike the other jihadi organisations, Lashkar was also allowed to maintain its training camps and continued to operate relatively openly

2 Ahmed Rashid, 'Can Musharraf Survive', *The Daily Telegraph*, 14 June 2002.
3 Interview with Senior Western Official (29 December 2008 in Lahore, Pakistan). 'Pakistan freezes bank accounts of terror group Lashkar-i-Toiba', *Pakistan TV* (from BBC Monitoring), 24 December 2001. Mohammad Amir Rana, *The Seeds of Terrorism* (London: New Millenium, 2005), p. 71..

and unfettered.⁴ Immediately prior to the ban LeT also engineered a split with its political wing, known at the time as the Markaz Dawat wal Irshad (MDI). The MDI, also set to be banned in Pakistan, was dissolved and replaced by the Jama'at-ud-Dawaat (JuD), which had existed since the mid-1980s as a registered charity. Hafiz Saeed resigned as the amir of LeT, assumed control of JuD, and announced that all Lashkar activities and offices had been shifted to [Indian-controlled] Kashmir.⁵

All of this was done with tacit state approval to protect the organisation's assets, and the actual separation between JuD and LeT was and always remained entirely cosmetic. This is the near unanimous opinion of all those this author interviewed in Pakistan and India. The only person the author interviewed who vociferously protested this characterization was Abdullah Muntazir, the spokesperson for the JuD who claims the two are separate groups. Several days after the interview the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation accused Muntazir of masquerading as Lashkar's mysterious spokesman, Abdullah Ghaznavi, who allegedly operated out of Srinagar in Kashmir but had never been seen by anyone.⁶

LeT was not the only group to engineer a name change, but it was able to build up its above-ground organisation relative to other jihadi groups thanks to preferential treatment from the state. Crucially, the JuD escaped a second round of bans in 2003. In November of that year the U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan Nancy Powell complained that jihadi groups linked to al-Qaeda and the Taliban were reconstituting themselves under new names.⁷ President Musharraf responded several days later by banning Khuddam ul-Islam (formerly JeM), Millat-e-Islamia Pakistan (formerly SSP), and Islami Tehreek Pakistan (formerly Tehreek-e-Jafria, a Shia Party). Three days after that, Musharraf

4 Interview with Senior Western Official (29 December 2008 in Lahore, Pakistan). Amir Mir, 'Forward' in *A to Z of Jehadi Organizations in Pakistan* (Lahore: Mashal, 2006), pp. 57-58, 60.

5 Jama'at-ud-Da'awa Pakistan Press Release, 24 December 2001. Translated by Azmat Abbas on 2 January 2009 in Lahore, Pakistan.

6 Amir Mir, 'Jamaatul Daawa spokesman impersonates as Lashkar-e-Toiba spokesman', *Middle East Transparent*, 4 January 2009.

7 Farhan Bokhari, 'Pakistan Bans Three Hard Line Islamic Groups', *Financial Times*, 15 November 2003.

also rebanned Jamaat ul-Furqan (a JeM splinter group), Jamiat ul-Ansar (formerly HuM) and Hizbul Tehrir, which was previously legal. JuD remained legal.

This had several ramifications. First, it enabled the organisation to grow financially relative to other jihadi organisations. Second, it provided a vehicle for LeT to insinuate itself further into Pakistani society via the provision of charity and social services. Taken together these activities provided a crucial leg-up for Lashkar, which as an Ahl-e-Hadith group did not enjoy the same built-in support base as Deobandi jihadi groups.

Briefly, the Ahl-e-Hadith sect of Islam is analogous to the South Asian version of Wahhabism though today the preferred term is Salafism.⁸ Like the Deobandi movement to which the Taliban belongs, the Ahl-e-Hadith [People of the Traditions of the Prophet] also emerged out of Northern India during the time of British colonial rule. However, unlike the Deobandis who followed the Hanafi school of Sunni jurisprudence, the Ahl-e-Hadith believe all that is needed for moral and ethical guidance can be found in the Quran and the Hadith [Traditions of the Prophet] and that traditional schools of jurisprudence are tantamount to 'imitation.'⁹ The Ahl-e-Hadith also revile syncretism, putting them at odds with the many Pakistanis who incorporate local practices into their approach to Islam.¹⁰ Ahl-e-Hadith adherents have historically embraced an 'exclusionary identity' by deviating from their co-religionists on issues such as the performance of prayer, manner of dress and cut of beard. This has marked them as an elitist group and further undermined their standing in South Asian society.¹¹

Although the Ahl-e-Hadith have made progress in terms of spreading their faith in Pakistan since the 1980s, they remain

8 'Wahhabis' often reject the term because it suggests they follow Ibn Wahhab, a person, rather than God. They instead use the term 'Salafi.'

9 Yoginder Sikaand, 'Islamist Militancy in Kashmir: The Case of the Lashkar-i Tayyeba', *South Asia Citizens Web*, 20 November 2003. The Hanafi School is the oldest of the four schools of jurisprudence in Sunni Islam. The other three are: Hanbali, Shafi'i and Maliki. Ayesha Jalal, *Partisans of Allah: Jihad in South Asia* (London: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 145.

10 Ayesha Jalal, *Partisans of Allah: Jihad in South Asia* (London: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 146.

11 Barbara Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 283.

a small minority. Thus, Lashkar did not enjoy the same initial infrastructure as the other major jihadi groups. During the 1990s Lashkar leveraged the significant amount of support it received from the Pakistani state to develop an infrastructure that reached far beyond the small Ahl-e-Hadith community in Pakistan. After the ban it took advantage of its position vis-à-vis the other jihadi groups to consolidate and expand its place within Pakistani society.

This preferential treatment gave LeT further incentive to remain obedient to the state and gave the state leverage over LeT, which had an increasing amount to lose were it to fall out of the government's good graces. LeT remained more amenable to ISI control than any other jihadi outfit and was willing to wage a 'controlled jihad' in Kashmir, increasing or decreasing its levels of violence whenever asked to do so.¹² By December 2002, jihadi infiltration across the Line of Control (LoC) into Indian Kashmir had largely returned to pre-9/11 levels following a brief decline of 40 per cent earlier in the year.¹³

Aside from its continued operations in Kashmir, LeT kept a low profile. It took a low-key approach, relative to other jihadi groups, in terms of making threats against the U.S. and sought to keep its fingerprints off any attacks targeting American nationals or interests. This enabled Lashkar to maintain its special relationship with the Pakistani state, which in turn left it largely intact in comparison to its increasingly fractured fellow jihadis. As the organisation grew more powerful and ordinary Pakistanis became more dependent on the social services, such as education and healthcare, that JuD provided this type of crackdown also became less likely.

Bad Jihadi

Below the surface LeT was very much a part of al-Qaeda's global jihad. Following the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan LeT operatives assisted in the exfiltration of al-Qaeda cadres from Afghanistan and in facilitating either safe haven in Pakistan

12 Amir Mir, 'Forward' in *A to Z of Jehadi Organizations in Pakistan* (Lahore: Mashal, 2006), p. 57-58, 60..

13 Peter Chalk and Chris Fair, 'Lashkar-e-Tayyiba leads the Kashmiri insurgency', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 1 December 2002).

or safe through and out of Pakistan to safer havens.¹⁴ LeT was by no means alone in this endeavour as other jihadi outfits provided similar assistance. However, it had – and continues to have – the best network in the country and so became a key facilitator in terms of enabling al-Qaeda operatives to move around Pakistan. This 'urban facilitation' involved provision of fake passports, safe houses, guards and fixers.¹⁵ According to a report prepared by interrogators of foreign and Pakistani nationals arrested in Lahore and other parts of the Punjab in March 2002 and later obtained by the newspaper *Dawn*, this support was not ad hoc. The LeT organisation directed these operatives to provide assistance.¹⁶

Lashkar continued to provide safe houses to al-Qaeda operatives and affiliated individuals following this initial period of exfiltration, and a number of al-Qaeda operatives have been captured in LeT safe houses.¹⁷ According to Ahmed Rashid, most of the evidence regarding these arrests has been suppressed by the Pakistani government, and the Pakistani Army has exerted heavy pressure on the Pakistani media not to report on them.¹⁸ The most notable operative captured at an LeT safe house is Abu Zubayda. Recent reports suggest Zubayda was more of a 'jihadi fixer' than a long-standing member of al-Qaeda, though he worked directly with the group following 9/11.¹⁹ In March 2002 he was captured at a Lashkar safe house in Faisalabad.²⁰ Several LeT members were also captured during the raid.²¹ The central Punjab city has long been an LeT stronghold and it appears that Zubayda chose the

14 Interview with Ahmed Rashid (29 December 2008 in Lahore, Pakistan). Interview with Senior Western Official (29 December 2008 in Lahore, Pakistan). Asif Shahzad, 'Outlawed groups help Al Qaeda suspects', *Dawn*, 20 April 2002.

15 Interview with Ahmed Rashid (29 December 2008 in Lahore, Pakistan).

16 Asif Shahzad, 'Outlawed groups help Al Qaeda suspects', *Dawn*, 20 April 2002.

17 Gary Schroen, *First In: An Insider's Account of How the CIA Spearheaded the War on Terror in Afghanistan* (New York: Ballantine, 2005), p. 361. Interview with Ahmed Rashid (29 December 2008 in Lahore, Pakistan).

18 Interview with Ahmed Rashid (29 December 2008 in Lahore, Pakistan).

19 Peter Finn and Joby Warrick, 'Detainee's Harsh Treatment Foiled No Plots', *Washington Post*, 29 March 2009.

20 U.S. Department of State, 'Country Reports on Terrorism 2007', Ch. 6.

21 'Capture of Bin Laden's Aide Boosts US Anti-Terror Fight', *Financial Times*, 3 April 2002.

city as the location in which to establish his new operational headquarters.²²

As al-Qaeda operatives fled across the border, U.S. forces began dismantling the jihadi training camps in Afghanistan. Lashkar was the only major jihadi outfit to escape the Pakistani crackdown and with its camps more or less intact it was able to fill this void. From October 2001 through late 2003/early 2004, when the Taliban and al-Qaeda were able to reestablish themselves and reconstitute a safe haven in the tribal areas, Lashkar served as a major provider of military training for jihadi actors in the region.²³ Some of the author's interlocutors believe that Lashkar currently is working in concert with the Taliban and al-Qaeda Central to train people, either at Lashkar camps in Mansahra or elsewhere in the NWFP. Others believe that Lashkar remains estranged from the Taliban owing to the Deobandi-Ahl-e-Hadith divide and thus, while they may collaborate at times, Lashkar would not engage in a joint training program.

While the vast majority of trainees of the groups continue to be Pakistani, LeT also provided training to would-be jihadists from around the world. This includes Westerners, especially British citizens of Pakistani ancestry.²⁴ An activist very close to LeT and intimately familiar with its activities said that 3-4 years ago he became familiar with a program for training people from the West.²⁵ Notable trainees include the members of the Virginia Jihad Network; Omar Khyam, who spearheaded the fertilizer bomb plot in the U.K.; and Willie Brigitte, a French convert to Islam arrested on charges of planning attacks in Australia. Dhiren Barot, who masterminded the failed gas-cylinder bombing plot in London and prepared blueprints for al-Qaeda of buildings in New York's financial district, also trained and

22 Zahid Hussain, *Frontline Pakistan: The Struggle With Militant Islam* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007), p. 127.
 23 Interview with Senior Western Official (29 December 2008 in Lahore, Pakistan).
 24 Interview with Zahid Hussain (16 December 2008 in Islamabad, Pakistan).
 Interview with Mariam Abou Zahab (7 December 2008 via phone).
 25 Interview with JuD Activist (30 December 2008 in Lahore, Pakistan).

fought with Lashkar.²⁶ According to transcripts of Brigitte's trial in France, foreigners were grouped separately and those he met included British and American citizens of Pakistani origin.²⁷

That it was such a popular destination for foreigners in search of terrorist training owes partly to the fact that it was also well known and easy to find.²⁸ Omar Khyam trained with LeT in January 2000. He testified that, upon landing in Islamabad, he simply told his taxi driver to 'take me to the office of the mujahideen'.²⁹ For those looking to plan a bit more in advance, LeT's web site provided contact information until 2002 when the site was taken down.³⁰

Additionally, because the group aims to reform and purify society, it rarely turns people away. The author's Pakistani and Western interlocutors agreed that LeT has a history of making its camps available to all those interested in attending. Traditionally, before recruits receive training in guerrilla warfare, known as Dura Khas or Special Training, they first go through a two- to three-week basic course (Dura Am) and three weeks of religious indoctrination in the Ahl-e-Hadith faith called the Dura Suffah. More specialised skills, such as bomb-making, come after a recruit has completed the Dura Khas and are only taught to a select few. It is not unusual for recruits who receive this initial training to wait for up to a year or more before they

26 Dhiren Barot wrote a book about his time fighting with a militant group in Kashmir that was almost certainly LeT. The book was entitled *The Army of Medina*, which is one of the aliases Lashkar has used. Taiba is also the old name of the holy city of Medina in Saudi Arabia. Lashkar-e-Taiba can be translated both as 'Army of the Pure' and 'Army of Medina'. See also: Susan Schmidt and Siobhan Gorman, 'Lashkar-e-Taiba Served as Gateway for Western Converts Turning to Jihad', *Wall Street Journal*, 4 December 2008. For details of the plots Barot was involved with, see: James Sturcke, 'Man gets life sentence for terror plot', *The Guardian*, 7 November 2006.
 27 Ben English, 'Revealed: Brigitte and the school of terror', *The Advertiser*, 18 October 2004.
 28 Interview with Azmat Abbas (2 January 2009 in Lahore, Pakistan).
 29 Peter Bergen, 'Al Qaeda-on-Thames: UK Plotters Connected', *Washingtonpost.com*, 30 April 2007.
 30 Author in possession of hard copy.

graduate to military training. In the meantime, recruits work in fields such as fundraising or propaganda for the JuD.³¹

Thus, simply stating that a person 'trained with LeT' does not mean he automatically received training in guerrilla warfare or urban terrorism. However, because the purpose of the initial twenty-one days of religious indoctrination is to consolidate and expand Lashkar's Ahl-e-Hadith beliefs among Pakistanis, the group can be more lenient with foreigners. Moreover, LeT has a history of providing military training for money, which would have enabled committed jihadists to bypass the initial indoctrination.³²

The group also acts as a gateway for Westerners seeking terrorist training, facilitating access to groups like al-Qaeda that are actively seeking so-called 'clean skins' in order to plan and perpetrate attacks in the West.³³ This is particularly true in the case of British Pakistanis. Although the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq may have more resonance than the struggle in Kashmir for them, militants who have fought in Kashmir are their first port of call when seeking terrorist training or to fight in Afghanistan. Using what some have called the 'Kashmiri Escalator' British Pakistanis are able to use familial connections to find their ways to groups like LeT and JeM, and from there make their way to the Tribal Areas.

Because JuD was a legitimate entity and easy to find, it made the perfect way station on the road to al-Qaeda's facilities. The U.K. Security Services asserts that Shahzad Tanweer, one of the men responsible for the 2005 London tube bombings, spent several nights at LeT's sprawling compound in Muridke. Musharraf has also said Tanweer briefly visited a madrassa linked with LeT.³⁴ British officials believe Tanweer was 'shopping around' among militant groups, and it is possible LeT

31 Interview with Amir Rana (16 & 18 December 2008 in Islamabad, Pakistan). Interview with former member of Lashkar-e-Taiba (1 January 2009 in Lahore, Pakistan). See also: Sumita Kumar, 'Pakistan's Jehadi Apparatus: Goals and Methods', *Strategic Analysis*, 24, no. 12 (March 2001). Zaigham Khan, 'Allah's Army', *The Herald*, January 1998.
 32 Interview with Senior Western Official (29 December 2008 in Lahore, Pakistan).
 33 Interview with Ahmed Rashid (29 December 2008 in Lahore, Pakistan).
 34 James Kirkup, 'Pakistanis Ready to Extradite 7/7 Terror Link to UK', *The Scotsman*, 10 September 2005.

played matchmaker as well as serving as a temporary host.³⁵ Others, like Khyam and Barot, stayed longer and received training in the type of guerrilla warfare tactics necessary for fighting in Kashmir before graduating to al-Qaeda.

Lashkar played a more active role in preparing recruits for attacks against Australia. According to Jean-Louis Bruguere, France's leading anti-terrorism judge, Frenchman Willie Brigitte wanted to fight against the U.S. in Afghanistan. Unable to get across the border from Pakistan, he turned up at a JuD/LeT mosque from which he was directed to Muridke. Brigitte was then sent to a camp near Faisalabad, where he was trained with up to 3000 other volunteers to use conventional arms and explosives.³⁶ Brigitte claims he was then dispatched to Australia, after having received training from an explosives expert named Abu Salah.³⁷ Brigitte told investigators he was deployed to Australia to help a locally-based group to 'prepare a terrorist act of great size' and that his mission was to look after a Chechen explosives expert who was infiltrating the country.³⁸ Potential targets for this terrorist act allegedly included the Lucas Heights nuclear reactor, the Australian Army's administrative compound at Victoria Barracks and the Perth headquarters of Australia's SAS regiment. French authorities believe that U.S. military bases, the Pine Gap intelligence base and nuclear installations may have been targeted.³⁹ Brigitte claims he was acting on orders from LeT and following extradition to France he was sentenced to nine years in prison.⁴⁰

This raises several questions about the nature of the LeT threat at the time. For a group that had so assiduously avoided

35 Ibid.
 36 Ben English, 'French link Australian plot to jihad militants', *The Advertiser*, 22 March 2004.
 37 'The Kashmir connection', *Jane's Terrorism & Security Monitor*, 13 September 2006. Ian McPhedran, 'Australian Links to Al-Qaeda', *The Advertiser*, 14 February 2004. Ben English, 'Brigitte's links to world terror network', *The Advertiser*, 22 March 2004.
 38 Ben English, 'Sydney Faces Bomb Attack 'Of Great Size' - Exclusive: Terrorist Willie Brigitte Confesses', *The Daily Telegraph*, 22 March 2004.
 39 Ben English, 'Brigitte's links to world terror network', *The Advertiser*, 22 March 2004.
 40 Fiona Hudson, 'Brigitte found guilty', *The Daily Telegraph*, 16 March 2007.

leaving fingerprints on any activities seen as directly threatening to the West, plotting major attacks in Australia seems out of character. It is possible that this was a rogue operation within LeT. However, this seems especially unlikely since Lashkar is considered by almost all experts to have remained cohesive and disciplined at the time. Another alternative is that LeT was merely providing the training without its leadership directing the actual planning. However, Brigitte's testimony suggests otherwise. A Pakistan-based Western official who has seen the evidence Australia is compiling, but has not yet released publicly, called that evidence 'pretty damning'. He suggested it left little doubt that LeT provided more than just training.⁴¹ This does not mean that the top leadership initiated these plots, but it is unlikely such plotting could have moved forward without their knowledge and approval.

It also does not mean that LeT operatives planned the operation. LeT may have trained Brigitte with the initial intention of dispatching him to the Kashmiri theatre, and later decided to loan him out. While some reports have him traveling to Australia to plot attacks, others suggest he was deployed to act as support to locals who were already planning these strikes. The former suggests LeT was taking deliberate measures to widen the scope of its war, while the latter that LeT was continuing on its path of acting as a facilitator and trainer. If this was the case then the obvious question is to whom LeT was making Brigitte available. Either way, there is little doubt Lashkar was involved in a plot designed to kill many Westerners far outside of its normal Indian theatre of operations.

In the event that this was not an independent LeT operation then al-Qaeda was likely, though by no means definitely, the other entity involved. Given LeT's role as the de facto training option at the time, it is possible that some trainees were being funnelled toward al-Qaeda operations, though it is unclear whether this would have been an ad hoc or semi-formalised process. The more troubling issue is the degree of Pakistani Army or ISI knowledge and involvement. Brigitte stated in his testimony that Pakistani Army soldiers were a common presence at the camp, and most of this author's interlocutors

41 Interview with Senior Western Official (29 December 2008 in Lahore, Pakistan).

in Pakistan agreed that in the early part of the decade the Army and ISI maintained a healthy degree of oversight vis-à-vis LeT activities and training.⁴² This does not mean the Pakistani state was actively complicit in plots designed to kill Westerners, but it was tacitly allowing Lashkar to maintain operations that, at the least, facilitated and supported these plots.

Regardless of its role in these plots, LeT continued to devote the majority of its energies to the ongoing insurgency in Indian-controlled Kashmir and to extending that insurgency into mainland India via terrorist attacks. LeT's modus operandi has always been to deny any role in terrorist activity that kills civilians, and so it denied operations in India just as it did any participation in facilitating operations against the West. Such denials fell on deaf ears in India, where most experts assert that LeT was working hand-in-hand with the ISI to equip, train, and direct the operatives involved. Also difficult to deny was the participation of some Lashkar cadres in the Iraq war.

Following the U.S. invasion of Iraq, LeT used its web site to call for sending fighters to Iraq, posting a statement that read, 'The Americans are dishonoring our mothers and sisters. Therefore, jihad against America has now become mandatory'.⁴³ Hafiz Saeed made a similar call during a gathering at the Jamia al-Qudisia mosque in Lahore, an LeT stronghold, saying, 'We should send mujahideen from Pakistan to help- the mujahideen fighting the forces of evil in Iraq'.⁴⁴ These statements were more than mere propaganda. LeT is alleged to have played a central role in recruiting jihadis to fight in Iraq, a charge that even the ISI does not entirely discount according to interviews conducted with Pakistani intelligence by Peter Chalk of the RAND Corporation in January 2005. However, Chalk reports that many interviewees believe this recruitment was ad hoc rather than directed by the group's central leadership.⁴⁵

42 Ben English, 'Revealed: Brigitte and the school of terror', *The Advertiser*, 18 October 2004.

43 Daniel Benjamin and Gabriel Weimann, 'What the Terrorists Have in Mind', *New York Times*, 27 October 2004.

44 E. Blanche, 'Lashkar-e-Taiba spreads its tentacles', *Jane's Terrorism & Security Monitor*, 1 September 2004.

45 Angel Rabasa, et al., *Beyond al-Qaeda Part 1: The Global Jihadist Movement* (Arlington, VA: RAND Corporation, 2006), p. 88 and fn. 26.

In the spring of 2004 British forces in Basra, Iraq's southern capital, arrested several LeT cadres who were traced to the organisation via phone numbers stored in their phones.⁴⁶ One of them was Dilshad Ahmad, alias Abdul Rehman al-Dakhil, an LeT operational commander who from 1997-2001 was in charge of the forward camps from which cadres were launched across the Line of Control into Kashmir. Ahmad was a close associate of Zaki-ur-Rahman Lakhvi, the second-in-command in the Lashkar military hierarchy, and as early as 1998 had publicly advocated extending the group's jihad beyond Kashmir.⁴⁷ The presence of a former senior commander so close to Lakhvi, and the group's reputation for disciplined decision-making, argue against the idea that these were renegade cadres.⁴⁸ However, LeT was experiencing an internal feud between Saeed and Lakhvi at this time and it is possible that this decision was made by a faction within the organisation rather than taken unanimously. The U.S. government has claimed that Lakhvi directed one LeT operative – possibly Ahmad – to travel to Iraq in 2003 to assess the situation and followed up by dispatching additional operatives and funds to attack U.S. forces in Iraq in 2004.⁴⁹ It is unlikely the Pakistani government was complicit in this operation, and once the presence of LeT cadres in Iraq was brought to Musharraf's attention the government reportedly came down hard on LeT.⁵⁰

The Gloves Come Off

2005 was a difficult year for Lashkar, for many reasons beyond the government's displeasure over the Iraq imbroglio. On 2 May 2005 LeT was banned by the United Nations under

46 The means through which these LeT cadres were traced was explained to Declan Walsh, *The Guardian's* foreign correspondent in Pakistan, by senior Western officials. Interview with Declan Walsh (13 December 2008 in Islamabad, Pakistan).

47 E. Blanche, 'Lashkar-e-Taiba spreads its tentacles', *Jane's Terrorism & Security Monitor*, 1 September 2004. Praveen Swami, 'The Long Arm of Lashkar', *Frontline*, 21, no. 9 (7 May 2004).

48 Interview with Ahmed Rashid (29 December 2008 in Lahore, Pakistan).

49 U.S. Department of the Treasury, *HP-996: Treasury Targets LET Leadership*, 27 May 2008.

50 Interview with Declan Walsh (13 December 2008 in Islamabad, Pakistan).

Resolution 1267 for its links with al-Qaeda.⁵¹ Most troubling for the organisation was that in June 2005, finally succumbing to American pressure, Musharraf clamped down on cross-Line-of-Control infiltrations into Indian-controlled Kashmir.⁵² Although these infiltration attempts have continued, their frequency has greatly decreased since that time.⁵³ This left the majority of LeT's cadres now sitting idle. Many of them would soon perish in the massive earthquake that struck Pakistan-administered Kashmir and the Northwest Frontier Province in October 2005.

Because of their familiarity with the terrain, surviving LeT cadres were able to work at the front lines with their above-ground colleagues to provide much-needed relief support. Of course, since this was in Pakistani territory where LeT was ostensibly banned, all of this was done under the JuD umbrella. JuD reaped a financial windfall in the form of charitable donations and cemented its reputation as a social welfare organisation through its provision of aid.⁵⁴ Those donations along with its increasingly high and positive profile within Pakistani society helped it to become more independent from the Pakistani state.⁵⁵ Although it would continue to work with the Pakistani Army to conduct low-level infiltration across the Line of Control and to carry out terrorist attacks against the Indian mainland, which increased post-2005, LeT also began to focus its attention on actively engaging in hostilities against the West.

The Direct Approach

By 2005 both the Taliban and al-Qaeda had reconstituted themselves in Pakistan's tribal areas and were operating with less constraints. According to Zahid Hussain, after

51 United Nations, 'The Consolidated List established and maintained by the 1267 Committee with respect to Al-Qaida, Usama bin Laden, and the Taliban and other individuals, groups, undertakings and entities associated with them', <http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/consolidatedlist.htm> (accessed 17 March 2009).

52 Interview with former high-ranking Army and ISI Official (20 December 2008 in Islamabad, Pakistan).

53 Interview with Suba Chandran (5 January 2009 in Delhi, India).

54 Zahid Hussain, *Frontline Pakistan: The Struggle With Militant Islam* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007), p. 188. Amir Mir, 'Forward' in *A to Z of Jehadi Organizations in Pakistan* (Lahore: Mashal, 2006), p. 62.

55 Interview with Senior Western Official (29 December 2008 in Lahore, Pakistan).

the earthquake there was a sense within the entire jihadi community that the tide was shifting. Jihadis were beginning to feel reasonably secure that neither the U.S. and the West nor their Pakistani allies were in a position to shut down the jihadi organisations.⁵⁶ The new-found freedom of operation for other jihadi groups meant that LeT's cachet as a major provider of training and logistical support waned. This coincided with anti-American sentiment reaching its highest levels yet in Pakistan, creating an atmosphere in which the Afghan jihad took on greater relevance just as Musharraf was finally clamping down on cross-Line-of-Control infiltration into Kashmir during the summer of 2005.⁵⁷ It is not surprising that Lashkar was looking for a way to get into the Afghan action, and by this time some of its cadres were already wandering off from Kashmir to join the insurgency against the U.S. and its allies.⁵⁸

LeT has historical ties to Kunar Province, an Ahl-e-Hadith stronghold, and has maintained contacts there since the jihad against the Soviets.⁵⁹ In particular LeT preserved its relationship with the Jami'at al-Da'wa al-Qur'an wa'l-Sunna, which had supported Hafiz Saeed and Lakhvi during the first Afghan jihad.⁶⁰ The Salafis in Kunar were theocratically antithetical to the Deobandi Taliban. Haji Rohullah, the primary Salafi leader in Kunar, moved to Pakistan to avoid the Taliban and stayed there in exile until the Taliban regime was toppled in 2001 by Operation Enduring Freedom.⁶¹ Following the destruction of the Taliban government, the Jami'at al-Da'wa al-Qur'an wa'l-Sunna led by Haji Rohullah emerged from a scrum of competing factions as the most functional political entity in Kunar. It was aligned against the Taliban and Haji Rohullah helped facilitate Hamid Karzai's election as president of Afghanistan. However, he was later arrested by Coalition Forces and sent to Guantanamo Bay.⁶²

56 Interview with Zahid Hussain (16 December 2008 in Islamabad, Pakistan).

57 Interview with Senior Western Official (29 December 2008 in Lahore, Pakistan).

58 Interview with Ahmed Rashid (29 December 2008 in Lahore, Pakistan).

59 Interview with Mariam Abou Zahab (7 December 2008 via phone). See also: Daan Van Der Schriek, 'Nuristan: Insurgent Hideout in Afghanistan', *Jamestown Terrorism Monitor*, 3, no. 10 (19 May 2005).

60 Interview with Amir Rana (16 & 18 December 2008 in Islamabad, Pakistan).

61 Brian Glyn Williams, 'Afghanistan's Heart of Darkness: Fighting the Taliban in Kunar Province', *CTC Sentinel*, 1, no. 12 (November 2008).

62 Interview with Michael Semple (23 December 2008 in Islamabad, Pakistan).

LeT's Salafi allies in Afghanistan thus had reason to oppose both the Coalition Forces and the Taliban from 2002 onwards. They were also in some disarray following Haji Rohullah's arrest. The result is that in the early part of the decade there was not much of an insurgency in Kunar Province, the one area in which LeT would have had the most reason to participate and the easiest time doing so. According to Michael Semple, the former EU Deputy Head of Mission to Afghanistan and an expert on that country, the Americans were 'chasing ghosts because there was no one to fight, or who would fight openly'. This began to change in 2003 when some actors in the Bajaur Agency in Pakistan began executing a series of raids on positions close to the border and linked up with Afghan fighters in the Korengal Valley in Kunar Province. This brought a greater American presence. The U.S. established a Forward Operating Base in Korengal, but were unable to clear out resistance there. By 2005 the Korengal Valley was a contested/liberated area, meaning it is a place where insurgents are guaranteed a fight if they want it.⁶³

In 2006 LeT emerged among the group of actors looking for a fight in Kunar. They were only one of a number of actors operating in the region at the time, the others being Arab elements, Ahl-e-Hadith [or Salafi] Afghans including Jami'at al-Da'wa al-Qur'an wa'l-Sunna, the Afghan Taliban, and Kashmir Khan's Hezb-i-Islami. Rather than redeploying existing cadres, Lashkar appears to have opened its campaign in Afghanistan by recruiting fighters from mosques and madrassas in Peshawar.⁶⁴ This assessment is supported by reports that LeT began recruiting at mosques in the Jalozai refugee camp in Peshawar in 2006. Refugees were told they would be given training and their expenses would be paid if they joined the jihad against the government of Afghanistan.⁶⁵ According to Kathy Gannon, who spoke with the relatives of those recruited,

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid.

65 'Pakistani party incites Afghan refugees against government', *Afghan State TV*, (in Dari) from BBC Monitoring, 5 October 2006. 'Press selection list of Afghan newspapers 7 Oct 06', *The Kabul Times*, from BBC Monitoring, 7 October 2006. 'Pakistan needs to do more to prevent terrorism', *Afghan State-Run Hewad*, (in Pashto) from BBC Monitoring, 17 October 2006.

other refugees were sent by LeT to train in al-Qaeda camps in Waziristan.⁶⁶

By 2008, Lashkar was fighting in Kunar Province though it is unclear whether they were operating under their own command structure or that of local Afghan Salafis. US defence officials and officers with the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan have confirmed that Lashkar is operating in the area. According to one ISAF official, although the group has not exhibited a great amount of influence, its fighters are 'a cut above what we normally see'. The official added that Lashkar was most likely assisting in training, but when there is 'a particularly well-organised attack, they are our default position as they are top-notch fighters'.⁶⁷ Lashkar is widely believed to have been one of several groups involved in the attack on Combat Outpost (COP) Wanat in Dara-i-Pech on 13 July 2008.⁶⁸

The Indirect Approach

In terms of directly targeting the West, Lashkar is suspected of providing some of the funding for the thwarted 2006 transatlantic aircraft plot to detonate liquid explosives aboard airliners travelling from the UK to the US and Canada. The group is suspected by British and Pakistani investigators of funneling money raised in British mosques for earthquake relief in Pakistan to the plotters.⁶⁹ JuD was at the forefront of the effort to provide relief after the earthquake that devastated parts of Kashmir and the NWFP in Pakistan in 2005. The group raised enormous sums of money, so much so that a number of the author's interlocutors believe it was this event that allowed Lashkar to become financially independent. According to one former Pakistani official close to the intelligence officials investigating the plot, JuD provided money for the plane tickets

66 Interview with Kathy Gannon (19 December 2008 in Islamabad, Pakistan).

67 'Cross-border hardcore', *Jane's Terrorism and Security Monitor*, 5 September 2008

68 'Surge of the insurgents', *Jane's Terrorism and Security Monitor*, 5 September 2008. Carlotta Gall and Eric Schmitt, 'Insurgents breached base in deadly Afghan attack', *International Herald Tribune*, 16 July 2008. Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Bill Roggio, 'A Dangerous Neighbor: How Pakistan's Deterioration Harms Afghanistan', *The Weekly Standard*, 6 August 2008.

69 Dexter Filkins and Souad Mekhennet, 'Pakistani Charity Under Scrutiny In Financing of Airline Bomb Plot', *New York Times*, 13 August 2006.

used to conduct a practice run as well as for the attacks themselves. That money was suspected of coming from the group's network in Britain rather than from Pakistan, raising questions about whether this was a sanctioned operation or freelancing.⁷⁰ Notably, Lashkar's operations in the UK have historically focused mainly on fundraising, though the group has also recruited some British Pakistanis to participate in its training program and to fight in Kashmir.

LeT's main focus remained India and the group stepped up its terrorist campaign against the Indian mainland from 2005 onwards. The majority of these attacks were done in concert with locally-based actors. In some instances it was Lashkar operatives executing attacks with the logistical assistance of locals, while in others LeT would provide logistical and financial support to homegrown or pre-positioned actors. Lashkar had also provided training to many of these local actors. All of this has made it difficult to determine conclusively the extent of LeT involvement in many of the recent terrorist attacks against the Indian mainland.⁷¹

LeT's modus operandi is to take credit for attacks against Indian government or security forces, which it has often done even when these operations have taken place on the Indian mainland. However, it denies terrorist attacks deliberately targeting civilians. Despite these denials, a host of evidence exists pointing to Lashkar's operations against civilian Indian targets on the mainland. In recent years those operations have moved south toward Mumbai and Bangalore, increasingly aimed at soft targets in the business and tourism sectors.

In 2006 the Israeli Foreign Ministry posted a travel advisory warning of the threat of terror attacks in the Goa region where multitudes of visitors, including Israelis, often holiday during Christmas and the Gregorian New Year. It recommended that Israeli citizens stay away from sites popular with Westerners and Israelis during the holiday season.⁷² One year later,

70 Ibid. 'UK police probe terror money trail: Investigators believe alleged plot tied to Asian quake relief', *CNN.com*, 16 August 2006.

71 Interview with Suba Chandran (5 January 2009 in Delhi, India). Interview with Praveen Swami (8 January 2009 in Delhi, India).

72 Associated Press, 'Israel warns against al-Qaida attack in Indian tourist center', *Israel Insider*, 14 December 2006.

Riyazuddin Nasir, alias Mohammed Ghouse, was arrested while planning to set off a series of blasts on Goa's crowded beaches during the Christmas-New Year period in December 2007. The aim was to target American and Israeli tourists.⁷³

Nasir, a native of Hyderabad, had undergone LeT training and was also suspected of cross-training with a Pakistan-based HuJI cell.⁷⁴ Despite the fact that LeT and HuJI do not work together in Pakistan, where their sectarian and ideological differences keep them apart, such collaboration is not unusual when operating in India.⁷⁵ Further, HuJI's Bangladesh operations (HuJI-B) provide another safe haven for training and preparation as well as a point of infiltration into India. As cross-Line-of-Control infiltration has become more difficult, HuJI-B's stock has risen. Indeed, by the latter part of this decade some Indian experts considered HuJI-B to be at least as large a threat to the Indian mainland as Lashkar.⁷⁶ But the Mumbai attacks of November 2008 reordered the threat matrix once again.

According to a U.S. counterterrorism official, the U.S. warned India about a possible maritime insertion and attack against Mumbai at least a month before the Mumbai attacks. Indian security forces confirmed they were warned twice by the United States and subsequently tightened security measures, but these were eventually reduced.⁷⁷ It was also an open secret that Lashkar was practicing amphibious operations on a lake near its headquarters in Muridke, outside Lahore.⁷⁸ Indeed, 2007 witnessed several incidents of attempted maritime insertion by LeT. The first came in March 2007 when Indian intelligence reported that Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-

73 Pranab Dhal Samanta, 'Taliban's Mullah Omar our new inspiration, not Osama: jailed SIMI chief', *The Sunday Express*, 13 April 2008. Josy Joseph, 'Mumbai, Goa's beaches, Gujarat were terror targets', *Daily News & Analysis of India*, 4 February 2008.

74 K. Srinivas Redd, 'Islamist Terrorists Planned Blasts in Goa', *The Hindu*, 2 February 2008.

75 Interview with Amir Rana (16 & 18 December 2008 in Islamabad, Pakistan). Interview with Suba Chandran (5 January 2009 in Delhi, India). Interview with Praveen Swami (8 January 2009 in Delhi, India).

76 Interview with Wilson John (11 December 2008 in Delhi, India).

77 'Source: U.S. warned India about possible Mumbai attack', *CNN.com*, 1 December 2008.

78 Steve Coll, 'Lashkar-e-Taiba', *The New Yorker's Think Tank*, 1 December 2008.

Mohammed were planning to bring in weapons via the sea.⁷⁹ The second occurred during the summer of 2007 when three alleged Lashkar members confessed to entering India via the Mumbai coast after bribing coast guard officials.⁸⁰

Storming the World Stage

Given the existing evidence, Lashkar's November 2008 attacks in Mumbai should not have been totally unexpected. They occurred amidst an intersection of trends: a focus on soft targets including tourism infrastructure, an increasing willingness to target Westerners in order to damage the Indian economy and internationalise the Kashmir issue, and repeated attempts to infiltrate Mumbai – the economic and cosmopolitan heart of India. This said, the attacks were a game-changer for Lashkar and marked its emergence on the global jihadi stage. Space does not permit a full accounting of all that transpired in the lead-up to the attacks or in the tortuous investigative and judicial processes since. The objective here is to do the following: assess what the objectives and execution of the attack tell us about Lashkar, consider the possibility of ISI involvement, analyse the Pakistani government's response, and discuss how Lashkar may be reacting.

The attacks had multiple objectives, which speaks to Lashkar's sophisticated strategic culture and complicated position as a presumed al-Qaeda affiliate *and* Pakistan Army proxy. The primary objective almost certainly was to increase tension between India and Pakistan, with the hoped-for result likely being war between the two countries. War may have been a best-case scenario for Lashkar, but the group probably counted on at least halting the Indian-Pakistani peace process. Peace between the two countries is not only antithetical to Lashkar's ideology, it would also make the group irrelevant to the state. Intertwined with this objective may have been the intention to strengthen hardliners in the Pakistani government, and possibly in India as well. In this regard, the attacks might also have been a shot across Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari's bow. He had softened Pakistan's official stance, stating Pakistan

79 'Terror from the Deep Blue', *Hindustan Times*, 17 March 2007.

80 'ONGC acts to combat rig threat', *Lloyd's List*, 16 July 2007.

was not the enemy of India and declaring a 'no first use' policy with Pakistan's nuclear weapons.⁸¹ Both statements angered hardliners in the government, the Army and ISI as well as infuriating LeT and other jihadis. Yet given the amount of time needed to plan the attacks it is unlikely Zardari's recent actions triggered them.

The global jihadi texture of the attacks also signals a move into al-Qaeda's orbit, but even this is not entirely clear cut. Jews from America and Israel were clearly targeted at Nariman House, but the targeting of Westerners at the Taj and Oberoi hotels is more opaque. Some reports suggest that Westerners were specifically singled out. Others that the attackers did not discriminate in their violence. Thus, it is unclear whether the attackers were looking to kill Westerners in particular or only to target a location frequented by Westerners. Even if Lashkar's operatives were not actively singling out Westerners for execution, targeting the Taj and Oberoi still signifies an evolution from the past when the group eschewed targets commonly frequented by Westerners. Again, this choice appears to have been the result of multiple secondary objectives.

Lashkar's choice of Nariman House and the Taj and Oberoi Hotels suggest one of the secondary objectives of the attacks was to increase group's stature in the jihadi community by killing Jews and Westerners. Its relevance had waned in recent years and these attacks launched it into the top tier of jihadi threats. This is also in keeping with its return to Afghanistan, where it is actively seeking to engage Western forces.

These attacks also served another purpose: to make the Kashmiri conflict part of the global jihad. Lashkar has long sought to internationalise Kashmir, and with these attacks it made good on its promise to do so. This suggests that targeting Westerners was a means for Lashkar to 'have its cake and eat it too', i.e., to advance its primary objectives vis-à-vis Kashmir and India by undertaking actions that would also fulfil a secondary objective of enhancing its position within the jihadi community. In this context, killing Westerners is a means of hurting India economically by threatening business and

81 'Pakistan is not an enemy of India: Zardari', *Thaindian*, 17 December 2008.

tourism interests, drawing attention to the Kashmir cause and burnishing its jihadi credentials all at once. Again, this speaks to a sophisticated strategic approach that integrates long-standing objectives with recent moves to step-up its activities and profile within the global jihad.

The ensuing Indian-Pakistani response, whereby each of the countries moved troops to the border, has raised the question of whether another one of the secondary objectives was to relieve pressure along Pakistan's other border with Afghanistan. If so, a natural follow-up must be, to relieve pressure on whom? If this was an objective, the goal could either have been to create space for the insurgents or an excuse to pull back for the Army. Given Lashkar's sophisticated strategic culture and history of holding multiple alliances, the goal may also have been to create space for the insurgents *and* an excuse to pull back for the Army.

Most of the author's interlocutors believe the umbilical cord between LeT and the Pakistani security services is pretty tenuous, but that it is likely still closer to the ISI than to al-Qaeda. However, as evidenced by its engagement in Afghanistan and targeting of Westerners, Lashkar has more overtly embraced al-Qaeda's agenda in the last two years. This appears to be more a function of al-Qaeda's influence on the direction of the jihadi movement than on LeT specifically. The author's interlocutors uniformly agreed that Lashkar continues to see itself as its own organisation rather than an al-Qaeda affiliate. Its leadership has met bin Laden and been involved in a number of al-Qaeda meetings and strategy sessions over the years, according to one Pakistani-based Western official with deep knowledge of both groups, so the relationship is not new.⁸² Moreover, LeT has always been ideologically anti-Western. The difference is that it is now acting on those inclinations. The increased difficulty since 2005 in waging jihad in Kashmir coupled with the fact that al-Qaeda succeeded in reorienting money and interest toward battling the West caused Lashkar to reorient as well. It still prioritises the jihad against India, but its mission during the past two years is broadening to account for this shift. It is thus increasingly intersecting with

82 Interview with Senior Western Official (29 December 2008 in Lahore, Pakistan).

al-Qaeda's and when this happens LeT is more than willing to collaborate.

The same Western official also suggested that during the last two the ISI has been pulling itself back in terms of involvement with LeT.⁸³ However, Ahmed Rashid suggested that, based on conversations with the security services, the message remained 'sit tight' until the tide turns. This does not mean they are still actively supporting Lashkar, but rather promising that support will resume at some point.⁸⁴ Kathy Gannon, another Pakistan-based reporter with excellent sources within the security establishment, also believes the ISI is keeping track and keeping in touch, but not necessarily providing active support or laying out Lashkar's plans of attack.⁸⁵

Since 2002 U.S. intelligence agencies have documented regular meetings between Lashkar operatives and the ISI, and one U.S. official who follows the group closely suggests the disciplined manner of these meetings implies they are official rather than conducted by rogue elements.⁸⁶ Several former Pakistani Army and ISI officers admitted that meetings still occur, but all claimed that in doing so the ISI was only doing what any intelligence agency would do, which is to keep its contacts active. They all suggested this was a means for gathering information and, possibly, steering the group away from turning its own guns on the state.⁸⁷ The problem with these explanations is two-fold. First, it is unclear whether the ISI is being disingenuous when it promises to resume support or when it claims these meetings are a means of information gathering and restraining Lashkar within Pakistan. Second, both may be true as different elements of the security services may be operating with different agendas.

Current and former members of Lashkar certainly seem to believe that the ISI remains on their side. A current JuD member with close knowledge of the leadership's thinking and Lashkar's operations suggested that the ISI continues

83 Ibid.

84 Interview with Haroon Rashid (19 December 2008 in Islamabad, Pakistan).

85 Interview with Kathy Gannon (19 December 2008 in Islamabad, Pakistan).

86 Eric Schmitt and Mark Mazzetti, 'Pakistan raids group linked to Mumbai attacks', *International Herald Tribune*, 8 December 2008.

87 Author interviews with former Pakistani Army and ISI officials, conducted during the month of December 2008 in Islamabad, Pakistan.

(and cannot stop) its support because Lashkar is the only, or at least the best-equipped, organisation for inflicting damage on India.⁸⁸ A former member still close to many in the group echoed this sentiment, stating that until Kashmir is settled Pakistan will always 'have a soft corner for LeT'.⁸⁹ Whether this is wishful thinking or reflective of reality cannot be determined with any degree of certainty. Further, as the same former cadre observed, LeT no longer needs operational help from the Army or ISI as they have already passed along enough operational knowledge to enable Lashkar to plan and train on its own.⁹⁰ There are also people within the Army and ISI who have their own sphere of influence and, without formal sanction or direction, can make assets available to Lashkar. This support, while active, is informal and not institutional.

No hard evidence has yet linked the ISI or the Army to the Mumbai attacks, though that could change as further details emerge. According to one Islamabad-based reporter with sources inside the security services, the reaction following Mumbai was one of surprise and displeasure since 'it was not the right time' for an attack of this nature.⁹¹ However, even if they were not officially involved, there is no doubt that the Pakistani security apparatus has allowed LeT to operate unfettered. This passive support was essential to enabling Lashkar to plan and train for the Mumbai attacks.

Condemnation of Lashkar following Mumbai was swift, vociferous and international, yet there is little hope in India, Pakistan or the West that the group will actually be dismantled. At the time of this author's last visit to Pakistan, a month after the attacks, LeT's cadres had gone to ground. However, some of its camps continued to operate as did JuD despite the fact that the United Nations and Pakistan had banned it. The Pakistani government cracked down on JuD reluctantly and only as a result of the UN Security Council resolution and the 'annoyance of friends', to quote General Javed Ashraf Qazi (Retd.), who has held a number of government positions as well as serving as the Director General of the ISI during the

88 Interview with JuD Activist (30 December 2008 in Lahore, Pakistan).

89 Interview with former member of Lashkar-e-Taiba (1 January 2009 in Lahore, Pakistan).

90 Ibid.

91 Interview with Zaffar Abbas (24 December 2008 in Islamabad, Pakistan).

1990s.⁹² JuD has already reemerged under the banner Tehrik-e-Tahafuz Qibla Awal (TTQA), which means the Movement for the Safeguarding of the First Center of Prayer.⁹³ All of its funds were transferred before the the state froze JuD's accounts.⁹⁴

In short, the group's infrastructure remains intact. This infrastructure is a double-edged sword – for Lashkar and the Pakistani state. For Lashkar it enables the group to maintain a positive public profile and insinuate itself into civil society, as well as providing a strong fundraising operation. Conversely, this infrastructure also presents an inviting target for the Pakistani government, if it wants to use it as leverage. Lashkar has more to lose than any of the other existing jihadi organisations in Pakistan.

There is little doubt that the Lashkar threat stems largely from this infrastructure, which enables sophisticated attacks like those in Mumbai and insulates the group at home. The flip side is that the Pakistani policy of allowing JuD to operate encouraged proselytising and the provision of social services at the expense of violence. Many of the Pakistanis the author interviewed spoke with fear for what this means for the nature of Pakistani civil society. They see the group as the greatest long-term threat to a secular Pakistan. Still, they cannot help but acknowledge that in the short run this may be preferable to adding fuel to the revolutionary fire currently engulfing parts of their country.

In response to criticism that it is moving slowly, the Pakistani government has indicated that it fears a twin backlash should it clamp down too hard. With state assistance Lashkar has created a well of support for itself within the country's borders. Jama'at was more than a front group. It embraced its non-militant role and became a leading provider of relief aid and social services in Pakistan. Despite much of the money it raises going directly to Lashkar activities, JuD has accrued a positive reputation and through its welfare activities insinuated itself into Pakistani society. Actually dismantling that infrastructure would

92 Interview with Javed Ashraf Qazi (15 December 2008 in Rawalpindi, Pakistan).

93 'Pakistan's Jamaat "ban" lie nailed', *Times of India*, 12 January 2009.

94 Matthew Rosenberg and Glenn Simpson, 'Money Eludes Pakistan's Crackdown on Accused Terror Group', *Wall Street Journal*, 13 December 2008.

mean losing the social services the group provides and risking a negative public reaction.⁹⁵

The government also claims to fear that an excessive crackdown could provoke a Lashkar uprising in the country's Punjabi heartland. This fear may be a convenient fiction for an Army that hopes to hold the group in reserve. However, the March 2009 attacks against the Sri Lankan cricket team in Lahore raised the spectre of an angry section within LeT that had abandoned the group's long-held policy of refraining from attacks within Pakistan's borders. At the time of this writing, it is unclear whether Lashkar cadres prosecuted those attacks although according to the author's interlocutors the emerging consensus is that the banned sectarian group, Lashkar-e-Jangvi, was responsible.

If it turns out LeT was involved that means the group has either made the strategic decision to turn its guns on the state or its once-fabled discipline and coherence is weakening. The former suggests an already unstable state is facing another deadly foe. The latter equates to more well-trained and dedicated jihadis freelancing in Pakistan and possibly abroad. Alternatively, if Lashkar was not responsible and remains coherent and disciplined then it will likely be able to continue to play its double game of cozying up to the state while continuing to attack India and conspire with al-Qaeda, and others, to threaten the West. Of course, even if LeT remains disciplined and obedient today that can change too. None of these scenarios bodes well for the future.

95 Interview with Zaffar Abbas (24 December 2008 in Islamabad, Pakistan).

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