



## Lashkar-e-Taiba: Evolving Into A Hybrid Entity?



Brigadier **Kuldip Singh** (retd), Indian Army

The recent statements by Talla Saeed (son of Hafiz Saeed), the admission (6 March 2017) by Pakistan's former National Security Advisor Mahmud Ali Durrani that a 'terrorist group based in his country' carried out the 2008 Mumbai terror attack, the National Investigation Agency's findings (January 2017) that the September 2016 Uri attack was carried out by the operatives of the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) operatives,<sup>1</sup> and the February 2016 video-link deposition of David Coleman Headley together bring back focus on the links of the LeT with Pakistani establishment particularly the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). Traditionally, the Indian military and intelligence community has looked at: (i) the LeT as a terror entity which initially had an India-specific orientation, but has been pursuing a trans-regional agenda in the recent years; and (ii) the ties between the Pakistan Army/ISI and the LeT from a precise prism of "terrorism". Additionally, the Indian military-intelligence complex often ponders why the Pakistani establishment remains unwilling to jettison

the LeT despite the deteriorated security situation inside Pakistan and persistent pressure from the international community besides India. There is however another view, that: (i) the LeT—Jama'at-ud-Dawa (JuD) combine, with its hospitals, universities, social-service wings, etc, is not merely a terrorist organization, but is a three-dimensional "hybrid" movement that is emulating the Hezbollah or Hamas; (ii) the JuD-LeT combine's large social service programmes earns it the support of large swathes of the Pakistani population; and (iii) the Pakistani military-ISI may use the JuD-LeT combine, along with 'sleeper cells' and Overground Workers (OGWs) in India, as a tool to challenge the prevailing Indo-Pak conventional forces symmetry.

There is hence a need to examine whether the LeT is just a terrorist proxy or whether the JuD-LeT, operating quite freely in Pakistan, and with a large infrastructure and support base, is gradually turning into a 'hybrid' entity. However, prior to examining this precise aspect, it is important to analyze the history of the 'Maktab

The Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS), New Delhi, is an autonomous think tank dealing with national security and conceptual aspects of land warfare, including conventional and sub-conventional conflict and terrorism. CLAWS conducts research that is futuristic and outlook and policy-oriented in approach.

Website: [www.claws.in](http://www.claws.in)

Contact us: [landwarfare@gmail.com](mailto:landwarfare@gmail.com)



al-Khidamat' and the JuD-LeT, as it highlights the similarities in the development of these entities. It is noteworthy that the US government<sup>2</sup> has labelled 'Maktab al-Khidamat' (Office of Services or the Afghan Services Bureau) (MaK)<sup>3</sup> as the "precursor to Al Qaeda" (AQ).

### **Brief History: 'Maktab al-Khidamat'—Al Qaeda**

The Soviets invaded Afghanistan in December 1979 and thereafter, the US-Saudi bloc bankrolled the jihad which saw thousands of mujahideen reach Afghanistan to fight the Soviets. Between 1980 and 1984, a Palestinian religious scholar Shaykh Abdullah Azzam<sup>4</sup> realizing that the Arab jihadis fighting in Afghanistan required organization and support,<sup>5</sup> established the MaK astride the Pakistan-Afghan border.

According to the CIA's biography, Osama bin Laden (OBL) (born in March 1957), deeply influenced by radical Islam while studying, reached Pakistan-Afghanistan in the early 1980s to assist the mujahideen in their campaign against the Soviets.<sup>6</sup> In Afghanistan, Abdullah Azzam convinced OBL to join his nascent organization, who then utilized his financial connections and business experience to organize the MaK. The MaK was nurtured by Pakistan's ISI, which was the CIA's primary conduit for conducting the covert war against the Soviets in Afghanistan.<sup>7</sup>

By 1986, MaK had many branches, including in about 30 cities in the US, collecting donations to support the jihad against the Soviets. The most important branch of MaK, called the Al-Kifah Refugee Centre, namely, 'Brooklyn Jihad Office', was in New York.<sup>8</sup> This Centre was also responsible for recruiting and training jihadis with the CIA's assistance at shooting ranges in New York, Pennsylvania, and Connecticut before dispatching them to fight in Afghanistan (the Al-Kifah Refugee Center later played a role in the 1993 World Trade Centre bombing<sup>9</sup>). Another significant branch was at the Islamic Center of Tucson, Arizona, which the US counter-terrorism expert Rita Katz<sup>10</sup> calls the 'the first cell of Al Qaeda in the USA'.

The MaK's fighting and 'services' efforts were

assisted by two banks in Saudi Arabia which channelled funds through 20 NGOs, the most famous of which was the International Islamic Relief Organisation (IIRO). Both IIRO and the Islamic Relief Agency functioned under the umbrella of the World Islamic League.<sup>11</sup> According to Michael Scheuer, Head of the CIA's anti-OBL unit, about \$ 600 million passed through OBL's charity fronts between 1980 and 1989, most of it through the MaK.

It is from the MaK that OBL established the Bait al-Ansar (House of Allies), the military training camps necessary to train the jihadis and finally, the AQ in 1988.<sup>12</sup> In April 1988, the former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev agreed to withdraw from Afghanistan under the UN-brokered Geneva Accord. Shortly before the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan (February 1989), Azzam and OBL decided to form a new vanguard group, *Al-Qaeda al-Sulbah* ("The Solid Base"), whose concept is commonly attributed to the Egyptian theorist Sayyid Qutb's vision of a revolutionary Muslim vanguard that would overturn un-Islamic regimes in the Middle East and establish Islamic rule.<sup>13</sup> Azzam too had envisioned the AQ as an Islamic "rapid reaction force" that would canalize the Afghan mujahideen into fighting on behalf of 'oppressed Muslims worldwide'.<sup>14</sup> He, however, did not support killing of non-combatants and terrorist tactics.<sup>15</sup> By the end of 1988, OBL's relationship with Azzam deteriorated on account of various issues. After Azzam was assassinated in a car bomb attack (the late 1989; Afghanistan), hardliner Ayman al-Zawahiri took over as the main ideologue of the AQ. Zawahiri, the mastermind of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, then began transforming the AQ into a terrorist organization.<sup>16</sup>

### **Brief History: Jama'at-ud-Dawa-Markaz al-Dawa wal-Irshad-Lashkar-e-Taiba**

**Zaki-ur Rehman Lakhvi:** The Soviet-mujahideen conflict was in full bloom when Zaki-ur Rehman Lakhvi (the LeT's 'military' commander) moved (1982) from Pakistan's Punjab to Paktia (Afghanistan) to participate in the fighting. In 1984, Lakhvi, a fanatic supporter of the Ahl-e-Hadith (AeH) an extreme interpretation of Islam, established his own AeH-based militant group.

**Hafiz Muhammad Saeed:** Hafiz (LeT's amir) was reportedly born in 1950 in Sargodha to a Punjabi family that had lost many members while migrating to Pakistan from India after the Partition (1947). In the early 1980s, Hafiz Saeed was appointed to General Zia ul-Haq's 'Council on Islamic Ideology' and taught Islamic studies at Lahore's University of Engineering & Technology. He then went to Saudi Arabia for higher studies, where he met Abdullah Azzam, OBL's mentor. Azzam encouraged Hafiz Saeed to also start a politico-militant-social organization like the MaK.

**Founding of Jamaat ul-Dawa (JuD) and the Markaz al-Dawa wal-Irshad (MDI):** In 1985, Hafiz Saeed and another academician, Zafar Iqbal, created JuD, an AeH social organization. The JuD however, could not gather traction as there already was a major AeH organization called the 'Jamaat AeH', led by a well-known Pakistani scholar, Allama Ehsan Elahi Zaheer. So, in 1986, Saeed and Lakhvi joined hands, and along with foreign militants, set-up the MDI (Center for Call and Guidance) at Muridke (near Lahore; current HQ of the LeT-JuD).<sup>17</sup> Besides 'social' activities, the radical MDI also began fighting alongside the Salafist-adhering 'Jamaat al-Dawa al-Quran wal-Suna'<sup>18</sup> (JDQS) in Afghanistan.

In 1987, three events shaped the final trajectory of the JuD-LeT; (i) the MDI established militant training camps in Paktia and Kunar (Afghanistan); over the years, these camps hosted many militant groups including the AQ; (ii) Jamil al-Rahman, the leader of JDSQ, died; and (iii) Allama Ehsan Elahi Zaheer, the leader of Jamaat AeH, was killed in Lahore. Their deaths allowed the MDI to gain primacy and grow. The Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan in February 1989 but strife continued. In 1990, the MDI formally established the LeT as its militant wing under Zaki-ur Rehman Lakhvi.

### Similarities Between Al Qaeda and Lashkar-e-Taiba

- Both OBL (of MaK-AQ) and Hafiz Saeed (of JuD-MDI-LeT) were deeply influenced by Abdullah Azzam.
- Like the MaK-AQ, the JuD-MDI-LeT were

founded by militants based in Pakistan-Afghanistan.

- Both organizations believed in radical strains of Islam.
- Just as the killing of Abdullah Azzam allowed OBL-Zawahiri to take control of the AQ and turn its focus towards terrorism, the deaths of Jamil al-Rahman (leader of JDSQ) and Allama Ehsan Elahi Zaheer (leader of Jamaat AeH) allowed the JuD-MDI to grow stronger.
- Both entities had a 'services' as well as militant wings, gained experience in the Afghan crucible, and went on to set-up self-sustaining, social service organizations and well-organized militant-terrorist wings.
- AQ, the terrorist wing of MaK, was formed in the latter half of 1988; the LeT in the early 1990.
- Both were aided by the Pakistani military-intelligence establishment as well as by foreign patrons.
- Like the AQ, the JuD-LeT's ideological framework attracts members from outside of Pakistan; it also benefits from a support network outside of Pakistan that includes Saudi Arabia.<sup>19</sup>
- From the AQ, the LeT learnt that establishing networks is the most efficient way to manage resources, carry out attacks, and remain resilient.
- The LeT's strategic goals overlap with those of AQ in many ways. While the relation between the AQ and the LeT is complex, both have assisted each other<sup>20</sup> (case of Ramzi Yusuf) as well as learned from each other over time.<sup>21</sup>

### Similarities: Landmarks Plot (New York) and the '26/11' Mumbai Attack

The multi-prong '26/11' attack by the LeT seems based on the 1993 New York Landmarks Plot, which was planned by militants associated with OBL's newly-established AQ. In July 1993, the US counter-terrorism authorities had arrested eight individuals based on information provided by an informer. These individuals had planned to attack multiple targets in Manhattan including a waterfront heliport, hotels

(Waldorf-Astoria, St Regis, UN Plaza), and the Lincoln and Holland tunnels. The militants had: (i) carried out extensive pre-operation surveillance (as David Headley did for the LeT); (ii) planned to use speedboats to attack the heliport (the LeT too entered Mumbai from the sea); and (iii) intended to infiltrate the hotels to kill as many people as possible (as did the LeT). As in the case of Mumbai, the attacks were aimed at undermining New York as a financial centre. Ostensibly, the LeT had derived key operational lessons from the thwarted Landmarks Plot.

### Lessons Imbided by Pakistan

In supporting the MaK and the mujahideen, the Pakistani establishment, particularly the ISI, gained immense experience in using radicalized zealots, as well as in irregular warfare and waging proxy wars. It drew three main lessons, that: (i) irregular forces provide a low-cost, asymmetric, and disruptive option against superior conventional forces; (ii) they can really hurt an adversarial state, often without provoking a full-scale war (by the late 1980s, Pakistan had also achieved a capability ‘to rapidly assemble a nuclear device if necessary’<sup>22</sup>) and (iii) the target State has to expend disproportionate amounts of resources on countering the asymmetric threat with little or no damage to the terror-sponsoring State(s).

It is therefore no surprise that just after the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan, Kashmir became the LeT’s primary focus. Some of the reasons for this shift were as follows: (i) the personal animosity that Hafiz Saeed and few others harboured against India ostensibly over events astride the Partition; (ii) with Afghanistan gradually being taken over by the mujahideen, Kashmir was the nearest theatre of jihad for the LeT; (iii) the MDI’s belief that ‘Muslim-dominant Kashmir was occupied by kafirs’; and (iv) most importantly, because the Pak Army-ISI had decided to utilize the MDI-LeT,<sup>23</sup> along with other groups, to rapidly ramp up instability in J&K.

The 1990 ambush of a vehicle carrying the Indian Air Force personnel is generally accepted as the first known LeT operation in J&K.<sup>24</sup> Since then, the LeT,

with funding and other assistance from the ISI, has carried out scores of attacks in India including beyond J&K.<sup>25</sup> Within J&K, fidayeen attacks have been LeT’s signature tactics<sup>26</sup> (first recorded fidayeen attack in J&K was in July 1999). For attacks outside J&K, the LeT initially took the help of Indian militants from the ‘Tanzim Islahul Muslimeen’<sup>27</sup> and later, of the ‘Student Islamic Movement of India’ (SIMI) and its splinter, the Indian Mujahideen (IM)<sup>28</sup> (the IM was designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) by the US on 19 September 2011). This methodology fits into the broad ISI-LeT strategy—the ISI provides covert supports to the LeT; the latter fosters proxies within India. This allows the ISI, and in turn, the LeT, to maintain deniability in certain cases while trying to claim that terrorism in India is home-grown.<sup>29</sup>

### Post-2001 Evolution of Lashkar-e-Taiba

#### Proscription

Soon after the attack on India’s Parliament (13 December 2001), India outlawed the LeT; the US included the LeT in the Terrorist Exclusion List on 5 December 2001 and on 26 December 2001, designated it as a FTO; and the military government of General Pervez Musharraf ‘banned’ it on 12 January 2002. Later (May 2005), the United Nations too banned the LeT. Following the November 2008 Mumbai attack (26/11), the United Nations Security Council added the JuD, two trusts known to be supporting the LeT-JuD, and the names of few leaders of the LeT<sup>30</sup> to the proscribed list.<sup>31</sup> In May 2012, the US added Hafiz Saeed to the ‘Rewards for Justice’ programme, and offered \$ 10 million for information leading to his arrest. On 25 June 2014, the US amended the LeT’s FTO status by adding JuD and some of its aliases/trusts to the list. In January 2015, Pakistan announced that it had ‘frozen the assets of JuD and imposed travel restrictions on Hafiz Saeed’ (he however continued to move around in Pakistan/POK and make virulent speeches). In November 2015, the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Agency (PEMRA) reportedly banned media coverage of US-

and UN-designated terrorist organizations such as JuD and the Falah-e-Insaniyat Foundation (FiF) (also an alias of the LeT).<sup>32</sup> All this however, does not seem to have really affected the JuD-LeT.

### Rebranding

Under pressure from the international community post-2001 ('9/11'; attack on the Indian Parliament), the LeT underwent a change. Evidently forewarned, the LeT's leaders quietly dissolved the MDI in December 2001 and rebranded it as the Jamaatul-Dawa (JuD), the original name used by Saeed-Iqbal's group.<sup>33</sup> The JuD then intensified humanitarian projects to circumvent restrictions.<sup>34</sup> The ISI also moved to sever overt/direct links with the LeT-JuD, which in turn began to re-form into groups operating under several names.<sup>35</sup> Overall, the efforts drove the LeT-JuD deeper underground, and made the ISI-LeT financial, organizational and training links harder to trace. Such rebranding by the LeT is an established phenomenon—just days after the end-January 2017 detention of Hafiz Saeed, the JuD re-labelled itself as 'Tehreek Azadi Jammu & Kashmir' (TAJK).

### Pakistani Inaction

Although the Pakistani security forces has carried out scores of operations against groups that conducted attacks within Pakistan such as the Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP), it has not targeted the LeT-JuD, which continues to operate, train, fundraise, and give virulent hate speeches freely in Pakistan.<sup>36</sup> After the '26/11' attacks and prior to the inclusion of the LeT in the UN Resolution 1267 (December 2008), the Pakistani government had signalled that it would take action against the LeT-JuD. In early December 2008, Pakistani security forces raided some camps and offices of the LeT-JuD and detained Lakhvi and Zarar Shah, along with a handful of LeT fighters. In 2009, it formally charged seven men including Lakhvi of planning the '26/11' attacks. Since then, the trial has sputtered along, with Lakhvi moving in and out of jail, and finally getting bail in 2015. In the latter half of January 2017, Pakistan announced that it had placed Hafiz Saeed under house

arrest. All this appears to be a part of the 'revolving door' policy, as Saeed has been detained earlier too (2008 and 2009), only to be released. All these suggest that the Pakistani establishment does not want to act against the JuD-LeT, a fact which should clearly worry the West.

### Targeting the West

Like the AQ, the LeT, has from inception been committed to pan-Islamist jihad as it views itself as fighting on behalf of the entire *ummah*.<sup>37</sup> Its antipathy towards India, Israel, and the West is evident from its statements about the 'Brahmanic-Talmudic-Crusader' alliance that seeks to destroy the *ummah*.<sup>38</sup> In addition to several attacks against Coalition Forces in Afghanistan,<sup>39</sup> it has hence been trying to target the West. Notable cases are as follows: (i) Willie Brigitte, a French convert to Islam, who after spending several months in a LeT training camp in 2001, was despatched to Australia, to carry out a series of attacks; however, alerted by France, Australia arrested and deported him;<sup>40</sup> (ii) in 2004, the LeT reportedly despatched several fighters under LeT operative named Danish Ahmed to Iraq to fight the US-led coalition; the group was arrested by the Coalition forces;<sup>41</sup> (iii) the '26/11' Mumbai attacks, had also targeted luxury hotels, a Jewish centre, and a popular café; (iv) Dhiren Barot, namely, Abu Eisa al-Hind, a UK-based Indian-origin Muslim convert, who had trained in LeT camps, was accused of a plot (2004) to detonate IEDs and for providing target information to AQ (2001); and (v) David Hicks, an Australian, joined the AQ (2001) after training in LeT camps; he was arrested in Afghanistan.

### Lashkar-e-Taiba's Recruits: As Good as Pakistan Army Soldiers?

In 2013, the Combating Terrorism Center, US Military Academy, West Point, New York, published a study entitled *The Fighters of Lashkar-e-Taiba: Recruitment, Training, Deployment, and Death*. For this study, the researchers analyzed the following: (i) biographical information and other key details of 917 LeT militants

killed in combat from 1989 to 2008; and (ii) statistical information released by the Pakistan government. The report, co-authored by Christine Fair (Georgetown University), states that:

- The LeT recruits tens of thousands of well-educated, highly-skilled young men from the same neighbourhoods<sup>42</sup> and social networks as the Pakistani military.
- ‘These are some of Pakistan’s best and brightest, and the Pakistani military and Lashkar are competing for guys with the same skill set’, and that ‘Between 100,000 to 300,000 men have received some form of LeT training over the last two decades.’
- The LeT fighters had higher levels of secular education compared to the generally low average for Pakistani men (‘their backgrounds contradict a lingering belief in the policy community that Islamist terrorists are the product of low or no education or are produced in Pakistan’s madrassas’). ‘It’s a myth that poverty and madrassas create terrorism, and that we can buy our way out of it with US aid.’
- ‘Lashkar’s popularity and clout defy conventional approaches to fighting extremism’ as it ‘enjoys such a degree of open support’. ‘That is the disconcerting reality of LeT, one of the world’s most dangerous militant organizations.’

The report also explains why the Pakistan establishment largely ignored international pressure to crack down on the LeT after ‘26/11’. CIA’s counter-terrorism officer Charles Faddis separately added that:

- They (LeT) operated in Pakistan with a lot more ease than AQ. They had the ability to make connections with military officers, well-educated people abroad and scientists. The Pakistani government was extremely reluctant to confront them.
- The earlier mentioned study had also assessed that the JuD-LeT’s legitimate activities in the name of charity, education, social service, etc., provide the organization a façade for its violent activities, even as its networks of legitimate

mosques, schools, media, and publications help the organization sustain its presence inside Pakistan/POK and abroad.

### **Infrastructure of the Jama’at-ud-Dawa - Lashkar-e-Taiba**

A 2005 assessment by the Strategic Foresight Group lists the assets of the JuD-LeT as including: *A 190-acre campus in Muridke, 500 offices, 2200 training camps, 16 Islamic institutions, 156 schools, 125 ‘Al-Dawa schools’ across Punjab, PoK, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Skardu, 2 science colleges, 3 hospitals, 34 dispensaries, 11 ambulance services, mobile clinics, blood banks, a publishing empire, garment factory, iron foundry, and woodworks factories. It had more than 300,000 cadres at its disposal and paid salaries to their top-bracket functionaries that were 12-15 times greater than similar jobs in the civilian sector.*

In addition is a network of branch offices to collect donations in Pakistan, the Gulf, and Europe.<sup>43</sup> These assets have since grown like in 2013, the JuD had planned construction of several masjids, madrassas, and schools under the aegis of its Khalid Bin Waleed Trust. It was allotted plots in several areas of Sindh province and Punjab. The Falah-e-Insaniyat Foundation (FIF), a front organization of the LeT/JuD, had participated in an international workshop titled ‘Humanitarian Action in Today’s World: Reality and Challenges’, organized by OIC in Jeddah in June 2013. The JuD succeeded in providing aid to earthquake-ravaged regions in Kashmir in 2005 where the Pakistani government was slow to reach. The FIF also rendered aid in earthquake-hit areas of Baluchistan.

Thus, the JuD-LeT has been able to assemble an organization that nearly rivals the Hezbollah and has been using the same to establish itself within the populace. Additionally, Hafiz Saeed has been emphasizing that ‘Pakistan is facing water crises as a result of Indian water aggression’, which is an emotive issue in water-deficient Pakistan. According to a recent UNDP report, Pakistan, which had touched the ‘water stress line’ in 1990 and crossed the ‘water scarcity line’ in 2005, is likely to dry up by 2025. Hence, it is possible that the recent Indian warning about revisiting the Indus

Waters Treaty<sup>44</sup> may provide more propaganda material to Hafiz Saeed.

### Lashkar-e-Taiba: Evolving Into a Hybrid Entity?

The former US Director of National Intelligence (DNI) James Clapper had in his testimony (12 March 2013) before the US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, stated as follows:

Pakistan-based LeT will continue to be the most multifaceted and problematic of the Pakistani militant groups and the group has the long-term potential to evolve into a permanent and even Hamas/Hezbollah-like presence in Pakistan.

Separately, the former Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage's famous description of Hezbollah provides an example of how a pariah terrorist movement can effectively transform itself first into a politico-social-militant group, and then into a political powerhouse.

**Hezbollah:** Formed in 1982 in response to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the Hezbollah, a Shia militant group in Lebanon, advocates Shia empowerment globally. Designated a FTO in October 1997, the Hezbollah, supported by Iran and Syria, has over the years morphed into a politico-military group. It maintains an extensive security-military apparatus, a political organization, and social services network in Lebanon, and is often described as a 'state within the state'. It also receives funding from private donations, financial support and profits from a range of legal and illegal businesses. The Hezbollah has representation in the Lebanese parliament<sup>45</sup> and a committed constituency in Lebanon. It proved its military capabilities against Israel in the 2006 Lebanon war, which many analysts feel was a defeat for Israel. Hezbollah's military philosophy revolves around the guerrilla-based concept of 'Muslim resistance'. Its cadres live as civilians among the population at large, but in times of war, the Hezbollah fighters emerge as a well-trained, disciplined, and well-coordinated military force.<sup>46</sup> The Hezbollah provides an apt example of how a terror organization can transform into a politico-military force which is tolerated by the

international community, partly because of its political and social service activities.

### Environmental Factors and Other Similarities

- **Hezbollah:** Its transformation can be attributed to environmental factors prevalent in its area of operations and specific capabilities that it acquired over a period of time. These were as follows: (i) an unstable political environment in Lebanon; (ii) financial backing by Iran and Syria; these allowed it to compete with the Lebanese government in large scale social welfare activities including medical care, opening of schools, providing jobs, etc; (iii) active military and intelligence support of Iran and Syria; (iv) a committed cadre; (v) well-planned and executed media management policies/propaganda; and (vi) a well-organized regional reach.
- **JuD-LeT:** The JuD-LeT arguably has nearly all the above characteristics. It has active support of the Pakistani establishment (for India-centric operations primarily); covert political patronage of the PML (N); and a prominent presence in the Pakistan's charitable landscape through its front organizations. Like Hezbollah, the JuD-LeT has a well-structured and functional organization. It has generally been the 'first relief' provider in case of many natural calamities; has been organizing large, well-attended rallies; and looks after the families of its slain fighters. Its front organizations also maintain an effective social media presence through multi-lingual sites in English, Arabic, and Urdu. It can therefore be concluded that JuD-LeT has earned the goodwill of select segments of Pakistan's populace through focused social service initiatives; enjoys political and establishment patronage; and modifies its behaviour and actions in accordance with the requirement of the security establishment. There appears to be synergy between the LeT and the Pakistani establishment. Finally, it has also acquired a quasi-military capability to operate beyond India and Pakistan - and has an effective

presence throughout Pakistan, has fighters in Afghanistan<sup>47</sup> and claims that its fighters have fought in Chechnya, Kosovo, Iraq, etc.

- **Significant Differences:** The Hezbollah prospered in a country which does not have a strong central establishment or an effective military establishment. Moreover, Lebanon is home to diverse religious communities with no group enjoying significant majority. LeT, on the other hand, operates in a predominantly Sunni dominant country, and hence, does not have a committed and imperiled constituency as the Hezbollah has (it enjoys loyal support of the Lebanese Shia). Unlike Lebanon, Pakistan has a professional and strong security establishment that enjoys unparalleled power and has the capacity to overcome internal security challenges. Therefore, in its present avatar, the LeT-JuD has to operate within the constraints imposed by the Pakistani security establishment. This however implies that the LeT-JuD cannot carry out major operations without the broad concurrence of the Pakistani establishment.

## Conclusion

- Just as the Hezbollah has been used by Iran to further its interests in the Levant, the LeT is a key cog in Pakistan's anti-India strategy and has all the makings to play a major role in Pakistan's conventional or sub-conventional strategy versus India in any future conflict.
- The JuD-LeT is far more dangerous than the AQ. The JuD, with a vast social service, educational and media network, enjoys support in many parts of Pakistan. The LeT has motivated terrorists and fighters whose quality seems almost at par with the Pakistani soldier. In addition is the covert state-support to the JuD-LeT.

## Precedence: Use of Terrorist and Militants Entities in War

Although there are many contradictory definitions of

terrorism, most terrorism experts concur that it can be broadly defined as politically motivated violence against non-combatants/civilians, and if similar terrorist tactics are used against combatants, they tend to fall in the category of irregular warfare. Carl von Clausewitz had famously said that 'war is the continuation of politics by other means'; by corollary, irregular warfare is a continuation of combat through different means. The fact is that terrorist entities and irregular warfare have been a part of war since times immemorial. The earliest known organization that practiced what is now defined as terrorism was the Zealots of Judea; they had carried out covert assassination of Roman occupation forces, as well as of Jewish collaborators. The Assassins (in the late thirteenth century), a splinter of Shia Islam called the Nizari Ismailis appear to have pioneered the *fidayeen*. Not having enough manpower to wage open warfare, their leader, Hassam-I Sabbah, operating out of what is modern day Iran, had perfected the art of sending a lone *fidayeen* to kill a key enemy leader. The fact that Zealots and the Assassins are remembered in history speaks of the deep psychological impact they had.

**Modern Warfare and Civilians:** Modern warfare is industrial in nature. In turn, this generates a compelling imperative to destroy an adversary's economic and industrial capacities, which are largely run by non-combatants. Another reality is that wars are started on orders of political leaders, fought by soldiers but sustained by public opinion; the latter thus leads to a compulsion to demoralize a population. Thus, the imperative to destroy the war-waging capacity of an adversary and the 'total war' concepts practiced since World War II have led to 'civilians' being 'inadvertently' targeted as well as being used for irregular warfare.

**Precedence—Irregular Warfare:** During World War II particularly, the major powers' supported 'resistance' organizations and accepted their use of terrorist tactics as a legitimate tool of war. World War II was followed by the Cold War. With both the USSR and the US maintaining nuclear weapons on alert, the prospect of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) ensured that the two adversaries provided assistance to revolutionary movements around the world and confronted each other

only through proxies in distant parts of the world, but never fought each other directly. Around this time, many colonies and societies were also looking at independence; with nationalism strengthening, leaders of revolutions and independence movements began to use terrorism as a tactic. The period from the second half of the twentieth century onwards thus saw the rise of several terrorist organizations, committed to socialist revolution/communism, or liberation, or religious-political goals. This dynamic threw up some notable conflicts between terrorist-insurgent movements and nation states, some of which still continue.

### Future Wars

Military strategists like Steven Metz and Raymond Millen have long argued that the days of the World War II type of set-piece battles are over. A number of other studies<sup>48</sup> further outline that: (i) ‘most intra-state conflict (in the future) will be characterized by irregular warfare—terrorism, subversion, sabotage, insurgency, and criminal activities’; (ii) inter-state conflict will also be increasingly ‘irregular as distinctions between regular and irregular forms of warfare may fade as some state-based militaries adopt irregular tactics’; and (iii) smart adversaries will present hybrid threats, combining conventional, irregular and high-end asymmetric threats, in the same time and space. Steven Metz has further opined that what happened in Crimea (Ukraine) heralds the dawn of ‘Unrestricted Warfare’, which is defined roughly as a state of war where ‘boundaries between the battlefield and what is not the battlefield, between what is a weapon and what is not, between soldier and non-combatant, between state and non-state or supra-state’ effectively disappear. He calls it a system of war for the future, and one for which even the US is unprepared. According to Metz, the US, with its conventional military supremacy:

“wants its conflicts and security problems to remain tidily restricted. Its strength is greatest when there is no political ambiguity or ethical confusion on who is the enemy, which allows partners to jump on board. This is precisely why its adversaries will not fight this way.”

Significantly, a 2011 study by RAND Corporation<sup>49</sup> on the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War in Lebanon had concluded that: (i) Israel was ill-prepared for the challenges posed by its ‘hybrid’ adversary; and (ii) irregular (terrorist-insurgent) entities can easily be transformed into hybrid adversaries (like the Hezbollah and Hamas) with additional equipment and training by state sponsors. In other words, all that the JuD-LeT needs to transform into a hybrid force is training and more potent weapons from the Pakistani establishment.

### Prognosis

The Pakistan military has used irregulars and irregular warfare in every war, be it with India, in erstwhile East Pakistan or in Afghanistan.<sup>50</sup> Presently, a fair segment of the Pakistan Army is committed in counter-insurgency tasks in its tribal regions as well as counter-terror operations in Pakistan’s core. This commitment is expected to persist. The attrition on military equipment and Pakistan’s deteriorated economic condition has also impinged on its military’s capability. Hence, it is quite possible that Pakistan, which does not have the same budgetary support and overall conventional forces capacity as India, is drawing its own lessons from hybrid entities and ‘Unrestricted Warfare’. The JuD-LeT is an ideal proxy for this task as its ideologically committed to *jihad*; has an ethnic composition similar to that of the Pakistani military; and has links to the Pakistani military-intelligence. Importantly, the JuD-LeT does not support revolutionary *jihad* at home, has refrained from terror attacks inside Pakistan and against the Pakistani military, and generally followed the establishment line.

The JuD-LeT combine therefore has the potential to grow in stature, overtly in the social, economic and religious fields, and covertly in the military sphere. It also has skilled and educated cadres, and access to many segments of the Pakistan populace. The Pakistan Army could therefore use the JuD-LeT against India in three broad ways:

- **Option I:** Raise the ante in Kashmir. However, turning the ‘militancy clock’ back in J&K will not be easy. The Indian intelligence agencies are well-experienced and have in place a sound intelligence

structure while the Indian security forces have established a good counter-intelligence grid.

- **Option II:** Direct the LeT to carry out major attacks in India's core in conjunction with ' sleeper cells, etc. However, some strategic experts opine that: (i) the Pakistan Army, presently committed in substantial numbers on its Western border, apprehends that a major attack by the LeT (akin to 26/11) would surely lead to a military strike by India, for which Pakistan is ill-prepared; and (ii) hence, the Pak Army-ISI are keeping a close watch on the LeT in order to thwart such a major provocation. That said, it does not mean that there are not planning for such attacks in the future at an optimal time.
- **Option III:** Use the LeT during a conflict to challenge the prevailing conventional forces asymmetry versus India as follows:
  - **Externally (inside India):** Use the LeT, in conjunction with sleeper cells, for terror strikes and sabotage in India's core astride a conflict. Such strikes in the heartland during a war, along with military strikes, have the potential to create a sense of insecurity and anxiety in the civilian populace.
  - **Internally (within Pakistan):** Progressively transform the LeT into a hybrid force and allow it to fight like the Hezbollah against an advancing Indian Army. There however are no concrete reports on how the Pakistan Army-ISI are training/equipping the LeT. That said, there is no reason to assume that the Pakistan Army is not keen, or has no plans to use the LeT in this manner.

Option III is the most likely. Consequently, India, its Armed Forces and its intelligence agencies have to prepare for such an eventuality.

### Notes

1. Statement by NIA DG Sharad Kumar on 31 January 2017.
2. 'Monograph on Terrorist Financing', by the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, Staff Report to the Commission.
3. Available at [https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/terrorist-illicit-finance/Pages/protecting-charities\\_execorder\\_13224-i.aspx](https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/terrorist-illicit-finance/Pages/protecting-charities_execorder_13224-i.aspx)  
MaK was initially created by Osama bin Laden's mentor, Shaykh Abdullah Azzam, who was also the spiritual founder of Hamas, as an organization to fund mujahideen through Pakistan in the Soviet-Afghan conflict. After Azzam was killed in 1989, Osama bin Laden and Sheikh Umar Abd al-Rahman (The Blind Sheikh) continued to use MaK to recruit fighters for the Soviet-Afghan conflict. Sheikh Umar Abd al-Rahman was implicated in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing and later convicted.
4. A Palestinian religious scholar affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood and the leader of the Arab fighters in the 1980s Afghanistan. Through Azzam's mentoring, OBL's Salafist ideas underwent a radical transformation. MaK was initially created by Osama bin Laden's mentor, Shaykh Abdullah Azzam, who was also the spiritual founder of Hamas, as an organization to fund mujahideen through Pakistan in the Soviet-Afghan conflict. After Azzam was killed in 1989, Osama bin Laden and Sheikh Umar Abd al-Rahman (The Blind Sheikh) continued to use MaK to recruit fighters for the Soviet-Afghan conflict. Sheikh Umar Abd al-Rahman was implicated in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing and later convicted.
5. 'Fundamentalism Reborn?: Afghanistan and the Taliban', William Maley, New York University, New York, 199, p. 201.
6. 'Al Qaeda's Ideology', Rohan Gunaratna, Senior Fellow, Combating Terrorism Center, United States Military Academy, West Point, 19 May 2005.
7. 'Bin Laden Comes Home to Roost—His CIA Ties are Only the Beginning of a Woeful Story', Michael Moran, MSNBC, 24 August 1998.  
US Congressional Research Service report RL30588, 'Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy', 2 December 2014.
8. 'The Osama bin Laden I Know: An Oral History of al Qaeda's Leader', Peter L. Bergen, available at <https://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/maktab-al-khidamat-mak>
9. 'The Cell: Inside the 9/11 Plot, and Why the FBI and CIA Failed to Stop It', John C. Miller, Michael Stone and Chris Mitchell.
10. Co-founder of the Washington-based Search International Terrorist Entities Intelligence Group, a private intelligence firm.
11. 'Al Qaeda's Ideology', Rohan Gunaratna, Senior Fellow, Combating Terrorism Centre, United States Military Academy, West Point, 19 May 2005.  
'Dynamics of Taliban Insurgency in FATA', Muhammad Amir Rana, Safdar Sial and Abdul Basit, Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies, pp. 20-23.
12. USMA's Combating Terrorism Center, 'The Late Sheikh Abdullah Azzam's Books—Part III: Radical Theories on Defending Muslim Land Through Jihad', available at <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/next-al-qaeda-lashkar-e-taiba-and-future-terrorism-south-asia>, November-December 2011.  
USMA's Combating Terrorism Center, 'Usama Bin Ladin's Father Sheikh: Yunus Khalis And The Return of Al-Qaeda's Leadership to Afghanistan', May 2013.
13. 'Al Qaeda's Ideology', Rohan Gunaratna, Senior Fellow, Combating Terrorism Centre, United States Military Academy, West Point, 19 May 2005.

- 'Dynamics of Taliban Insurgency in FATA', Muhammad Amir Rana, Safdar Sial, and Abdul Basit, Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies, pp. 20-23.
14. Abdullah Azzam, 'Al-Qa'idah al-Sulbah', *Al-Jihad*, 41, April 1988, p. 46. The original text in Arabic was translated into English by Reuven Paz, Academic Director, International Policy Institute for Counter Terrorism, Israel.
  15. Abdullah Azzam, 'Al-Qa'idah al-Sulbah', *Al-Jihad*, 41, April 1988, p. 46.  
Abdullah Azzam, *Iklan al-Jihad*, Peshawar: Maktab Khidmat al-Mujahideen, pp. 95–131.
  16. 'Al Qaeda's Ideology', Rohan Gunaratna, Senior Fellow, Combating Terrorism Centre, United States Military Academy, West Point, 19 May 2005.  
Published extracts from Ayman al-Zawahiri's book, *Knights Under the Prophet's Banner*, Al-Sharq al-Awsat, 1 December 2001.
  17. World Affairs, 'The Next al-Qaeda? Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Future of Terrorism in South Asia', November/December 2011.
  18. Thomas Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia: Violence and Pan-Islamism Since 1979*, Cambridge University Press. The JDQS was founded around 1986 by Jamil al-Rahman; it hosted many Arab volunteers and received funding from Saudi and Kuwaiti businessmen.
  19. Combating Terrorism Centre, US Military Academy West Point, 'Lashkar-i-Tayyiba Remains Committed to Jihad', March 2009.
  20. During a late 2009 visit to Islamabad, the former US Joint Chiefs Chairman Admiral Mike Mullen had asserted that over the past 12-24 months Pakistan-based terrorist groups including Al Qaeda, the Afghan Taliban, the Pakistani Taliban, LeT, JeM were *working much more closely together*.
  21. **2001 Attacks.** The LeT used identical tactics in the 2001 attacks (Srinagar state assembly and Parliament), viz, gunmen wearing military fatigues used fake identity/security pass stickers to get past security checkpoints, and utilized both small arms and explosives. AQ cells in Saudi Arabia later emulated these tactics and used fake government passes to get past security.  
**26/11 Attack.** OBL had, in his April 2006 recording entitled 'Crusader-Zionist-Hindu War against Muslims', espoused the cause of Kashmiri Muslims and thus placed India in AQ's focus. This was followed by LeT's 26/11 attack (2008). It is not known as to what extent the LeT was inspired by this video.  
**Target Set.** The LeT has struck the same types of targets AQ has chosen in its war against the US, viz, government sites, economic symbols and transportation systems (trains), as well as 'soft targets' like places of worship (Akshardham). The LeT's 26/11 attack was also loosely modelled on the 1993 Landmarks plot.  
**Training Model.** Following the AQ example, the LeT also trains, assists, and facilitates communications between organizations like HM and JeM in Kashmir, Harakat-ul-Jihad-ul-Islami (HuJI) in Pakistan and Bangladesh, and the anti-Shia Lashkar-e-Jhangvi. Included in LeT's network are multinational organized crime syndicates (Dawood Ibrahim) and of course the Pak establishment.
  22. 1982 US National Intelligence Estimate, 1993 *Report to US Congress on Status of China, India and Pakistan Nuclear and Ballistic Missile Programs*.
  23. US Country Reports on Terrorism for 2013 (released April 2014).
  24. Yoginder Sikand, 'Islamist Militancy in Kashmir: The Case of Lashkar-e-Taiba', Aparna Rao, Michael Bollig, and Monika Bock, eds., *The Practice of War: Production, Reproduction and Communication of Armed Violence*, London: Berghahn Books 2007.
  25. The more prominent being the 2001 attack on the Srinagar state assembly, the December 2001 attack on the Indian Parliament and the 26 November 2008 (26/11) attack in Mumbai.
  26. Available at <http://almanac.afpc.org/sites/almanac.afpc.org/files/LeT%202017%20Update.pdf>
  27. 'A Vicious Cycle of Terror, Counter-terror', Praveen Swami, *The Hindu*, 26 August 2003.
  28. US Country Reports on Terrorism for 2015 (released June 2016).
  29. C. Christine Fair, 'Students Islamic Movement of India and the Indian Mujahideen: An Assessment', Seattle, WA: The National Bureau of Asian Research, January 2010.
  30. Hafiz Saeed, Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi, Haji Mohammad Ashraf, Mahmoud Mohammad Ahmed Bahaziq.
  31. Available at <http://www.un.org/press/en/2008/sc9527.doc.htm>
  32. US Country Reports on Terrorism for 2015 (released in June 2016).
  33. 'The Threat to the U.S. Homeland Emanating From Pakistan', Testimony by Stephen Tankel, Visiting Scholar, South Asia Program Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, to the House Committee on Homeland Security Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence, 3 May 2011.
  34. US Country Reports on Terrorism for 2014 (released April 2015).
  35. Other names are as follows: al Mansoorien, Al Mansoorian, Army of the Pure, Army of the Pure and Righteous, Army of the Righteous, Lashkar e-Toiba, Lashkar-i-Taiba, Paasban-e-Ahle-Hadis, Paasban-e-Kashmir, Paasban-i-Ahle-Hadith, Pasban-e-Ahle-Hadith, Pasban-e-Kashmir, Jamaat-ud-Dawa, JUD, Jama'at al-Dawa, Jamaat ud-Dawa, Jamaat ul-Dawah, Jamaat-ul-Dawa, Jama'at-i-Dawat, Jamaat-ud-Dawa, Jama'at-i-Dawat, Jamaat-ud-Dawa, Idara Khidmat-e-Khalq, Falah-i-Insaniat Foundation, FiF, Falah-e-Insaniat Foundation, Falah-e-Insaniyat, Falah-i-Insaniyat, Falah Insania, Welfare of Humanity, Humanitarian Welfare Foundation, Human Welfare Foundation, Al-Anfal Trust, Tehrik-e-Hurmat-e-Rasool, and Tehrik-e-Tahafuz Qibla Awwal.
  36. US Country Reports on Terrorism for 2015 (released June 2016).
  37. 'The Threat to the U.S. Homeland Emanating From Pakistan', Testimony by Stephen Tankel, Visiting Scholar, South Asia Program Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, to the House Committee on Homeland Security Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence, 3 May 2011.
  38. Testimony of C. Christine Fair, before the House Homeland Security Committee, Subcommittee on Transportation Security & Infrastructure Protection, 11 March 2009, available at <http://www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/CT320/>.
  39. US' Country Reports on Terrorism of June 2016, p. 384.
  40. Stephen Tankel, 'Lashkar-e-Taiba in Perspective: An Evolving Threat', Counterterrorism Strategy Initiative Policy Paper, New America Foundation, February 2010, available at [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/Lashkar-e-Taiba\\_in\\_Perspective.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/Lashkar-e-Taiba_in_Perspective.pdf)

41. Praveen Swami, 'Lashkar Renews Anti-American Polemic', *The Hindu*, 9 May 2004, available at <http://www.hindu.com/2004/05/09/stories/2004050902141000.htm>
42. The highest concentration of LeT fighters were from (in that order of frequency) the districts of Gujranwala, Faisalabad, Lahore, Sheikhpura, Kasur, Sialkot, Bahawalnagar, Bahawalpur, Khanewal, and Multan.
43. US Country Reports on Terrorism for 2015 (released June 2016).
44. *Indian Express*, 27 September 2016, available at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/indus-water-sharing-treaty-india-pakistan-modiborder-security-underwater-sensor-uri-3051968/>.
45. Hezbollah joined the Lebanese political in the wake of the 1989 Taif agreement. Brokered by Saudi Arabia and Syria, this Agreement was aimed at addressing Lebanon's sectarian challenges and ending the civil war.
46. 'Irregular Warfare and Non-State Combatants: Israel and Hezbollah', *Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior*, October 2007.
47. US Country report on Terrorism, 2014 (released in April 2015).
48. US National Intelligence Council's report entitled 'Global Trends 2030: Alternative Futures'; Pentagon's Quadrennial Defence Review (March 2014); 'The Irrelevance of Traditional Warfare?', David Barno and Nora Bensahel (27 January 2015); UK Ministry of Defence's 'Strategic Trends Programme—Future Operating Environment 2035'; RAND 'War by What Means, According to Whose Rules? The Challenge for Democracies Facing Asymmetric Conflicts: Proceedings of a Rand-Israel Democracy Institute Workshop', 3–4 December 2014; RAND 'Improving Strategic Competence—Lessons from 13 Years of War', October 2014.
49. The 2011 RAND study also drew from the report of Winograd Commission (named after Eliyahu Winograd, the Head of the Commission for the Examination of the Events of the 2006 Campaign in Lebanon).
50. In 1947, Pashtun tribesmen from FATA/NWFP fought alongside the Pak Army against India; eventually, Pak was able to seize northern areas and parts of J&K. In 1965, Pak launched Operation Gibraltar, a covert Pak Army operation to infiltrate troops and irregulars across the LoC to stir up an uprising in J&K. In 1971, in East Pakistan, the Pak Army worked with two groups of irregulars to prevent Bangladesh's secession; the al-Shams and al-Badr, para-military organizations formed by Pak's best organized Islamist political party, Jamaat-i-Islami (JI), fought alongside the Pak Army against the Mukti Bahini in East Pakistan. Thereafter, it fomented terrorism in Punjab and J&K, followed by covert insertion of troops in 1999 (Kargil).

---

*The contents of this Issue Brief are based on the analysis of material accessed from open sources and are the personal views of the author. It may not be quoted as representing the views or policy of the Government of India or Integrated Headquarters of MoD (Army).*



**CENTRE FOR LAND WARFARE STUDIES (CLAWS)**

RPSO Complex, Parade Road, Delhi Cantt, New Delhi 110010

Tel.: +91-11-25691308, Fax: +91-11-25692347, Email: [landwarfare@gmail.com](mailto:landwarfare@gmail.com)

Website: [www.claws.in](http://www.claws.in)