



# Storming the World Stage: The Story of Lashkar-e-Taiba (Columbia/Hurst)

*Stephen Tankel*

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On November 21, 2008, ten men boarded a boat in Karachi and hijacked an Indian fishing trawler, killing four of the vessel's crewmen and forcing its captain to sail toward India. Four miles off the coast of Mumbai, these men abandoned the trawler for inflatable speedboats, and within hours they began hitting multiple targets in Mumbai in a series of simultaneous and well-coordinated attacks. Over the course of three days, more than 170 people were killed and more than 300 injured. The victims included members of the Indian elite as well as Jews and Westerners.

The Mumbai attacks placed Lashkar-e-Taiba high on the list of the world's most fearsome terrorist groups. A complex and powerful organization that rose to prominence with Pakistani state support, Lashkar has sent scores of fighters to Iraq and Afghanistan and provides them with essential strategic and tactical help. Lashkar was formed by men with years of training in the trenches of Kashmir, and its skill in executing efficient and effective insurgencies has made the organization extremely attractive to dissidents. Nevertheless, Lashkar is afraid to associate too closely with al-Qaeda, which is closely tied to Pakistan's government, and al-Qaeda is afraid to ally itself too intimately with Lashkar, which would jeopardize its partnership with the Pakistani state.

Were the Mumbai attacks evidence of Lashkar's increasing infiltration of al-Qaeda's domain, or were they simply the latest in a series of attacks on Pakistan's historic rival? Stephen Tankel traces the development of Lashkar from a small resistance group to the largest, most feared organization operating in Kashmir, India, and Pakistan today. He considers the threat Lashkar now poses to Pakistan, India, and the West, and how this danger may evolve in coming decades.

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