

**Book review: Samina Yasmeen: Jihad and Dawah
- Evolving Narratives of Lashkar-e-Taiba and
Jamat ud Dawah; London: Hurst 2017, ISBN
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This can explain why some analytical details remained superficial, not to mention the instances of incorrect translations and numerous mistakes in the transliteration of Pashto words and names. Notwithstanding such (mostly linguistic-hermeneutical) details, the book will undoubtedly find a grateful audience, especially among persons who are interested in political and military studies. For those unfamiliar with military issues, the large number of military-specific abbreviations may be confusing.

Lutz Rzehak

SAMINA YASMEEN, *Jihad and Dawah. Evolving Narratives of Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jamat ud Dawah*. London: Hurst, 2017. 320 pages, £35.00. ISBN 978-1-8490-4710-4

With the jihad-focused spotlight of journalists, pundits and scholars shining brightly on the so-called “Islamic State”, interest in Pakistan has taken a back seat over the last few years. Samina Yasmeen’s new book, *Jihad and Dawah*, makes a compelling case for why it is fruitful to bring the country’s shifting jihadi landscape back into the realm of rigorous academic analysis. As Yasmeen rightly notes, existing studies have tended to exhaust themselves in mere descriptions of the terrorist activities and global linkages of Pakistan’s jihadi groups. Her goal, by contrast, is to dissect the ideological writings of one influential organisation, Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT, “Army of the Good”), and its political wing, Jamat ud Dawah (JuD, “Society for the Call to Islam”). In particular, the author wants to understand “how locally relevant narratives have been employed by jihadi groups in Pakistan to attract supporters” (p. 3).

To this end, Yasmeen has scrutinised a wide range of books, magazines and pamphlets that have been published in Urdu since the early 1990s. Her argument is straightforward: LeT initially considered the promotion of jihad as its main task. Proselytising (*da’wa*) was only a secondary consideration. Yet, this approach gradually – and mostly as a result of external shocks – gave way to a much more prominent role for religious preaching. As Yasmeen sees it, by carefully reshaping its message and postponing the call for armed struggle against the enemies of Islam, LeT managed to avoid government bans, broaden its societal base and secure additional sources of funding in the midst of a highly competitive “Islamic market”. Alongside this main argumentative arc runs the important notion that women’s agency within the organisation received a significant boost through this development, as well. Over the last three decades, female activists attached to LeT have made their voices increasingly heard. They hail “proper Muslim mothers” as crucial catalysts, both

within the domestic sphere and beyond, for the establishment of a society conducive to jihad.

Jihad and Dawa extends over six chapters plus an introduction and conclusion. The first two sections are perhaps the least impressive parts of the book. Chapter 1, “Islam in Pakistan”, merely provides a rehashing of the oft-repeated (but, sadly, less-frequently deconstructed) story of increasing Islamisation in the country since the 1970s, fuelled by religious influence stemming from Saudi Arabia. Chapter 2 introduces the LeT as originating within a particular South Asian Salafi tradition, known as Ahl-i Hadith (The People of the Prophet’s Sayings). This part of the book is somewhat weak on the historical and theological background of this sect but makes a highly convincing case for how certain factions within the Pakistani military had a major hand in the founding of LeT in February 1990.

The organisation was supposed to be a vehicle for channelling expertise in armed conflict, gained during the Afghan jihad, toward the support of an existing uprising in Indian-held Kashmir. The LeT leadership at this time argued that neither was a “perfect” Islamic state necessary to wage holy war against external enemies (such as India), nor was it required that those recruited for this task displayed complete purity in their doctrinal convictions (pp. 65–67). In this chapter, Yasmeen provides an excellent account of the elaborate training courses devised by LeT. She shows how the organisation made use of its annual conventions in order to drum up support, inter alia by having Osama bin Laden address the attendees via telephone in the mid-1990s.

Chapter 3 “The Kargil Crisis and MDI” very successfully argues that the border conflict with India in 1999 had serious repercussions for LeT. After the Indian army recaptured positions held by LeT fighters, the organisation scaled back its call for jihad and redirected its outreach activities toward alternative fields such as education. The author consequently detects an ideological shift in LeT publications that began to equate the role of the *mujahid* (one engaged in jihad) and the *da’i* (“preacher”): while the former shed his blood on the battlefield, the latter spilled his sweat on the pulpit. This way, LeT granted both essentially complementary roles, since their activities had the same aim – namely the propagation of God’s word (pp. 106–107).

Chapter 4 “From *Lashkar-e-Taiba* to *Jamat ud Dawah*” and Chapter 5 “JuD and the Mumbai Attacks” demonstrate how this reconfiguring of the organisation’s message gathered further momentum. LeT and JuD carefully adjusted their activities after events such as 9/11, the assault on the Indian parliament in October 2001 and the 2008 string of terrorist attacks in Mumbai. LeT responded to steadily increasing international pressure – especially since it was widely seen as being implicated in the context of Mumbai – by foregrounding the need for patience. Its leading thinkers reacted by stressing that first the correct understanding of God’s unicity (*tawhid*) needed to be in-

culcated in society before jihad could be waged (again). LeT emphasised that it would never fight the Pakistani state and embarked on alternative forms of activism such as spearheading protests against “anti-Islamic” messages emerging from the West or devoting itself to extensive welfare programmes for the wider Pakistani society. In this challenging climate, LeT magazines for women shifted the responsibility for keeping the flame of jihad burning to the group’s female members.

While Yasmeen manages to tell a persuasive story, the book’s readability is impacted by some structural issues. For long stretches, the author seems merely to relay the arguments she finds in her sources without embedding these into the context of wider Islamic thought or additional scholarship. This issue is particularly evident in her extensive discussion of a new “theory of jihad” post-9/11, which she ascribes to Hafez Saeed, one of the main ideologues of LeT. Yasmeen perceives echoes of the thought of Carl von Clausewitz and Sun Tzu in Saeed’s writings, without, however, being able to substantiate these claims (pp. 129–135). More troubling perhaps is the lack of engagement with recent literature on the conceptualisation of Pakistan as an Islamic state, such as the monographs by Naveeda Khan, Faisal Devji or Venkat Dhulipala, contributions on JuD such as Humeira Iqtidar’s book *Secularizing Islamists?*, or Andreas Rieck’s study of Shi’i Islam in Pakistan. Nevertheless, Yasmeen has done a great service to the field. She has skilfully engaged with LeT publications that have remained relatively inaccessible to many scholars and has deftly proven that jihadi writings need to be explored on their own terms. Her attention paid to female activists, in particular, is both innovative and highly fascinating. *Jihad and Dawah* is thus a trailblazing work in demonstrating the gendered dimensions of jihad in South Asia and beyond.

Simon Wolfgang Fuchs

STEPHANIE STOCKER, *Caste and Equality. Friendship Patterns among Young Academics in Urban India*. Bielefeld: transcript, 2017. 300 pages, €39.99. ISBN 978-3-8376-3885-1

The primary theme of this book is described in the subtitle, whereas the tension between the caste hierarchy and equality is dealt with in a more implicit manner. The notoriously difficult term “caste” is introduced all too cursorily, yet strangely enough, the word *Harijan*, unusable today, is used for the Dalits, and the error – often found in the literature – is repeated here, that the Indian government has abolished the caste system (p. 63), whereas only the practices of untouchability have been made illegal. Nevertheless, in her dissertation (in