

FRAGILE FRONTIERS

The Secret History of Mumbai Terror Attacks

Saroj Kumar Rath

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Fragile Frontiers

Saroj Kumar Rath's Fragile Frontiers stands head and shoulders above other books on the 26/11 Mumbai attacks. Despite his thorough research the intimate details and his easy style make this book read like a thriller. But the seriousness of the facts about the terrorists' strength and India's unpreparedness that he has unearthed makes it compulsory reading for anybody interested in India's security.

Nayan Chanda

Editor-in-chief, Yale Global Online and author of *Bound Together: How Traders, Preachers, Adventurers and Warriors Shaped Globalization*, Yale University, New Haven

Saroj Kumar Rath is that rare breed of thinker who combines the capacity to capture the details and immediacy of a significant event the way a journalist can, but who can also analyze and assess that event's importance, both nationally and geopolitically, only the way a seasoned analyst and academic can. In this book, he has brought new and compelling insight into the Mumbai massacre.

David Plott

Managing Editor
Global Asia, Seoul

In Fragile Frontiers, Saroj Kumar Rath painstakingly reconstructs the tumultuous days of the 2008 Mumbai attacks, from its initial stages to the attack itself to the highly publicized trial. He cuts through the confusion and misreporting to deliver a clear and sobering look at one of the major geopolitical events of the new century, making it essential reading for scholars and the policy community.

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Formerly with *The Wall Street Journal*

Saroj Kumar Rath has ventured into the tricky territory of contemporary history and the even trickier field of terrorism in this account of Mumbai attacks of 2008. Fragile Frontiers will attract debate, vigorous discussion and no doubt disagreement on both the causes of terrorism and the specific motivations that led to the Mumbai attacks.

David Walker

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Fragile Frontiers

The Secret History of Mumbai Terror Attacks

Saroj Kumar Rath

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Abbreviations

ATS	Anti-Terrorist Squad
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
CBI	Central Bureau of Investigation
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CrPC	Criminal Procedure Code
CST	Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus
DEA	Drugs Enforcement Administration
DNI	Director of National Intelligence
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FIA	Federal Investigation Agency
GPS	Global Positioning System
HHTI	Handheld Thermal Imager
HI	Hizb-e-Islami
HuA	Harkat-ul-Ansar
HuJI	Harkat-ul Jihad-ul Islami
HuM	Harkat-ul Mujahideen
HuM	Hizb-ul Mujahideen
IB	Intelligence Bureau
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
IM	Indian Mujahideen
IPC	Indian Penal Code
IPS	Indian Police Service
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence
ISRO	Indian Space Research Organization
J&K	Jammu and Kashmir
JCE	Joint Criminal Enterprise
JeM	Jaish-e-Mohammad
JI	Jamaat-e-Islami
JKLF	Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front
JKSLF	Jammu and Kashmir Student Liberation Front
JuD	Jamat-ud Dawa
JUI	Jammat-ul-Ulema-i-Islami
LeJ	Lashkar-e-Jhangvi

LeT	Lashkar-e-Taiba
LoC	Line of Control
MDI	Markaz-ud-Dawa-wal-Irshad
MEA	Ministry of External Affairs
MI	Military Intelligence
MLA	Member of Legislative Assembly
NAL	National Awami League
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NBW	Non-Bailable Warrant
NDA	National Defence Academy
NDC	National Defence College
NIA	National Investigation Agency
NLI	Northern Light Infantry
NSA	National Security Advisor
NSG	National Security Guard
NWFP	North West Frontier Province
PISCES	Personal Identification Secure Comparison and Evaluation System
PoK	Pakistan-occupied Kashmir
POTA	Prevention of Terrorists and Disruptive Activities Act
QRT	Quick Reaction Team
RAW	Research and Analysis Wing
RDX	Research Department Explosive
ROP	Royal Omani Police
SAG	Special Action Group
SIMI	Students Islamic Movement of India
SRPF	State Reserve Police Force
SSP	Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan
TADA	Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act
TNSM	Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi
TTP	Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan
UAPA	Unlawful Activities Prevention Act
ULFA	United Liberation Front of Assam
UN	United Nations
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
VoIP	Voice over Internet Protocol
VT	Victoria Terminus

Glossary

Ahl-e-Hadith	Persons who follow the words, deeds, acts, approval or disapproval ascribed to Prophet Mohammad.
Al Badr	Al, a prefix, means 'the'. Badr is the name of the first full military confrontation between the Muslims and the pagans at Mecca in the second year of Hijrah (624 CE).
Al Barq	The winged ass. Inspired from the winged jackass on which Prophet Mohammad flew from Mecca to Jerusalem.
Al Jihad	The struggle or the holy war.
Al Umar Mujahideen	The Holy Warriors of Umar. Umar bin Al Khatab was one of the best companions of Prophet Mohammad, who became the second Khalif (leader) after the death of the Prophet.
Al-Fatah	The Conquest
Al-Mansoorian	The Victorious
Al-Nasaryeen	The Victorious
al-Qaeda	The base
Azad	Liberate
Beit-ul Mujahid	House of Holy Warriors
Berelvi	Named after a small town Bareilly in Uttar Pradesh, India, where its proponent Ahmad Raza Khan lived and popularized the movement on the basis of the tradition of Prophet Mohammad.
Bhai Wasul	Receive of general training (tour) as well.
Daura-e-Ama	
Bharatiya Janata Bollywood	People of Bharat (India) The Mumbai film industry, a portmanteau of Bombay and Hollywood.
Chhota	Literal meaning small, also used to refer to the youngest in the family.
Daura-e-Khasa	Major Training

Rukka	Note
Daura-e-Ribat	To station and stay in place for the training.
Daura-e-Sufa	Religious training and proselytizing
Dawa	Literally means 'call', and in this sense, it refers to calling to the Truth through preaching and propagation.
<i>Khairaat</i>	Charity
<i>Falah-w-Bahbood</i>	Welfare
Deobandi	Followers of Deoband, named after a place in Uttar Pradesh, India. It is a Sunni religious movement and adherent of Hanafi school of Sunni jurisprudence.
Hanafi	One of the four Sunni jurisprudences.
Sunni	People of the tradition of Prophet Mohammad.
Difa-i-Pakistan	Defence of Pakistan.
Dukhtareen-e-Taiba	Daughter of the pure.
Dukhtran-e-Millat	Daughter of the nation.
Falah-e-Insaniyat	Welfare of human.
Fidayeen	One who sacrifices himself/herself.
Ghazwa	A battle or invasion.
Harkat-ul Ansar	Literally, activities of the helpers or supporters. People of Madinah who responded to the Prophet's call to Islam, becoming Muslims, and welcomed him to Madina when he immigrated there from Makkah are known as the Ansar.
Harkat-ul Jihad-ul Islami	Activities of holy Islamic worriers.
Harkat-ul Mujahideen	Activities of the holy warriors.
Harkat-ul Mujahideen Al-Alami	Activities of the global holy warriors
Hizb-e-Islami	Islamic party.
Hizb-ul Mujahideen	Party of the holy warriors.

Idara Khidmat-e-Khalaq	Service of the women, children and old.
Ikhwan-ul-Muslimeen	Brothers of Muslims.
Ittehad-e-Islami	Islamic Unity.
Ibn-e-Tayamiah	Those who are committed to the great cause.
Jaan-e-Fidai	sacrifice of life.
Jaish-e-Mohammad	Army of Mohammad.
Jamaat-ul Furqaan	Organization of the Criterion (between truth and falsehood).
Jamaat-e-Islami	The Islamist party.
Jammat-ul-Ulema-i-Islami	The party of Islamic clergy.
Jihad	A fairly controversial Arabic term used 41 times in the Holy Quran with reflexive/ subjective meanings. Clerics describe the meaning as a personal struggle in the way of Allah to keep evil away from oneself; critics translate it as Holy War against the Kafir. Peace-loving Islamists call it 'preserving ones-self from sin and disbelief as the greater (akbar) Jihad'. However, militants often espouse jihad as 'going to war to defend Islam, adherents of Islam, their property or occupation of a Muslim or Islamic country'.
Kafir	An Arabic word meaning non-believer or infidel. Used 470 times in the Holy Quran but over time, the word developed negative connotation and in South Asia, it is derogatory! Indian Muslims normally avoid publicly calling Hindus as Kafir as this often leads to conflict. In 2012, Deoband clergies have tried to clarify that Hindus are not Kafir. Western scholars only interpret the literal meaning and not the underlining sense of the word.
Khuruj	Revolt
Lal Masjid	Red Mosque

Lashkar-e-Jabbar	Also known as Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (Army of Jhang, a region in Pakistan)
Lashkar-e-Omar	Army of Omar
Lashkar-e-Taiba	Army of the Pure
Lathi	Literally, stick or baton. In South Asia, lathi has a broad meaning as it is equated with the most reliable backer/supporter at the time of need and distress.
Madrassa	Islamic seminaries where apart from education (mostly religious), food and shelter are also provided to the students.
Maharaja	Great King
Mahaz-e-Azadi	Front for Freedom
Markaz	The <i>Center for Proselytization and Preaching</i>
Dawa-ul-Irshad	
Maulavi	Sunni religious teacher
Mohajir	Literally, migrant. After the partition of India, those Muslims who migrated to Pakistan from India could not melt with the indigenous Pakistanis and are called mohajir.
Mujahedeen	Plural of Mujahid, one who wages jihad
Mullah	A Muslim scholar, educated in Islamic law
Nizam-e-Mustafa	Rule of God
Paasbaan-e-Ahle-Hadith	Defender of Ahle-hadith
Paasban-e-Kashmir	Defender of Kashmir
Panchasheel	A Sanskrit word meaning five virtues.
Pathan	The origin of this mysterious word which cannot be traced in any known language, but it is believed to mean either or both, the rudder, or the mast of a ship. The Paktues and Pakthas of the Vedas. The Afghans call themselves Pakhtan from which the change to Pahtana and again to Pathan is easy.
Qaid-e-Azam	Great Leader
Roza	Roza is an Urdu word which means fasting

Sachar Committee report	In March 2005, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh appointed a high level committee to prepare a report on the Social, Economic and Educational Status of Indian Muslims. The 7-member committee, headed by Justice Rajinder Sachar (retired) submitted its report to the Prime Minister in November 2006.
Salafi	The word 'salaf' means predecessor or forefather. The first generation and the two generations that followed after the Prophet Mohammad passed away are called al-salaf — the predecessors. As per Salafism the first three generations of Muslims were pure and unadulterated, and, hence their interpretation of Quran and the Sunnah is best and must be followed
Shahadat	Martyrdom
Sher-e-Kashmir	Lion of Kashmir
Shuhada	Martyr/witness, evidence
Shura	Literal meaning consultation, other meaning council of elders
Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan	Soldiers and companions of Pakistan
Takfiri	The action of claiming that a person or a group is Kafir
Taliban	Plural of Talib meaning student or someone who requests a thing that is Talibul Ilm, means Requester of Knowledge
Taqlid	Means 'emulation' or 'copying' another individual. In Islam, Muslims do taqlid of a scholar who they believe preaches the correct thing in fiqh (jurisprudence — religious law). They do this by following his opinions concerning fiqh issues
Tehreek-e-Hurmat-e-Rasool	Movement for defending the honour of the Messenger
Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi	Movement for the Enforcement of Islamic Law

Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan	Movement of Students of Pakistan
Tehrik-ul- Mujahideen	Movement of the holy warriors
Ummah	Means a community or a people. It is used in reference to the community of believers or Muslims across the globe because they are brothers and sisters in Islam
Wahhabis	Inspired by Muhamad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, Wahhabism advocates purging Islam of what is considered impurities. Wahhabi theology treats the Qur'an and Hadith as the only fundamental and authoritative texts

Foreword

I have been asked to write a Foreword to this book, and have much pleasure in doing so.

In late autumn 2008, when I saw the spectacular scene of flames and smoke billowing from the colonial-style Taj Mahal Palace hotel in Mumbai and the triumphant operationalization of the organized systematic attacks by terrorists on TV, I was astonished. Thanks to my long professional career, I instinctively felt that a big organization must be behind the crime. This supposedly new type of crime made me think about the structural similarity it shared with war crimes like ethnic cleansing, committed to attain an 'ethnically clean' land. And I started wondering about the applicability of Joint Criminal Enterprise (JCE) in the Mumbai conspiracy.

JCE is an international criminal law notion applied mainly in war crimes and can implicate someone powerful behind the scenes who would otherwise escape criminal liability in a situation such as conspiracy, or aiding and abetting.

I shared my wish to undertake a research study on Mumbai attacks with former Japanese ambassador in India Chusei Yamada, and he kindly introduced me to Dr Rath, a specialist in terrorism, who knows the region very well.

In April 2010, when the scorching summer sun was blazing down on India, I landed in Delhi to meet Dr Rath. Since then, for three long years, we worked together, visiting the crime scenes in Mumbai, meeting the special public prosecutor of the Mumbai trial and touring other parts of India under contestation between India and Pakistan, including, Kashmir.

Along with Dr Rath, I endeavoured to unravel 'the purpose behind the Mumbai terror attacks'. When we put this important question to the special public prosecutor his explanation, which asserted that it was carried out with the intention of obtaining an upper hand and forcing India into a settlement of the Kashmir problem, was not persuasive. I was puzzled to hear that opinion, because terrorist attacks against India, in my opinion, would further complicate the Kashmir issue. Dr Rath and I agreed to disagree with the special public prosecutor

and other such voices. Our understanding about the purpose of the Mumbai attacks differed.

We found out that the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) is the terrorist group most obedient to Pakistan's intelligence service, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). But when it came to 2008, seven years after the beginning of the Afghan War, even within the ranks of the LeT, there arose some elements who were opposed to the ISI's official cooperation with US and joined the fight against the country with other militant groups. The ISI, which was playing a double game, had plunged itself into a difficult situation where the agency could not even handle the ever-loyal LeT. In that circumstance, some elements of the ISI contemplated to divert the attention of those extremists among the LeT from the Afghan War to India, the conventional foe, by launching the Mumbai attacks. Planning, training and other preparations for the Mumbai attacks were carried out by those elements of the ISI. In one line, the purpose of the Mumbai attacks was extraction of dissatisfaction-gas from extremist elements of LeT and at the same time to maintain the ISI's pro-US image in America's war on terror.

This revelation invites us to the next question: 'Why there were so many terrorist organizations established and flourishing in South Asia and how have they finally become so powerful as to usurp governmental organizations?'

Then Dr Rath and I have been in tandem with each other to tackle many broad questions on the hazardously complicated Indo-Pak relations beyond Kashmir and Pakistan's troubled history, affected by the Soviet-Afghan War and US war on terror, along with issues on the development of the Mumbai attacks' investigation.

For the last 35 years, Afghanistan has been ravaged by war, where Pakistan is pursuing an intriguing 'strategic depth' policy. The spillover effect of the 35-year-war, coupled with the ISI's strategy to support militants and extremists, has radicalized Pakistan in a comprehensive way. By the time the US compelled Pakistan to support its war on terror, its 'strategic depth' policy was in tatters. And because of this U-turn, Pakistan ended up fighting the very militants it has fathered and nurtured for long. ISI strategists were caught unawares by the impending explosive situations, at the forefront of which Pakistan is now standing.

For three years, Dr Rath has patiently pieced together the slowly trickling and gradually developing source materials by weighing the veracity of the information through his regional wisdom. Finally

he has produced this multi-dimensional analysis on Mumbai terror attacks, *Fragile Frontiers*, which also incorporates the above-mentioned developments in Pakistan prominently.

Fragile Frontiers is a different work, which eruditely examines the historical nexus existing between terror acts like the Mumbai attacks and the historically convoluted Indo-Pak relations, compared to the writings of Westerners and outsiders to this region on similar topics.

Dr Rath has certainly brought to his work not only knowledge and sympathy, but much care and research.

Professor Chikako Taya
Professor of Hosei University, Faculty of Law, Tokyo
Former Judge of International Criminal
Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, The Hague
Former Prosecutor of Supreme Prosecutor's Office, Tokyo

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Acknowledgements

Academic research on contemporary topics is often stymied by the inevitable gap between the researcher's quest to settle the myriad number of questions and the daunting obstacles in assembling source materials. Such gaps, most of the time insurmountable, by less resourceful academics, strike a fatal blow to the quest of the researcher who swallows agony before withdrawing from such enterprising research. Therefore, thinking journalists and governing officials — with access, affluence, articulation, academic interest and resourcefulness — have colonized the domain of research and publication on contemporary topics and developed the sector into a profitable trade. Alas, even the follow-up cold calculated journal articles on such topics also often carry the name of persons from those two tribes. This new development has reversed the trend where academics have to dispute and quote the academic works of untrained but very capable journalists and governing officials and not the other way around. Academicians were never ever under such threat. My endeavour is to remain engaged in this 'battle for space' and only readers would decide the verdict.

This work is a transparent presentation of the prevailing institutional malaise of South Asia; an analysis of the inclination and capabilities of state institutions to rationalize tyranny; and an exposure of the façade of deceptive diplomatic interactions among the US, India and Pakistan. I have ventured to create an investigative and academic, yet lucid and readable portrayal of terrorism in South Asia centred around the Mumbai attacks. The work is not a mute description of the past alone but a detailed explanation on most basic questions and an interesting unravelling of some of the highly complicated puzzles. So critics will doubtlessly have their own opinion for such an endeavour.

When I was working as a support staff (the actual work at times was far inferior than mere support) at the self-effacing environment inside the high walls of Japanese Embassy in New Delhi, renowned sociologist Professor P. Radhakrishnan of the Madras Institute of Development Studies often used to ask me uncomfortable questions about my research, study and its use. My clarifications never impressed the eminent sociologist. His questions and my agonies continued until Professor Chikako Taya sought to use my expertise for her research on

terrorism in India–Pakistan–Afghanistan. I left the permanent, secure embassy job to assist, learn and outwit Professor Taya and embrace uncertainties. Both these professors have watered and nourished each of the molecules in my adrenaline for a smooth, forceful rush. This book owes nearly everything to both.

The gruesome Mumbai attacks traumatized not only people from India but across the globe. Nearly all leading law enforcement agencies around the world sent observers to understand the attacks. Many research institutions and universities employed scholars to dissect the attacks and the trial. Under such trying circumstances, this study was commissioned and I had the chance to meet some of the outstanding persons whose expertise and cooperation were vital for the research inquiries. To get a sense of the attacks, I undertook on-the-spot inquiries at all the nine places of attacks in Mumbai, took a boat ride near Cuff Parade following the trail of the terrorists and went from court to court to follow the trials. From the Esplanade Session Court of Mumbai the matter sent to Special Session Court at Arthur Road Jail. Special Public Prosecutor Ujjwal Nikam kindly allowed my wife Mony and me to visit the Arthur Road Jail Court, where we had the chance to briefly meet the investigating officer of the Mumbai case. After the final judgement of Special Session Court, the matter reached the Bombay High Court, where there was not much spark in the argument. However, high drama waited in Delhi where two courts Patiala House Court No. 10 and Supreme Court of India at Court No. 7, within the distance of a few hundred metres, hearing the arguments — at times on confrontational and contradictory lines. Nearly four years after the Mumbai attacks, when Delhi Police arrested an accused Abu Jundal, the service of two new courts — Tiz Hazari Court in Delhi and Esplanade Court in Mumbai — sought by the law enforcing agencies to take the matter forward.

This work could not have completed without the generous support of several individuals. A simple, low-profile but highly impactful journalist, Mustafa Plumber, the Mumbai correspondent of *The Indian Express*, was instrumental and helpful in more than one way. I owe a lot to Mumbai Advocate Izaj Naqvi, whose cooperation helped me understand the case. Shailesh Gaikwad, the prolific *Hindustan Times* journalist from Mumbai, was most articulate and open to offer his journalistic expertise for this work. I thank Dhananjay Mahapatra, senior journalist of *The Times of India* for his guidance, which helped me understand the intricacies of the case. Josy Joseph, the investigative

journalist of *The Times of India* was always ready to guide me while shaping the monograph. I thank Saikat Datta, the *Outlook* journalist, for his arguments, articulation and cooperation.

Many people who have made it possible for me to gather source materials essential for the content of this book must remain unnamed. They allowed me a peek into the inner sanctum of the secret world. Their cooperation was not without risk, at times to their careers and at others to their lives.

Professor Chintamani Mahapatra, Omita Goyal, Dr Manoranjan Mishra, Dr Vir Narayan and Dr Vijay Sridhar have contributed to enrich the work in their own special way.

This work had to sail through the hands, heads and hearts of as many as six reviewers from various organizations. A note of thanks to all, especially the two reviewers from Routledge India, who contributed to the erudition and sparkle of this manuscript. The present shape of the book received substantial support from the editorial team at Routledge, New Delhi.

My father Dadhigana Rath encouraged me in a novel unspoken way. All praise to Mony, my life partner, who was my shadow during those frustrating chases of original documents and final writing of the monograph. Mony wordlessly withstood my numerous unnecessary flare ups, which used to occur liberally because of my failure to get hold of source materials. On one occasion on a sunny February afternoon, while hopping back and forth from Bombay High Court to Esplanade, an old Parsi gentleman had to intervene at Azad Maidan to restrain us from fighting, as he thought our marital differences were now out in the open. We took his counsel without informing the background. Professor Shiv Kumar Choudhury, a cardiac surgeon at AIIMS, New Delhi and Dr Kaushal Kant Mishra, an orthopaedic surgeon, have not only always raised the bar for me but provided every conceivable support to come out with the work. Amidst the writing of the book, the birth of Rigsadi, the stunning charmer, our son, brought immeasurable joy.

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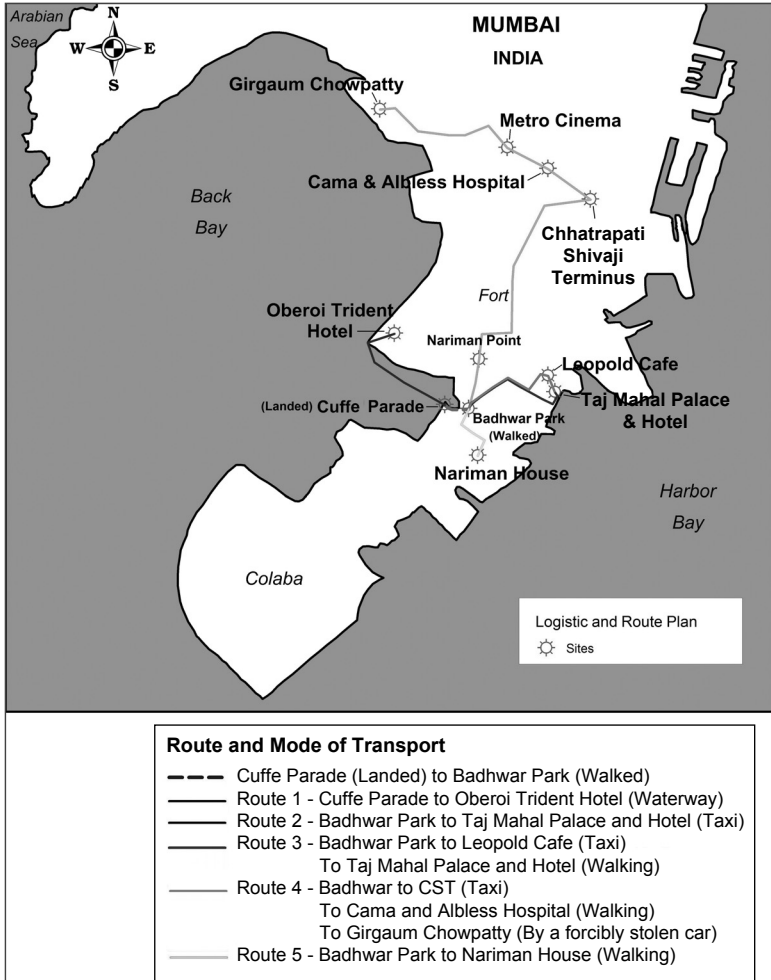
Map 1: Route from Karachi to Mumbai



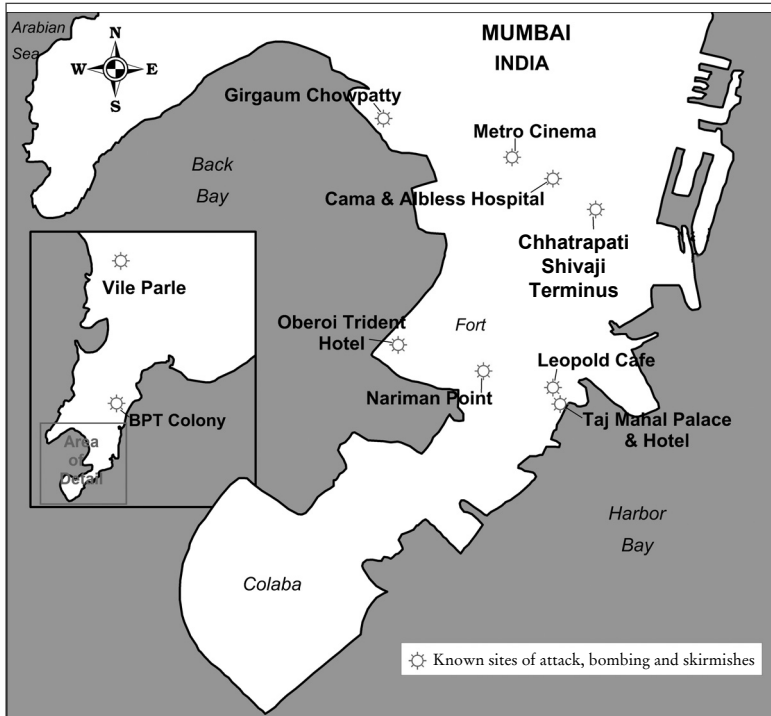
Source: All maps prepared by Ranjana Lashkar. Maps not to scale.

Note: Terrorists received sea training at Karachi but they started their journey from Kajhar Creek near Ketī Bandar, 150 km south-east of Karachi. Ketī Bandar had special significance for the terrorists as it was built from the ruins of ancient seaport Debal where Muhammad bin Qasim and his army arrived from Iraq to attack *Hindustan* in 711 CE.

Map 2: Landing and Travel Routes of Terrorists



Map 3: Bombing Sites of 2008 Mumbai Attacks



Note: Not only ten terrorists from south-east Karachi reached seven destinations inside South Mumbai without any restriction but also they were pleasantly surprised to face little resistance during the initial hours of attacks.

Map 4: Home Town of the 10 Mumbai Attackers



<u>Name</u>	<u>Attacked</u>	<u>Place of Origin</u>
Ismail Khan	CST	Dera Ismail Khan
Ajmal Kasab	CST	Faridkot
Shoib	Taj Hotel	Shakkargarh
Javed	Taj Hotel	Okara
Hafiz Arshad	Leopold Cafe & Taj Hotel	Multan
Naser	Leopold Cafe & Taj Hotel	Faisalabad
Abdur Rehman	Oberoi – Trident Hotel	Arifwala
Fahadullah	Oberoi – Trident Hotel	Okara
Babar Imran	Nariman House	Multan
Nazir	Nariman House	Faisalabad

Map 5: LeT Training Camps in Pakistan and Afghanistan



Note: Mumbai attackers and other LeT terrorists received indoctrination, training and support from these training camps.

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Introduction



On 26 November 2008, on a moonless evening, 10 strangers descended into Mumbai after a gutsy and risky 600 nautical miles' sea voyage from Karachi.¹ They were not the ubiquitous tourists or aspiring Bollywood actors the vivacious and bustling metropolis receives every day. Although in the peak of their youth, neither the nightlife of the city nor the breezy evening wind from the Arabian Sea drew these strangers into Mumbai. All in their early 20s, they were hardened terrorists belonging to the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), one of the most organized, disciplined and dreaded terrorist organizations of Pakistan. They unloaded their weapons and explosive-laden rucksacks from the fishing trawler, which had brought them up to four to five nautical miles off the Mumbai coast, loaded the bags into an inflated dinghy and paused to catch their breaths for sometime, before reaching the Mumbai shore and fanning into the metropolis to create mayhem.² They came to the city to kill its citizens and create a reign of terror before they themselves decidedly and unfailingly got killed.³ Their indoctrinated desires were not fully gratified however. One terrorist out of the 10 did not die. The Mumbai police apprehended him instead, denying him the promised paradise and, worse still, kept him alive long enough to tell the tale. Astonishingly, a mere 10 terrorists managed to successfully attack nine locations in the city. As video cameras rolled in on 26 November and transmitted the live telecast, what stunned the world was that *a mere handful of terrorists took the 18 million inhabitants of the megacity to ransom* for three long days (emphasis author). The frightening display of murder and mayhem, the chilling mediatized operationalization of the attacks, and the fiendish massacre rivalled the 9/11 attacks on the United States (US).

History books are full of narrations of terrorist attacks, grand and grotesque, but the Mumbai assault, often referred to as the 26/11 attacks, was the most horrific and durable on-camera cruelty and killings of innocents anywhere in the world.⁴ This assertion is verifiable. The Mumbai attacks stand alone if one compares them with other major terrorist strikes around the world. The duration of 9/11

attacks was 1 hour 17 minutes. The July 2005 London serial bombings continued for half an hour and the 2002 Bali and 2004 Madrid serial bombings ended within one minute. The 2006 Mumbai serial bombings went on for 30 minutes and the 1998 Nairobi attack consisted of one explosion. The Moscow and Beslan hostage crises of 2002 and 2004 continued for three days each; however, except for the bloody denouement of both these crises, the initial days were largely deathless. The casualties in some of these cases were higher than the Mumbai attacks but unlike 26/11, the unfortunate victims of the other attacks were neither incapacitated nor tortured by the terrorists before their death. Details of Voice over Internet Protocol calls between the LeT terrorists and their bosses in Pakistan provide chilling accounts of the remorseless efficiency with which the massacre of innocents was choreographed.⁵

I would like to clarify here that this book is not advocating one set of deaths over the others. In February 1941, during the Second World War, several Australian Air Force officers were captured by Japanese soldiers at the Laha Airfield in the Ambon Island, north of Australia. All the officers were beheaded by the Japanese soldiers.⁶ The Australian Government sent letters of regret to the martyrs' families, stating that their sons died 'in circumstances that are an affront to civilization'. One of the victims' parents, Oswald and May Walkers, wrote back to the government: 'We are grieved about it but realize how much better [off our son was] not to have suffered in a horror camp'.⁷ Another victim Isaac's father wrote: 'We should feel some degree of thankfulness that the time he spent in the hands of our inhuman adversary was very short, and that he was, therefore, spared a lot of suffering that other poor lads were called upon to endure ...'.⁸ The Mumbai attack victims were forced to endure long hours of suffering at the hands of their inhuman adversaries before succumbing to death. Therefore, they hold the dubious distinction of being the longest audio-visualized torture and killings by terrorists.

While the attacks were on, people across the world were anxiously scanning every possible source to get the slightest of information into the reasons for them — why the city of Mumbai was attacked; who were behind the attacks; and why had India failed to face, if not prevent, the attacks? These three questions, simple as they sound, tested the collaborative wisdom of the world in general and India in particular. The search for answers became tougher and murkier in the subsequent days. The needle of suspicion immediately pointed

towards Pakistan. India and Pakistan, the perennial rivals, got involved in a volley of allegations and counter-allegations, blame and counter-blame, and exchange of uncomfortable dossiers and counter-dossiers.⁹ In *Fragile Frontiers: The Secret History of Mumbai Terror Attacks*, I endeavour to examine these three fundamental questions with the explicit intention of providing irrefutable, convincing and unadulterated answers.

Before the Mumbai assault, intrusion of armed militants from foreign lands was limited to the fringe provinces of the country such as Jammu and Kashmir (J&K)¹⁰ and West Bengal. The pattern of terrorism in mainland India was limited to detonation of bombs and abatement of divisive forces, mostly by Pakistan. The bomb detonation pattern was reiterated by the then Indian Home Minister L. K. Advani in 1998 when he informed the Parliament that 'Delhi Police has been able to solve 36 bomb blasts incidents out of 40 with the arrest of 14 suspected militants, including 7 foreign nationals'.¹¹ In 2002, another cabinet minister informed the Parliament that until August of that year, Indian security forces had seized more than 49,000 kg of explosives.¹² Since 2001, there have been a series of bomb attacks all over India outside J&K. Cities like Delhi, Jaipur, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Coimbatore, Hyderabad, Varanasi, Ayodhya, Rampur and Agartala were targeted before the Mumbai attacks. India also lost two prime ministers to terrorism. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was killed in a bomb blast while Prime Minister Indira Gandhi died after a barrage of gunshots from her armed bodyguards.¹³ Nevertheless, in none of these incidents did foreign fighters descend into mainland India with AK-47s or challenge security forces. The Mumbai attacks were the first of their kind in mainland India, where armed militants successfully sneaked into a megacity to carry out their suicide strike.

Pakistan-sponsored suicide terrorist mission of any scale, although devastating and appalling in its effect, was successfully circumvented, and later eliminated in or around 2004–05 by the Indian security forces within the boundary of J&K.¹⁴ With the successful execution of the 26/11 attacks, terrorists determinedly disturbed that calibrated restriction. The attack was spectacular for its sheer scale, length and impact. It was first of its kind where a handful of terrorists from a foreign country came with the specific purpose of waging war against India.¹⁵ The foolhardy act of bravado by such a small number of terrorists stunned the world. What was also amazing was the terror technique opted by the terrorists, never applied previously in any part of the

world. After the Mumbai attacks, the Taliban militants in Kabul replicated their *modus operandi* with Mumbai style of attacks in the years 2010, 2011 and 2012.¹⁶ Osama bin Laden's effort to replicate Mumbai-like attacks in United Kingdom, France and Germany in 2010 was timely intercepted and pre-empted by German intelligence officials.¹⁷

The real question that needs to be answered is how the Mumbai terrorists managed to stun the world with their unique brand of terrorism and how they succeeded in subterfuging a whole nation. While the proceeding chapters answer these questions as well as why the terrorists chose Mumbai for the attack, it is obvious that the audacious attack was an impossibility 'without the active, specialized, and comprehensive choreographic support and strong backing of state institutions'.¹⁸

The genesis of the attacks can be traced back to an immensely deeper and extremely intricate set of background events. Those incidents were largely connected with the 9/11 attacks and the developments in J&K. The United States attacked the Taliban-governed Afghanistan on 7 October 2001 and with this, it began its massive war against terrorism.¹⁹ Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) was the mentor and backer of the Taliban in Afghanistan and the country, along with Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates, were the only three in the world that recognized the Taliban government. In a quick turn of events, Pakistan ditched the Taliban to support the US war efforts in Afghanistan.²⁰ Although the US quickly overwhelmed the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, Mullah Omar, the Taliban supreme leader, and Osama bin Laden, the al-Qaeda leader, escaped US bombings and fled from Afghanistan to settle in Pakistan.²¹ In the next two years, Mullah Omar and bin Laden regrouped their cadres and resumed their fight against the US–North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces and Pakistan in 2003. The Taliban, al-Qaeda and other militant groups targeted Pakistan because the country had switched support to the US. Therefore, the stage was set for a battle, ideological and armed, in Afghanistan and Pakistan, primarily between the US and its allies on one side and Taliban and the myriad groups of militants on the other. Later in 2009, explaining the reason behind the 9/11 attacks, one al-Qaeda commander revealed that al-Qaeda had 'planned this battle which actually aimed to bring the US and its allies into this trap and swamp (Afghanistan)'.²² The war on terror in Afghanistan and Pakistan was a policy reversal of both the US and Pakistan because

both the countries had supported terrorists in the past to achieve their state objectives.

During the Afghan War from 1979 to 1989, the US and Pakistan had collectively fathered and nurtured many of the militant organizations they are now fighting.²³

When the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center took place, India responded rapidly and decisively. US President George Bush telephoned Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on 7 October 2001, well before the launch of the air strikes on Afghanistan, and informed him of essential details about the war.²⁴ Prime Minister Vajpayee convened his key advisers and they quickly decided that India would offer its full support for the US war on terrorism.²⁵ Across the border, Pakistan's dilemma after the attacks was particularly palpable. The Pakistani army and the ISI found themselves standing at a crossroads. The Pakistan army's doctrine on national security rested on three pillars: 'resisting Indian hegemony in the region and promotion of Kashmir cause', 'protecting and developing the nuclear programme' and 'promoting a pro-Pakistan government in Afghanistan'.²⁶ Curiously, all the three interests of Pakistan were based on the comprehensive and subordinate support of Islamic forces and the militants. The US war in Afghanistan complicated the Pakistan army's age-old doctrine of supporting non-state actors against its adversary. To overcome this doctrinal difficulty, the ISI devised a novel strategy and as per the plan, Pakistan 'officially sanctioned [a] "double game", where the country is playing both sides of the war all along'.²⁷ Hence, Pakistan's support to the US war in Afghanistan was not the promised U-turn that would end army's long-standing support to Islamic extremists but rather a short-term tactical move to appease the US and offset India's hegemony.²⁸ Strategic analysts in the Pakistan army opined that the Americans might leave Afghanistan after the fall of Kabul, as they had done in the aftermath of Soviet withdrawal in 1989.

For Pakistan, playing the 'double game' has never been an easy task. When then Pakistan President General Pervez Musharraf was trying to balance the situation by giving equal support to the militants and the US, the militants and religious lobbies in Pakistan got impatient. The balancing act faltered when, much to the disbelief of the ISI and the terrorists, the US crushed the Taliban and refused to leave the ground.²⁹ The new circumstance lengthened the battle in between the

US-led troops and the militants. Two new developments disturbed all calculations of Pakistan. The first was that almost all militant organizations of Pakistan rushed to Afghanistan or supported their Afghan compatriots' war effort against the US, even by leaving other theatres of war such as Kashmir; and the second was that barring the LeT, all other Pakistani militant organizations and even the al-Qaeda trained their guns against Pakistan.

Meanwhile, back in India, encouraged by the success of the 9/11 attacks, Kashmir-oriented militants, primarily the Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) and the LeT, attacked the legislative assembly building of J&K on 1 October 2001 and Indian Parliament on 13 December 2001.³⁰ After a three-year decline in militant fatalities from 1996 to 1999 in Kashmir, the numbers steadily climbed from 1999 through 2002. Using spectacularly violent attacks, LeT and its fellow Pakistani jihadists helped spur another cycle of violence.³¹

But the militants' fight in Kashmir was getting increasingly untenable as by the year 2003, terrorist organizations had already fought for 14 long years in Kashmir. Kashmir had a long history of terrorism but since the late 1980s, incidents of violence had escalated phenomenally.

English historian Lord Acton once said 'Knowledge of the past is the surest and safest emancipation'. It is pertinent to look into a little bit of Kashmir's past. According to an authorized biography of General Akhtar Abdul Rehman, the ISI Director-general who commanded its campaign in Afghanistan during the Soviet-Afghan war, General Zia-ul-Haq entrusted the task of planning the jihad in Kashmir to the *amir* of the Jamaat-e-Islami of J&K, Maulana Sadruddin.³² During the 1980s, a Kashmiri version of Jamaat-e-Islami had begun to emerge in the Indian side of Kashmir. On 31 July 1988, a series of powerful explosions rocked Srinagar and Jammu. The blasts are usually taken to mark the start of the 'Kashmir insurgency'.³³ Just before the blasts in the month of April 1988, Pakistan's dictator General Zia-ul-Haq had addressed a meeting of the ISI and Military Intelligence (MI) officers and outlined a three-phase strategy on how to overwhelm Kashmir.³⁴ While the Afghan war was still apace, ISI and Pakistan arrived at a fateful conclusion: that it could do to India what it had done to the Soviet Union in Afghanistan.³⁵ As an organized rebellion erupted late in 1989 in Kashmir, the ISI was quick to back it. Inspired by the success against Soviet forces in Afghanistan, Pakistani intelligence officers announced to then Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in 1989 that they were prepared to use the same methods of covert

jihad to drive India out of Kashmir. The ISI organized training camps for Kashmiri guerrillas in Afghanistan's Paktia province, where the Arab volunteers had earlier organized their own camps.³⁶

In 1990, with peaceful demonstrators being gunned down by Indian forces in the streets, Jamaat-e-Islami activists in Kashmir were rapidly becoming disillusioned with the traditional non-violent stance of the movement. Maulana Abul Ala Maududi, the Aurangabad born Islamist ideologue, had established Jamaat-e-Islami on 26 August 1941 with Pathankot as its headquarter. After partition, escorted by the British army Maududi migrated to Lahore to continue the work of JeI. What remained in India was known as Jamaat-e-Islami Hind.

Jamaat-e-Islami in Kashmir formed an armed wing, known as Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, which, with its pro-Islamabad stance and obvious links to Zia's allies in Jamaat-e-Islami in Pakistan, was a natural focus for the ambitions of the ISI and the senior Pakistani military command. Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who continued to be the favourite of the ISI, provided training facilities for the new group at his camps in Afghanistan. Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, born in 1947 in the Kunduz province of Afghanistan, was a student at the Kabul University in 1975, when the ISI started funding him to exert Pakistan's influence in Afghanistan. During the USSR–Afghan war of 1979–89, Hekmatyar worked closely with the ISI to defeat USSR in Afghanistan. Since then until the rise of the Taliban in 1994, he became the favourite of ISI in Afghanistan.

One particularly large camp, known as the Markaz Faiz Mohammed Shaheed, was set up with ISI trainers and administrators on the road between Zhawar Khili and Khost in late 1991. Other militants were trained in camps set up around Muzzafarabad in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), in North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) and in the Punjab province of Pakistan. Trainers were borrowed from Hekmatyar and the syllabus was based on that taught by the ISI to the Afghan Mujahideen.³⁷ Since 1993, LeT joined the struggle in Kashmir and for the next 10 years, Pakistan-based militants wrecked havoc in J&K. Though casualties among their security personnel and civilians were high, the Indians showed no sign of weakening. During the closing years of the 1990s, India improved its counter-insurgency efforts remarkably by greatly increasing the number of troops and paramilitaries in Kashmir and by augmenting the military aspects of the counter-insurgency with social and political reforms.

India's socio-economic developmental efforts in Kashmir paid off and local support for the militants decreased.³⁸ The people of J&K were tired of the insurgency as terrorism kept almost all bread-earners of

the province indoor. Gul Ahmad, a tour operator from the beautiful hill resort of Gulmarg, 50 km away from Srinagar informs me that 'young people in their 20s and 30s grayed their beard and hair not by normal aging, but by aging too fast just by sitting frustrated indoors'.³⁹ People of the province were tired of the menace of the militants who visited their homes uninvited and demanded food, shelter, money and participants in their struggle.⁴⁰ By the year 2003, plagued by failure, frustration and exhaustion, the Kashmir-based militants started losing morale. During this time the theatre of war shifted to Afghanistan and militants of all hues in Pakistan started taking active interest in the al-Qaeda and the Taliban's fight against the US and coalition forces.⁴¹

All these events had produced a change far greater than the scale of anybody's imagination. The change occurred on three fronts: in Afghanistan, which now became the theatre of war in between Islamic extremists and US; in Pakistan, and in Kashmir, which no more remained a prime focus for the militants and hence became peaceful. In 2005, Indian security forces declared Kashmir safe from the menace of terrorism. The ISI was enraged with this change of circumstances, particularly in Kashmir. It wanted to revitalize the flagging guerrilla campaign against India. The agency devised a grand plan under the pet name of 'Karachi Project' to unsettle India.⁴² It is contended that the Mumbai attack was under the 'Karachi Project'. The assault on Mumbai was not a mere attack on the financial capital of the country but part of a grand design, an alternative offensive strategy of the Pakistani military to unsettle India and a way to alleviate the dissatisfaction of the extremist elements of LeT while maintaining the ISI's US-ally image. India became the consequential victim of Pakistan's age-old hostility and new regional security dynamics of South Asia.

The Mumbai attacks were no ordinary terrorist hits, which makes their critical assessment and examination more significant. *Fragile Frontiers* is a threadbare analysis of the plethora of questions surrounding the attacks. Why were the attacks, almost on the scale of waging a war, planned by the LeT, which was till then involved in low-scale terror acts against India? What were the circumstances which forced the Pakistani conspirators to sent storm troopers to a foreign country, despite the lurking danger of international condemnation and embargo? How could India have left its sea border exposed to a handful of terrorists to hold an entire megacity to ransom? Were the attacks, in which the perpetrators came by sea, an accidental aberration on the part of the security forces or was it the opening of a new and fragile frontier by Pakistan to wage a proxy war against India?

Why did the attackers take the sea route? Why was mainland India targeted by hardened foreign militants, who were till then targeting Kashmir and supporting homegrown militants to disturb peace in Indian cities? How much truth is attached to India's allegation that the Mumbai attack was an ISI act supported by the Pakistan army? Was, as the special public prosecutor insisted, the attack meant to gain upper hand to settle Kashmir dispute? Media reports are full of wild speculations. Some reports say that the attack was intended to shift the theatre of war from the western border to eastern border of Pakistan and to deflect inwards attacks in Pakistan and retrieve Pakistan from the morass of militancy. What is the truth?

A civilian government was in place in Pakistan when the attacks took place.⁴³ How did the incumbent government conduct itself during and after the Mumbai crisis? There were a series of bombings and blasts in almost all major cities of India before the Mumbai attacks. Were those attacks a prelude to the grand Mumbai attacks? Why was India clueless about the perpetrators of those blasts that occurred before the Mumbai attacks? What is the next plan of the ISI-LeT combine? The book is all about the fragility of India's frontiers in its recent historical past; an inquiry into the grand design behind the 26/11 attacks; a narration of its execution; an assessment of India's response mechanism; and a projection on future terrorism in India.

The attack on Mumbai was neither crude nor a dry terrorist act. It was not detached from India's past with Pakistan either.⁴⁴ A slight detour into the history of India's troubled relations and wars with Pakistan would give the reader the background knowledge about how India conducted itself, and how the frontiers of India remained fragile, which ultimately led to the Mumbai attacks. Until 1999, when the Kargil War took place, India had already fought three full-scale wars with Pakistan. India's supremacy and victory ensured in all the three wars but for surprising reasons, the country had developed the habit of losing a portion of its landmass to a defeated Pakistan, after all of its victories, except after the 1971 war. The trend prompted Pakistani dictator General Ayub Khan to declare that 'as a general rule Hindu morale would not stand more than a couple of blows delivered at the right time and place'.⁴⁵ The strange outcome of all these wars convinced the Pakistani leaders, especially the unaccountable military officers, about the stealth of their national boundary. Encouraged by the outcome of the first two wars, Pakistani military had developed a nebulous doctrine that India could neither initiate a war nor dare to seize land from Pakistan, although publicly they claimed the exact

opposite that 'India would dismember Pakistan if allowed a chance'.⁴⁶ This doctrine was a product and part of Pakistan's historical experiences, as the country had managed to stretch its national frontier inside India's territory twice, each time after testing defeat and surrender. The 1948 Indo-Pak war provided the Indian army the first ever opportunity to stand together and win a war solely for India after centuries of foreign rule.⁴⁷ India won the war but lost a great portion of territory to Pakistan, which was later known as 'Azad Kashmir' (13,297 sq. km) and 'Northern Areas' (72,496 sq. km). In 1965, Pakistan made another bid to wrest Indian territory but faced a crushing defeat. India won the war but lost 350 square miles of landmass to Pakistan.⁴⁸

The trend of acquisition of India in bits and parts, was reversed in the 1971 war when Pakistan plunged into a full-scale war and lost half of its landmass not to India, but to a new country, Bangladesh, carved out of Pakistan.⁴⁹ Even after losing half of their country, privately, the *mullahs* and military leaders of Pakistan were happy with the fact that 'not a single inch of their country' had gone to the *kafirs* (infidels).⁵⁰ After the creation of Bangladesh, the mullah military combine invoked and codified 'Indian bogey' in each stone of Pakistan and in the mind of common Pakistanis. Systematically, Pakistan indoctrinated all sections of the society about 'how India is actually a bogey' for Pakistan. To indoctrinate how India is an evil for Pakistan, three fronts were identified, which includes (a) syllabus of educational institutions, including medical colleges; (b) military training curricula; and (c) course structure of Madrassas. Later, communication and mass media became another vehicle of the said indoctrination process. Political leaders, military generals and religious zealots started thinking, planning and waging war against India one after another, by deceiving their home audience with the stage-managed scare that Hindu India was always preying to dismember and dissolve Islamic Pakistan if they did not take pro-active and strong action.⁵¹

The Muslim League led by Mohammad Ali Jinnah in pre-independent India had demanded and obtained a separate nation, Pakistan, for the Muslims. Cyril Radcliffe had drawn a demarcation line between the newly created Pakistan and the ancient civilizational land India. While coming to terms with the modern nation states and their pros and cons, India agreed to the demarcation line erected jointly by the British, Indian and Pakistani leaders. Pakistan not only refused to reconcile but staked claim on parts of newly independent India.⁵² This claim of Pakistan gradually took on an obsessive shape, a phenomenon later famous as 'India obsession' or more precisely 'Kashmir