

The Betrayal of India: A Close Look at the 2008 Mumbai Terror Attacks

Book review of "The Betrayal of India: Revisiting the 26/11 Evidence" by Elias Davidsson

By [Prof. Graeme MacQueen](#)

Global Research, June 07, 2017

These days we rush from one media story to another, trying to keep up with the latest terrorist attack. Yesterday Paris; today London; tomorrow, who knows? These attacks are tragic enough when they are acts of violence by religious extremists who have outsmarted our police and intelligence agencies. But, of course, many of them are actually violent acts facilitated by our police and intelligence agencies, directly or indirectly. The tragedy in such cases lies not only in the immediate human suffering but in the way our civil society and elected representatives are betrayed, intimidated, disciplined and stripped of their power by our own security agencies. The War on Terror, which goes by different names in different countries but continues as a global framework for violent conflict, thrives on this fraud.

But if the very agencies that should be investigating and preventing these attacks are involved in perpetrating them, what is civil society to do to protect itself? Who will step in to study the evidence and sort out what really happened? And who will investigate the official investigators? Over the years, civilians from different walks of life have stepped forward-forming groups, sharing information and methods, creating a tradition of civilian investigation.



One such investigator is Elias Davidsson (image on the right). Some readers will be familiar with his meticulous book, *Hijacking America's Mind on 9/11* or his more recent work, *Psychologische Kriegsführung und gesellschaftliche Leugnung*. Davidsson has now produced a book on the 2008 attacks that occurred in Mumbai, India. The book is entitled, *The Betrayal of India: Revisiting the 26/11 Evidence* (New Delhi: Pharos, 2017).

To remind ourselves of these attacks—that is, of the official story of these attacks as narrated by the Indian government—we can do no better than to consult *Wikipedia*, which seldom strays from government intelligence narratives:

"The 2008 Mumbai attacks were a series of attacks that took place in November 2008, when 10 members of Lashkar-e-Taiba, an Islamic militant organization based in Pakistan, carried out a series of 12 coordinated shooting and bombing attacks lasting four days across Mumbai. The attacks, which drew widespread global condemnation, began on Wednesday, 26 November and lasted until Saturday, 29 November 2008, killing 164 people and wounding at least 308."

This description, however faulty, serves to make clear why the events were widely portrayed as a huge crime—India's 9/11. When we bear in mind that both India and Pakistan are armed with nuclear weapons, and when we consider that these events were widely characterized in India as an act of war supported by Pakistan (Davidsson, 72-74; 511 ff.; 731 ff.), we will understand how dangerous the event was for over a billion and a half people in south Asia.

We will also understand how easy it was, on the basis of such a narrative, to get a bonanza of funds and equipment for the Mumbai police (735-736) and why it was possible, given the framing of the event as an act of war, for India's armed forces to get an immediate 21% hike in military spending with promises of continuing increases in subsequent years (739 ff.).

Wikipedia's paragraph tells a straightforward story, but the straightforwardness is the result of much snipping and smoothing. Both Pakistan and Lashkar-e-Taiba denied responsibility for the attacks (65; 513) and, Davidsson argues, they did so for good reason.

In his Conclusions at the end of the book Davidsson encourages us to assess separately the actual attacks and the Indian state's investigation of the attacks (865 ff.) It is "highly plausible," he says, "that major institutional actors in India, the United States and possibly Israel, were complicit in conceiving, planning, directing and executing the attacks of 26/11" (873); but the evidence of a deceptive investigation is even stronger:

"The first definite conclusion of this book is that India's major institutions, including the Central government, parliament, bureaucracy, armed forces, Mumbai police, intelligence services, judiciary and media, have deliberately suppressed the truth regarding 26/11 and continue to do so. I could discover no hint of a desire among the aforementioned parties to establish the truth on these deadly events (865)."

This distinction is useful for civil society investigators. We will frequently find it easier to prove that an investigation is deceptive, and that it is obscuring rather than illuminating the path to the perpetrators, than to directly prove the event itself to have been fraudulent. And there are two good reasons to pay attention to evidence of a cover-up. First, to cover up a crime is itself a crime. Second, those covering up a crime implicate themselves in the original crime. If they were not directly involved in the commission of the crime, they are at least accessories after the fact. To begin by exposing the fraudulent investigation, therefore, will often be wise. When this has been done we shall often find that we can begin to discern the path to the attack itself.

Davidsson gives a wealth of evidence about both the attacks and the investigation, but for this brief review I shall focus on the investigation.

Here are three recurring themes in his study that may serve to illustrate the strength of the cover-up thesis.

(1) Immediate fingering of the perpetrator

When officials claim to know the identity of a perpetrator (individual or group) prior to any serious investigation, this suggests that a false narrative is being initiated and that strenuous efforts will soon be made to implant it in the mind of a population. Thus, for

example, Lee Harvey Oswald was identified by officials of the executive branch as the killer of President John F. Kennedy—and as a lone wolf with no associates—on the afternoon of the assassination day, long before an investigation and even before he had been charged with the crime. And we had major news media pointing with confidence, by the end of the day of September 11, 2001, to Osama bin Laden and his group—in the absence of evidence.

In the Mumbai case the Prime Minister of India implied, *while the attack was still in progress*, that the perpetrators were from a terrorist group supported by, or at least tolerated by, Pakistan (65; 228; 478; 512; 731).



The Taj Mahal Hotel burning after the terrorist attacks in Mumbai (Source: Haunted India)

Likewise, immediately after the attacks Henry Kissinger attempted to implicate Pakistan. Three days prior to the attack on the Taj Mahal Palace Hotel in Mumbai, one of the main attack sites, Kissinger had been staying in the hotel. He “sat with top executives from Goldman Sachs and India’s Tata group in the Taj to ‘chat about American politics’” (331). Kissinger’s presence on the scene with Indian elites (the Tata family is one of India’s wealthiest, and the Tata Group owns the Taj) would be peculiar enough to cause raising of the eyebrows, but when combined with his immediate fingering of Pakistan it becomes extremely suspect. As Davidsson shows, what investigation there was came much later, and even today the case against Pakistan remains full of contradictions, unsupported allegations, and absurdities.

(2) Grotesque failure by official investigators to follow proper procedures

Incompetence is a fact of life, but there are times when the incompetence theory is strained to the breaking point and it is more rational to posit deliberate deception. In the case of the Mumbai investigation, Davidsson depicts its failures as going well beyond incompetence.

- Neither the police, nor the judge charged with trying the sole surviving suspect, made public a timeline of events (188-189; 688-689). Even the most basic facts of when a given set of attacks began and when they ended were left vague.
- Key witnesses were not called to testify. Witnesses who said they saw the terrorists commit violence, or spoke to them, or were in the same room with

them, were ignored by the court (e.g., 279 ff.).

- Contradictions and miracles were not sorted out. One victim was apparently resurrected from the dead when his testimony was essential to the blaming of Pakistan (229-230). A second victim died in two different places (692), while a third died in three places (466). No one in authority cared enough to solve these difficulties.
- Eyewitnesses to the crime differed on the clothing and skin color of the terrorists, and on how many of them there were (328-331). No resolution was sought.
- At least one eyewitness confessed she found it hard to distinguish “friends” from terrorists (316). No probe was stimulated by this odd confusion.
- The number of terrorists who committed the deeds changed repeatedly, as did the number of terrorists who survived (29 ff.; 689).
- Crime scenes were violated, with bodies hauled off before they could be examined (682-683).
- Identity parades (“line-ups”) were rendered invalid by weeks of prior exposure of the witnesses to pictures of the suspect in newspapers (101; 582).
- Claims that the terrorists were armed with AK-47s were common, yet forensic study of the attack at the Cama Hospital failed to turn up a single AK-47 bullet (156).
- Of the “hundreds of witnesses processed by the court” in relation to the attacks at the Café Leopold, Taj Mahal Palace Hotel, Oberoi-Trident Hotel or Nariman House, “not a single one testified to having observed any of the eight accused kill anyone” (40).
- Indian authorities declined to order autopsies on the dead at the targeted Jewish center in Nariman House. The dead, five out of six of whom were Israeli citizens (427), were instead whisked back to Israel by a Jewish organization based in Israel, allegedly for religious reasons (453). Religious sensitivity seems to have extended to a large safe at the crime scene, which the team also transported to Israel (454).

(3) Extreme secrecy and the withholding of basic information from the population, with the excuse of “national security”

- The surviving alleged terrorist had no public trial (661).
- No transcript of his secret trial has been released (670).
- One lawyer who agreed to defend the accused was removed by the court and another was assassinated (670).
- The public was told there was extensive CCTV footage of the attacks, despite the mysterious malfunctioning of the majority of CCTV cameras on the days in question (97-98; 109 ff.; 683 ff.); but only a very small percentage of the claimed footage was ever released and it suffers from serious defects—two conflicting time-stamps and signs of editing (111).
- Members of an elite Indian commando unit that showed up with between 475 and 800 members to battle eight terrorists (534) were not allowed to testify in court (327; 428-429).
- The “confession” of the suspect, on which the judge leaned heavily, was given in secret. No transcript of this confession has been released to the public and the suspect later renounced the confession, saying he had been under threat from police when he gave it (599 ff.; 681).

- The suspect, after being convicted and sentenced to death, was presumably executed, but the hanging was done secretly in jail and his body, like the bodies of the other dead “terrorists,” was buried in a secret place (37; 623).

It is difficult to see how the investigation described above differs from what we would expect to see in a police state. Evidently, the “world’s largest democracy” is in trouble.

Meanwhile, motives for the “highly plausible” false flag attack, Davidsson notes, are not difficult to find. The attacks not only filled the coffers of national security agencies, creating as they did the impression of a permanent threat to India, but also helped tilt India toward those countries claiming to take the lead in the War on Terror (809 ff.; 847). The FBI showed great interest in the attacks from the outset. It actually had a man on the scene during the attacks and sent an entire team directly after the event (812 ff.). The Bureau was, remarkably, given direct access to the arrested suspect and to his recorded confession (before he even had a lawyer), as well as to eyewitnesses (651-652; 815). The New York Police Department also sent a team after the conclusion of the event (816-817), as did Scotland Yard and Israeli police (651; 851). There seems to have been something of a national security fest in relation to Mumbai as ideas of closer cooperation in matters of security were discussed (e.g., 822).

In case Israel seems too small to belong with the other players in this national security fest, Davidsson reminds us that India is Israel’s largest customer in defense sales (853).

So, what can we learn from Davidsson’s book? For patient readers, a great deal: this 900-page study is as free of filler and rhetoric as it is rich in detail. (In correspondence the author told me that he was determined to produce a work dense with primary source material so that it could be of maximum help to activists in India striving for an official inquiry.) For readers with less patience, Davidsson has provided regular summaries. And both sets of readers will find that the book discusses not only details of the Mumbai attacks, but patterns of deception common in the War on Terror.

For all these reason, this book is a highly significant achievement and is of objective importance to anyone interested in the War and Terror-the structure and motifs of its ongoing fictions and the methods through which civil society researchers can lay bare these fictions.

Dr. Graeme MacQueen is the former Director of the Centre for Peace Studies at McMaster University in Canada. He was an organizer of the Toronto Hearings on 9/11, is a member of the Consensus 9/11 Panel, and is a former co-editor of the Journal of 9/11 Studies.

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