INDIA

Quick Facts

Population: 1,326,093,247 (July 2020 est.)

Area: 3,287,263 sq km

Ethnic Groups: Indo-Aryan 72%, Dravidian 25%, Mongoloid and other 3% (2000)

Government Type: Federal parliamentary republic

GDP (official exchange rate): $2.602 trillion (2017 est.)

Source: CIA World FactBook (Last Updated November 2020)

INTRODUCTION

Few nations have felt the deadly consequences of Islamist extremism more acutely than has India. South Asia and nearby regions host numerous centers of Islamist militancy that have affected India, including Pakistan, which is a key sponsor and instigator of international Islamist terrorism; Iran, the principal driver of Shi'a militancy; Afghanistan and Bangladesh, where Sunni militancy has flourished; and the Arab states, where radical interpretations of Sunni Islam have affected expatriate Indian workers and their families.

However, India's Muslim community has, in large part, refused to yield to the call of militancy. A community of well over 189 million Muslims – the third largest in the world, after those of Indonesia and Pakistan – lives in relative harmony within India's multicultural, multi-religious, secular democracy.[1] This coexistence is not without points of friction, however: strife between the various religious communities has been a significant feature in India since the country's partition in 1947. However, the Indian Muslim community has largely rejected broader attempts at radicalization and indoctrination and remains integrated into the fabric of Indian society.

Islamist terrorism in India has most impacted the state of Jammu & Kashmir, where a separatist movement has plagued the region for over two-and-a-half decades.[2] Islamist terrorist attacks on a smaller scale by both foreign and indigenous groups, meanwhile, have occurred in many other parts of the country.

ISLAMIST ACTIVITY

Islamist terrorism in India is overwhelmingly generated and supported by Pakistan and has long been principally concentrated in Jammu & Kashmir (J&K). Though J&K has often been the site of Islamist violence, the situation has improved in recent years, as changes on the world stage since 9/11 and Pakistan's growing instability have led to a diminution in violence. At its peak in 2001, Islamist violence in J&K killed over 4,500 people. Fatalities dropped significantly in 2012, but have risen gradually since.[3] India has

been confronted with Pakistani-backed Islamist subversion virtually since the birth of both nations, but experienced an asymmetric escalation after 1988, when then-Pakistani dictator General Ziaul-Haq, flush from the successful *jihad* against the Soviets in Afghanistan (1980–1989), decided to extend his strategy to J&K.[4] Successive governments in Islamabad have actively sustained this policy, leading to unrelenting terrorism in J&K for nearly three decades and inflicting – as of December 31, 2018 – a total of 44,954 fatalities since 1988.[5] In the first two months of 2019, another 93 fatalities were recorded in J&K.[6] Gradually, as international pressure to curtail *jihad* in J&K mounted and domestic circumstances in Pakistan worsened, terrorist groups largely controlled by Pakistan's powerful spy agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI), have increasingly found it necessary to base their cadres outside of J&K.[7] They have also had to rethink their approach within a wider pan-Islamist ideological framework that dovetails more seamlessly with the psyche of extremist groups and the logic of the global *jihad*. Ever-growing levels of Islamist subversion and terrorism were sustained across India since the start of the new century, culminating in the Mumbai attacks of November 26, 2008, though there has been a dramatic fall in incidence and fatalities since.[8] The networks and support structures of many Islamist terrorist organizations operating in India have been painstakingly constructed by the ISI and backed by enormous flows of financial support from West Asia, as well as from affluent expatriate Muslim communities in the West, as part of a sustained strategy of "erosion, encirclement and penetration" that has been exhaustively documented elsewhere.[9]

Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT)

Pakistan's ISI created Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) in Kunar, Afghanistan in 1990 under the leadership of Hafiz Mohammad Saeed. LeT is part of the "al-Qaeda compact" and is a member of the International Islamic Front for the Struggle Against the Jews and the Crusaders (*Al-Jabhah al-Islamiyyah al-'Alamiyyah li-Qital al-Yahudwal-Salibiyyin*) established by Osama bin Laden in February 1993.[10] In 1993, LeT's forces were diverted to the Pakistan-backed *jihad* in J&K, where they have operated since. At the same time, LeT has extended its networks and attacks across the rest of India, crystallizing the strategy that Saeed first articulated publicly on February 18, 1996, in an address at the Lahore Press Club: "The *jihad* in Kashmir would soon spread to entire India. Our mujahideen would create three Pakistans in India."[11]

The organization is headquartered at Muridke in the Sheikhupura district of Punjab in Pakistan, on a large plot of land widely acknowledged to have been gifted to it by the Pakistan government.[12] It is known to have operated terrorist camps in 11 separate territories throughout the country. The group manages at least 16 Islamic centers, 135 secondary schools, 2,200 offices, and a vast network of *madrassas* (religious seminaries), orphanages, medical centers, and charities across Pakistan.[13]

Until its designation as a terrorist group by the UN Security Council in December 2008, the LeT published a variety of papers, websites, and journals.[14] It remains loyal to Pakistan and continues to coordinate its activities with Pakistani state agencies. Finances for the group – as for all Pakistan-backed Islamist terrorist groupings – are provided via tacit state support, including the transfer of large quantities of fake Indian currency that Indian intelligence sources contend is printed at Pakistani security presses.[15]

LeT's financial sources also include "charitable" contributions that support both its vast Pakistani social network and its terrorist activities. These sources range from external contributions from diaspora communities to international Islamist charities, including several prominent ones from Saudi Arabia. The Pakistani state channeled a large proportion of international aid received in the wake of the earthquake in Kashmir in 2005 through the LeT, withholding state relief operations in order to facilitate the LeT's further consolidation in the affected areas.[16]

There is no doubt that the massive terrorist attack on Mumbai from November 26–29, 2008 – in which Pakistan-backed militants went on a four-day shooting and bombing rampage in India's commercial capital, killing 164 and wounding over 300 – was engineered by the LeT, which is now permitted to operate openly in Pakistan under a different name, Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD), after its supposed official ban

in 2002.[17] American involvement and pressure on Pakistan in the aftermath of that attack forced some apparent action against visible leaders of the LeT/JuD, though a long process of denial and obfuscation by Pakistan's top leadership and authorities suggests that the group will be allowed simply to reinvent itself under a new identity, as it has done previously.[18]

As a result of tremendous international focus and pressure, LeT has not been able to execute many significant incidents of terrorist violence in India outside J&K since the Mumbai attacks of 2008, yet the group nevertheless was reportedly involved in at least four: the Pune German Bakery blast (February 13, 2010); the Mumbai serial blasts (July 13, 2011); the Delhi High Court Blast (September 7, 2011), and; the Dinanagar Police Station attack in Gurdaspur, Punjab (July 27, 2015). LeT has indirectly been involved with 579 incidents in J&K since 2011, 310 of which were violent.[19] In a recent attack on civilians, LeT terrorists killed three civilians at Khanpora area of Baramulla District on April 30, 2018.

The Harkat Triad
In addition to the LeT, the three most significant terrorist groups that operate in India comprise the Harkat Triad. These groups are the Harkat-ul-Jihad-Islami (HuJI), the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HuM), and the Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), each of which is also linked to the Taliban and al-Qaeda.

HuJI came into existence in 1980 and fought the Soviets in Afghanistan. After the Afghan war, HuJI focused much of its resources on the fighting in Kashmir while also dispatching cadres to fight in Islamist campaigns in a number of other countries, including Bosnia, Myanmar, and Tajikistan. However, the emergence and consolidation of more effective terrorist organizations have marginalized HuJI in Pakistan. Consequently, the group is now strongest in Bangladesh, where HuJI Bangladesh (BD) was established as a distinct organization with direct aid from Osama bin Laden in 1992 and now seeks to establish Islamic *hukumat* (rule) there.[20] Since 2005, HuJI-BD has been involved in a number of major Islamist terrorist operations in India, executing joint operations with Pakistani terrorist groups including LeT, JeM, and HuM, and coordinating closely with the ISI.[21]

HuM is one of the original member organizations of bin Laden's International Islamic Front. It was established in 1985, at Raiwind in Pakistani Punjab, by Maulana Samiul Haq and Maulana Fazlur Rehman, leaders of factions of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Islam (JUI). Samiul Haq's *madrassa*, the Dar-ul-Uloom Haqqania at Akora Khattak near Peshawar, later emerged as a primary training ground for the Taliban and also came to dominate the HuM's terrorist mobilization and training projects. Within months of its creation, HuM was exporting recruits to Afghanistan, initially from Pakistan and Pakistani-occupied Kashmir, but subsequently from other countries. The primary area of HuM's activities, after the Afghan campaigns, was J&K, though HuM has suffered a continuous erosion of its stature as a leading player as Lashkar-e-Taiba and HuM's breakaway, Jaish-e-Mohammed, consolidated their role through a succession of dramatic attacks, both within and outside Pakistan.[22]

Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM) is the second-largest terrorist formation operating in J&K after LeT in terms of strength and capacity to carry out terror strikes.[23] India, the United States, and the European Union have declared HM a terrorist group; its chief, Syed Salahuddin, was declared a Specially Designated Global Terrorist on June 26, 2017, by the U.S. State Department.[24] HM is allegedly backed by Ghulam Nabi Fai's Kashmir American Council and Ayub Thakur's World Kashmir Freedom Movement in the United States. In January 2013, it was reported that HM had joined hands with HuJI to engage in operations to strike fear among Kashmiris.[25] The proscribed Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) is also believed to have links with HM.[26]

Recent reports suggest that the terrorist groups like HM, JeM, and LeT are operating jointly in J&K, especially since the killing of HM operational commander Burhan Muzaffar Wani on July 8, 2016, and the subsequent unrest.[27] The increasing closeness was particularly visible during the funeral services of killed terrorists.[28] However, a competitive dynamic between some of these outfits also exists.[29]

At one time, HM was the most important militant group of the Harkat Triad in terms of its effectiveness in perpetrating terrorist violence but has been progressively marginalized by LeT and JeM, both of which have become more central to Pakistan's strategic objectives in India. More recently, there has been some effort to restore HM's operational ascendancy in J&K as LeT and JeM bases and networks come under greater international scrutiny. HM has had only limited success, however, as the group's operational leadership was systematically decimated over the past few years.[30] Nevertheless, the group continues to operate openly from its headquarters at Muzzafarabad in Pakistani-occupied Kashmir, under the leadership of Yusuf Shah (a.k.a. Syed Salahuddin), who also serves as the chairman of the United Jihad Council—a conglomerate of India-directed *jihadi* organizations supported by the Pakistani state.

JeM is one of the most aggressive Pakistani groups operating in India. An offshoot of HuM, JeM was founded by Azhar Masood in 2000, when he left due to differences over matters of "finance and influence."[31] Bin Laden is believed to have extended generous funding to JeM.[32] JeM has also been extraordinarily successful in motivating second-generation South Asian Muslims in the West to join its *jihad*. These include Ahmed Sayeed Omar Sheikh, one of the conspirators in the 9/11 attacks in the United States and the killer of journalist Daniel Pearl, as well as Abdullahbhai, a Birmingham (UK) resident who served as the first suicide bomber in Jammu and Kashmir in the Badami Bagh incident of December 2000.[33]

JeM has recently been very active; it was involved in two of the deadliest attacks in India in 2016 and three other sizeable attacks since. On January 2, 2016, JeM terrorists attacked an India Air Force base at Pathankot in Punjab, killing seven soldiers. All six attackers were also killed.[34] In September 2016, JeM terrorists attacked an Indian Army administrative base in Baramulla District. The militants killed 20 soldiers and injured 17.[35] JeM terrorists attacked District Police Lines (DPL) in Pulwama District on August 26, 2017; eight Security Force personnel and three militants were killed.[36] In February 2018, JeM terrorists attacked the Sunjuwan Military Station in Jammu District, killing soldiers, a civilian, and three militants.[37] On February 14, 2019, at least 40 Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel were killed when a JeM suicide bomber rammed his explosive-laden SUV into a CRPF bus in Pulwama District.[38]

Other factions

There are a number of other Pakistan-based groups operating in India, playing roles of varying significance in the machinery of Islamist terror that has been assembled over the years. Some of these, like the Indian Mujahideen (IM), boast substantial Indian membership.[39]

Global *jihad*'s apparent appearance in India, evidenced by the formation of al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (*Jamā'at Qā'idat al-Jihād fī Shibh al-Qārrah al-Hindīyah*, or Organization of the Base of Jihad in the Indian Subcontinent, AQIS), and the Islamic State announcements regarding Khorasan Province (which includes the Indian Subcontinent), has attracted enormous interest. In reality, the impact of AQIS has been negligible, and the "Islamic State has not arrived in India because its ideology has no takers" despite occasional flurries of interest.[40] Nevertheless, there have been some incidents of flag-waving, provocative posters, and symbolism (such as wearing Islamic State T-shirts in one incident in Tamil Nadu in August 2014).[41] The National Investigation Agency (NIA), India's premier investigator, is now investigating another twenty-five cases allegedly related to Islamic State activities in India (as of March 14, 2019).[42]

Likewise, though AQIS exists in India, its impact has been minimal. India has been unsuccessfully targeted by al-Qaeda at least since 1996, when Osama bin Laden referred to India as being among the lands where the Muslims were living under "oppression," and thus a legitimate theater of *jihad*.[43] There has, as of this writing, been no incident of terrorist violence directly related to AQIS and no significant recruitment on Indian soil. However, the activities of the Base Movement, an al-Qaeda-affiliated group, have drawn the attention of security agencies. According to reports, the Base Movement is suspected to have orchestrated five different bomb blasts in Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka since April 2016.[44]

In a significant development, the Global Islamic Media Front, an al-Qaeda online propaganda platform, issued a statement in July 2017 announcing former HM leader Zakir Rashid Bhatt, also known as Zakir Musa, as commander of its newly-founded Ansar Ghazwat-ul-Hind (supporters of holy war in India) for J&K.[45] Reports suggest that Musa's group comprises less than two dozen terrorists, however, and security forces have so far succeeded in eliminating twelve cadres.[46]

Islamism and Society

Islamism in Indian society occupies a continuous ideological spectrum. Many ideologies which have fed terrorism in South Asia find their sources on Indian soil – though at least some of these sources have sought to distance themselves from the interpretations and activities of terrorists. Four broad sources can be identified on the landscape of revivalist, fundamentalist, and extremist Islamism in South Asia: the Deobandi school; the Barelvi school; the modernist-revivalist streams, such as the influential Jamaat-e-Islami; and the Ahl-e Hadith, which finds its inspiration in *Wahhabbi* doctrines and support and funding from Saudi Arabia. The Deobandi, the oldest of these four groups, dates back to 1867 and the establishment of the Dar-ul-Uloom seminary at Deoband in Uttar Pradesh. Founded by Maulana Muhammad Qasim Nanautawi and Maulana Rashid Ahmed Gangohi, the seminary developed a structured curriculum with an overwhelming emphasis on religious education based on original Arabic texts, rather than on later and "corrupted" interpretations. The impetus for these developments was the marginalization of the Muslim community in British India and concerns about the growth of Western and other non-Islamic influences.

The Deobandis formally subscribe to the Hanafi School of Islamic jurisprudence and emphasize a puritanical interpretation of the faith. In 1919, Deobandi leaders created a political front, the Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind (JUH). Later, the demand for a separate state of Pakistan for Muslims of the subcontinent split the JUH, and the JUI came into being in 1945. It lent its support to the dominant political formation favoring the communal division of British India, the Muslim League (ML). The JUI and a variety of Deobandi formations have been immensely influential, both socially and politically, in Pakistan, shaping the course of sectarianism, extremism and militancy. The Taliban in Afghanistan and the Harkat Triad in India also claim Deobandi affiliation. Significantly, however, the *ulema* of the Dar-ul-Uloom Deoband have repeatedly and explicitly condemned all aspects of terrorism, stating that "there is no place for terrorism in Islam" and declaring it to be an "unpardonable sin."[47] In February 2008, for instance, the Deoband Ulema organized an anti-terrorism conference at the Dar-ul-Uloom, which was attended by "tens of thousands of clerics and students from around India."[48]

The Barelvi order, established by Ahmed Raza Khan toward the end of the nineteenth century in Uttar Pradesh state, also adheres to an interpretation of the Hanafi School, but one that is at wide variance with the Deobandi reading. The Barelvi School, in fact, seeks to emphasize the very syncretic elements of South Asian Islam that were explicitly rejected by the Deobandis. Deeply influenced by mystical Sufi practices and beliefs, it attributes many extraordinary, perhaps even divine, qualities to the Prophet, conceiving of him more as a holy presence than a mortal man. They likewise believe strongly in the power of intercession by holy personages and saints and give greater import to the personal (rather than social and political) aspects of religion. Unsurprisingly, the Barelvi philosophy is anathema to the puritan reformist movements and schools of Islam, which condemn the Barelvis as a shrine – and grave-worshipping deviationists. The Barelvis have not been significantly associated with terrorism in India and have been systematically targeted by Deobandi terrorist groups in Pakistan.[49]

Another movement is Ahl-e Hadith, which is relatively small but has benefited enormously from Saudi support in recent times. It represents one of the most radicalized elements within the Sunni fundamentalist factions of South Asia. Inspired by Sayyed Ahmed "Shaheed" (The Martyr) of Rae Bareilly (in the present Indian state of Uttar Pradesh), who fought the Sikh Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1826–31 in the Peshawar region, the Ahl-e Hadith has sought to restore Islam to the purity of the original faith, as articulated in

the Koran and the Hadith. While claiming to be distinct from the *Wahhabbis*, the movement's beliefs and practices have much in common with the dominant creed of Saudi Arabia. Ahl-e Hadith practitioners have moved progressively closer to the Hanbali interpretation that is also the basis of *Wahhabbi* practices. Their interpretation of Islam is puritanical and legalistic, and they reject all manner of perceived deviations and "idolatrous" practices that they claim have crept into the other major traditions. While its numbers are believed to be small, and the movement no longer has more than a trace presence in India, it has remained vibrant in Pakistan, from where it has exercised disproportionate influence and demonstrated a great capacity for violence in recent years. Lashkar-e-Taiba proclaims adherence to the Ahl-e Hadith ideology. The Jamaat-e-Islami is one of the most influential revivalist movements in South Asia and has had tremendous political influence, both in pre-partition India and Pakistan. It is the most explicitly political of the various movements and categorically denies the very possibility of a distinction between the religious and the political (or even between the religious and the personal) within a genuinely Islamic order. Abu Ala Maududi, the ideologue and founder of the Jamaat-e-Islami, declared that in an Islamic state – the ideal and objective of the organization – "no one can regard his affairs as personal and private... An Islamic state is a totalitarian state."[50] Maududi sought to "enunciate an all-inclusive school of Islamic thought," one that was "not bound by any school of law."[51] To a large extent, Jamaat practice follows upon interpretations of Maududi's vision. Hizb-ul-Mujahideen and the SIMI trace their roots to Jamaat ideology. Nevertheless, the Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JIH) rejects all linkages with these groups, including SIMI – which it created as its student wing in 1977, but which was expelled in 1981 due to its increasing radicalization. The Hizb remains intimately connected with the Jamaat-e-Islami Jammu and Kashmir.[52]

Tablighi Jamaat (TJ) is a radical Muslim revivalist movement, founded by Muhammad Ilyas in 1926 in Mewat (in the present Indian State of Haryana), that reaches out to Muslims of all social and economic classes and seeks to purify the Islamic faith of all "idolatrous deviations." One of the most rapidly growing Islamist organizations, TJ primarily operates in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, but has extended its network in other parts of the world as well. It is "a loosely controlled mass movement, not a rigidly controlled organization" and "has no fixed membership and the leaders of the movement do not exercise total control on its activists."[53] TJ's founder, Mohammad Ilyas, emphasized the *jihad-bin-nafs*, or the internal *jihad* of the spirit, over the *jihad-bin-saif* (*jihad* by the sword), and the organization has long been criticized by other Islamists for its apolitical orientation. In recent years, however, linkages between TJ followers and Islamist terrorism have surfaced with increasing frequency.[54]

Today, some of the Indian Muslim community's disadvantages are structural and relate to accidents of history and geography. The partition divested the community of its leadership and its elites across North India, and Muslims have remained largely directionless and socially, politically, and economically underdeveloped. On virtually all social indicators, Muslims are worse off than the other major religious communities in India. Higher poverty and illiteracy levels in the community limit capacities for productive employment, especially at higher levels. Literacy among Muslims stands at 57.3 percent against a national average of 63.1 percent.[55] The distribution of Muslim populations has a crucial impact on these factors: the community is disproportionately located in some of the poorest and most ill-governed states of India. In 2011, for instance, just four of India's twenty-eight states and seven union territories, with some of the poorest human-development profiles in the country, accounted for 53.04 percent of India's Muslim population.[56] Significantly, in many of the better-administered and more prosperous states, the gap between the general population profile and that of the Muslim population tends to diminish on a number of variables. In Kerala, for instance, Muslim literacy in 2011 stood at 93.29 percent, as compared to a State average of 94 percent.[57] Nevertheless, Muslim poverty remains higher than the average in most states in the country.

In terms of Muslim education, it is crucial to understand that Indian *madrassas* have little in common with the "*jihad* factories" that have been established in a large proportion of Islamic educational institutions in Pakistan and, to some extent, Bangladesh. There are no authoritative estimates of the number

of *madrassas* in India, but comparatively recent approximations put the figure at roughly 94,528.[58] The government runs programs supporting modern, mainstream curricula in *madrassas* alongside traditional religious teachings.[59] Crucially, *madrassas* are often found to be providing the only option for schooling in areas where the state's education system has failed. However, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs has developed a "multi-pronged" policy focusing on counter-radicalization, involving several ministries, state governments, and a program for skill development for *madrassa* students.[60] However, *Wahhabbi madrassas* and mosques have proliferated in troubled Jammu and Kashmir, with the Ahl-e-Hadith leading the pack. They have reportedly been funded overwhelmingly through *hawala* channels and physical currency transfers across the Line of Control with Pakistan. While intelligence and enforcement agencies are well aware of the problem, they remained mute bystanders given the sensitive nature of the issue and the absence of a political mandate to act.[61] Similar patterns are visible in several other states across the country.[62] Recent developments have, however, been encouraging. Most prominently, on May 30, 2017, NIA registered a case to investigate funding to separatist organizations in J&K and conducted widespread searches in J&K, Delhi, and Haryana. During the ensuing investigation, NIA teams conducted searches at over 60 locations, and seized over 950 incriminating documents and over 600 electronic devices, and examined more than 300 witnesses.[63]

Islamism and the State

"India's secular democratic constitution," observes scholar and diplomat Husain Haqqani, "empowers the country's Muslims more than their co-religionists in Muslim majority states."[64] India's constitutional and legal order is rigorously secular and goes out of its way to protect minorities or to accommodate them through "reverse discrimination" provisions.[65] Nevertheless, Muslims – along with other disadvantaged groups – do endure significant discrimination in a deeply inequitable social, economic, and political order. Weak governance and a crumbling justice system across vast areas of the country have meant that injustice, neglect, and injury are often disregarded, and their victims have little practical recourse. While the broad trajectory of trends in communal violence is not discouraging,[66] periodic bloodbaths – the worst of these in recent history taking place in Gujarat in 2002, where some 2,000 (primarily Muslim) persons were killed – continue to poison relationships between communities and undermine the confidence of the country's minorities in state institutions.[67] During the most recent communal riots in Uttar Pradesh in 2013, 62 persons were killed, 98 injured and over 55,000 displaced.[68] Crucially, such violence often "bears the imprimatur of the state," as parties in power abandon constitutional values and subvert the agencies of the state.[69] Among the most visible indicators of systemic discrimination against Muslims in India is their share in government employment, which is low (4.9 percent) relative to the size of the national Muslim population (13.4 percent of the total).[70] When tallied in 2016, Muslims made up just 3.3 percent of the Indian Administrative Service and 3.2 percent of the Indian Police Service.[71] Much of this, however, is a consequence of poor education and the relative paucity of qualified aspirants to these posts. Thus, "the success rate of Muslims is about the same as other candidates," though the "small number of Muslim candidates appearing in the written examination of the civil services was a cause of concern."[72]

Despite the popular narrative, however, the successes of Islamist radicalism demonstrate no coherent correlation to specific grievances, atrocities, or deprivations among the Muslim community.[73] Islamist extremism is, in fact, rooted in a powerful, sustained process of ideological mobilization with roots in Pakistan. Indian Muslims have overwhelmingly resisted these efforts at subversion and radicalization. Nevertheless, fringe elements within the community remain vulnerable to radicalization and recruitment by terrorist and anti-state forces.

Areas with heavy Muslim concentrations would be more susceptible to such extremist mobilization, and these vulnerabilities are compounded where these areas lie along borders with hostile neighbors – particularly Pakistan and Bangladesh. The growth of *madrassas*, particularly where these are substantially

foreign-funded, along and on both sides of India's borders, is a matter of deep concern, though only a small minority of Indian *madrassas* have proven to be susceptible to radicalization.[74] The critical element of India's abiding success against radical Islamist mobilization is national, institutional secularism. Of course, Indian society and politics have yet to become "socially and emotionally secular," despite constitutional secularism and a long history of confessional co-existence.[75] The periodic recurrence of communal conflagrations and manifestations of religious extremism are evidence of this. Nevertheless, structural and cultural factors constrain even radical players from their greatest excesses.[76] For instance, electoral considerations have repeatedly forced the Hindu right to accommodate Muslim concerns.

Similarly, even where some state agencies have colluded with extremist elements, constitutional checks and balances have, eventually, reasserted themselves to bring offenders to some measure of justice. While the threat of Islamist radicalization and terrorism has endured for decades, and Pakistan gives every sign of being intent upon continuing its long-running asymmetric war of attrition, Indian responses have remained largely fitful, event-led, and ad hoc. Indeed, India has no clearly articulated counterterrorism policy.[77] This deficiency is compounded by endemic deficits of capacity in the security, intelligence, and justice systems, which make any planned and comprehensive response impossible.[78] Yet, after decades of Pakistan-sponsored Islamist terrorist activity on Indian soil, the country has yet to correctly define the problem confronting it or craft an appropriate "strategic architecture" by which to address it.[79] Thus, if Islamist terrorism has managed to gain little traction, and the state is still able to achieve significant successes against both terrorists and extremist ideologies, the credit must go to both small handfuls of exceptionally dedicated individuals in the intelligence and security community, and an enveloping culture that rejects terrorism.

Endnotes:

1. "Countries With The Largest Muslim Populations." World Atlas. April 19, 2018. https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/countries-with-the-largest-muslim-populations.html. (accessed February 25, 2019).

2. Swami, Praveen. *India, Pakistan and the Secret Jihad: The Covert War in Kashmir 1947–2004*. Asian Security Studies. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2007. Low-grade *jihadi* subversion and Pakistani incursions commenced almost from the moment of Partition.

3. "Fatalities in Terrorist Violence 1988–2019." South Asia Terrorism Portal. https://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/jandk/data_sheets/annual_casualties.htm. (accessed March 14, 2019).

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5. "Fatalities in Terrorist Violence 1988–2019." South Asia Terrorism Portal. https://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/jandk/data_sheets/annual_casualties.htm. (accessed February 26, 2019).

6. "Fatalities in Terrorist Violence 1988–2019." South Asia Terrorism Portal. https://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/jandk/data_sheets/annual_casualties.htm. (accessed March 14, 2019).

7. *Bad Company—Lashkar e-Tayyiba and the Growing Ambition of Islamist Militancy in Pakistan*, 111 Cong. (2010) (testimony of Ashley J. Tellis). http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/0311_testimony_tellis.pdf

8. "Islamist Terrorist Attacks Outside J&K, Punjab And Northeast 2000–2017." South Asia Terrorism Portal. https://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/database/OR_9-11_majorterroristattacks.htm. (accessed March 14, 2019).; "ISI related Modules Neutralised outside J&K and Northeast since 2004." South Asia Terrorism Portal. https://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/database/ISImodules.htm. (accessed February 26, 2019) ; India. Ministry of Human Resource Development. *Annual Report 2010*. https://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/

files/document-reports/AR2008-09.pdf, (accessed February 26, 2019); India. *Mumbai Terror Attacks: Dossier of Evidence*. 2009. http://www.investigativeproject.org/document/277-mumbai-terror-attacks-dossier-of-evidence. (accessed February 26, 2019); Deshpande, Rajeev. "26/11 Probe: US May Ask for Pak Major's Extradition." *The Times of India*, December 9, 2009. https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/26/11-probe-US-may-ask-for-Pak-majors-extradition/articleshow/5316709.cms. (accessed February 26, 2019); "Headley Link: 5 Pak Army Officers Held." *Hindustan Times*, November 25, 2009. https://www.hindustantimes.com/world/headley-link-5-pak-army-officers-held/story-6GcJRfO529sUviO3clsPiN.html. (accessed February 26, 2019). On November 26, 2008, a group of ten terrorists from Pakistan, affiliated with LeT attacked multiple targets in Mumbai. Conversations between the terrorists and their handlers in Pakistan were fully recorded by Indian and American intelligence agencies, and subsequent investigations have established linkages not only to the LeT in Pakistan, but to a number of serving and retired Pakistani army officers.

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