

# American Foreign Policy Council

## INDIA

### QUICK FACTS

Population: 1,173,108,018

Area: 3,287,263 sq km

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

Religions: Hindu 80.5%, Muslim  
13.4%, Christian 2.3%, Sikh 1.9%,  
other 1.8%, unspecified 0.1%

Government Type: Federal republic

GDP (official exchange rate):  
\$1.095 trillion



Map and Quick Facts courtesy of the CIA World Factbook (Last Updated July 2010)

*A peculiar urgency attaches itself to the question of radical Islam in India today, as Islamist terrorist attacks occur with frequency across wide areas of the country. The crisis is deepened by the rising instability of the South Asian region and the location of what has now become the fountainhead of international Islamist terrorism—Pakistan—in India's immediate neighborhood. Beyond Pakistan, there is a multiplicity of centers of Islamist militancy that have affected India, including, on one hand, Iran, Afghanistan and the Arab world, and on the other, Bangladesh, where radical interpretations of Islam influence millions, including significant proportions of expatriate Indian workers and their families.*

*In an age of an enveloping threat of global Islamist terrorism and reflexive Islamophobia, however, the Indian Muslim has refused*

*to yield to stereotypes. A community of nearly 161 million Muslims<sup>1</sup>—the third largest in the world, after Indonesia and Pakistan—lives in relative harmony within India’s multicultural, multi-religious, secular democracy. Such coexistence is not, of course, without its frictions; communal clashes with other religious fraternities have a long history since (and, indeed, long before) the carnage of partition in 1947, when the British Indian Empire was cleaved in two, with nearly half a million people killed in mutual slaughter. There are also sectarian clashes within Islam. Islamist terrorism has, moreover, certainly had significant impact in India—a separatist movement inspired by Sunni extremism and sustained by Pakistani support has plagued the north Indian State of Jammu & Kashmir for two decades now,<sup>2</sup> and Islamist terrorist attacks by both foreign and indigenous groups, in each case supported by Pakistan, have been witnessed in virtually every part of the country.*

## ISLAMIST ACTIVITY

Islamist terrorism in India, overwhelmingly spawned and supported by Pakistan, has long found its principal concentration in the north Indian state of Jammu & Kashmir (J&K)—where it was sustained at the level of a high intensity conflict (over 1,000 fatalities per annum) for 17 years, before the dramatic transformation of the post 9/11 world and growing internal instability in Pakistan created the conditions for a relative diminution in violence. Even at these diminished levels, however, J&K saw 377 fatalities in 2009 in Islamist terrorism-related violence.<sup>3</sup>

India has been confronted with Pakistan-backed Islamist subversion virtually since the moment of the twin birth of these nations,<sup>4</sup> but experienced an asymmetric escalation after 1988, when then-Pakistani dictator General Zia-ul-Haq, flush from the successful *jihād* against the Soviets in Afghanistan, decided to extend his strategy to J&K. Successive governments in Islamabad, both military and “democratic,” have actively sustained this policy. The result has been unrelenting terrorism in J&K for two decades, inflicting—as of 2009—a total of 42,657 fatalities in the state.<sup>5</sup> Gradually, as international pressure to wind down the *jihād* in J&K mounted on Pakistan, and as domestic circumstances in that country worsened,

terrorist groups substantially controlled by the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI),<sup>6</sup> Pakistan's notorious spy agency, have found it necessary to base their cadres increasingly into areas outside J&K, within a wider pan-Islamist ideological framework that dovetails more seamlessly into the psyche of extremist groups and the logic of the "global *jihad*." A steady stream of Islamist terrorism and subversion has been sustained in widening theaters across India over the past years,<sup>7</sup> culminating in the Mumbai attacks of November 26, 2008.<sup>8</sup>

The networks and support structures of the multiplicity of Islamist terrorist organizations operating in India have been painstakingly constructed by the ISI, backed by enormous flows of financial support from West Asia and from affluent expatriate Muslim communities in the West, as part of a sustained strategy of "erosion, encirclement and penetration" that has been substantially documented elsewhere.<sup>9</sup>

### *Lashkar e-Taiba (LeT)*

The LeT was created in 1990 by the ISI under the command of Hafiz Mohammad Saeed in the Kunar province of Afghanistan. Initially, it trained with—and participated in—the Taliban/al-Qaeda campaigns in that country. It is part of the "al-Qaeda compact"<sup>10</sup> and is a member of the "International Islamic Front for the struggle against the Jews and the Crusaders" (*Al-Jabhab al-Islamiyyah al-'Alamiyyah li-Qital al-Yahud wal-Salibiyyin*) established by Osama bin Laden. In 1993, its forces were diverted to the Pakistan-backed *jihad* in Indian J&K, where it has operated continuously since. At the same time, it has extended its networks and strikes 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."<sup>11</sup>

The organization is headquartered at Muridke on a large plot of land widely acknowledged to have been gifted to it by the Pakistan government,<sup>12</sup> and is known to have run terrorist camps in Muzaffarabad and Gilgit (in Pakistan-occupied Kash-

mir), Lahore, Peshawar, Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Karachi, Multan, Quetta, Gujranwala and Sialkot. The group runs 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.<sup>13</sup> The U.S. State Department’s 2008 *Report on International Religious Freedom* noted that “schools run by Jamat-ud-Dawa continued... teaching and recruitment for Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, a designated foreign terrorist organization.”<sup>14</sup>

Until its designation as a terrorist group by the UN Security Council in December 2008, the LeT published a number of journals, papers and websites.<sup>15</sup> Crucially, it remains a “loyal” group, and unlike many others created by the ISI which have since turned against Islamabad or whose loyalties are now suspect, 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, on the basis of interrogations of arrested terrorists and couriers, is printed at Pakistani Security Presses at the Mlair Cantonment in Karachi, and at Lahore, Quetta and Peshawar, and which Pakistan uses to finance its *jihad* against India. Significant in this regard is the Indian government’s August 2009 announcement that it intends to take up the issue of the importation of currency standard ink and paper by Pakistan from the UK, Sweden and Switzerland, with various international agencies, including Interpol.<sup>16</sup> In addition to very substantial seizures of fake Indian currency notes (FICN) from Pakistan-linked couriers, there have been instances of such currency also being recovered from Pakistan Embassy staff.<sup>17</sup> India’s Ministry of Home Affairs has reportedly found that “the ISI has managed to get access to the configuration, specifications and other secret codes of the genuine Indian currency notes from six European companies that supply Indian currency papers fitted with security features, and another company in Switzerland that supplies the security ink used in printing these currency notes in India.”<sup>18</sup> LeT financial sources also include “charitable” contributions that support both its vast social network across Pakistan and its terrorist activities; and a range of external contributions from diaspora communities and various international Islamist charities, including sev-

eral 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.<sup>19</sup>

There is now no doubt that the Mumbai carnage of November 26-29, 2008 was engineered by the LeT, which is permitted to operate openly in Pakistan under a different name, *Jamaat-ud-Dawa* (JuD), since its supposed official ban (imposed as a result of U.S. pressure) in 2002. 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.

While the LeT was not, as a result of tremendous international focus and pressure, able to execute any significant incidents of terrorist violence in India outside J&K through 2009 and the first nine months of 2010, the group's involvement was confirmed in at least 154 incidents in J&K during 2009, and another 101 incidents in 2010 (through early October). Of these, at least 15 were major incidents (involving three or more fatalities) in 2009, and another nine in 2010.<sup>20</sup>

### *The "Harkat Triad"*

In addition to the LeT, the most significant terrorist groups created by the ISI which operate in India include what can be termed the "Harkat Triad," comprising 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 Afghan *jihad*, the Taliban and al-Qaeda.

*Harkat-ul-Jihad Islami* (HuJI) came into existence in 1980 and had a long history of fighting in Afghanistan. After the end of the Afghan war against the Soviet occupation, HuJI turned its attention to Kashmir. HuJI cadres have also fought in Islamist campaigns in a number of other countries, including Bosnia, Myanmar and Tajikistan. HuJI was one of the major organizations that sent hundreds of its *mujahideen* into Afghanistan during the cam-

paigns against the Northern Alliance and the U.S.-led Coalition's Operation Enduring Freedom. It is also a member organization of bin Laden's "International Islamic Front." HuJI's greatest surviving strength is in Bangladesh, since the organization has been marginalized in Pakistan by the emergence and consolidation of more effective organizations in that country. HuJI Bangladesh (BD) was established as a distinct organization with direct aid from Osama bin Laden in 1992 and seeks to establish Islamic *hukumat* (rule) there. Since 2005, HuJI-BD has been involved in a number of major Islamist terrorist operations in India, executing joint operations with a number of Pakistani terrorist groups, including the LeT, the JeM and HuM, and coordinates closely with the ISI.

*The Harkat-ul-Mujahiddeen* was set up 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), to participate in the *jihad* against Soviet forces in Afghanistan. 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, the HuM was exporting recruits, initially from Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, but subsequently from a welter of other countries, including Algeria, Egypt, Tunisia, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh, Myanmar and the Philippines. HuM is one of the original members of bin Laden's "International Islamic Front." The primary area of HuM's activities, after the Afghan campaigns, was J&K, though it has suffered a continuous erosion of its stature as a leading player, as the Lashkar-e-Taiba and HuM's breakaway, Jaish-e-Mohammed, consolidated their role through a succession of dramatic attacks, both within and outside the State.

*Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM)* is one of the most virulent Pakistani groups operating in India. It was set up in early 2000, following Azhar Masood's triumphant return to Pakistan upon his release from India as part of a hostage exchange. Masood split with his parent HuM as a result of differences over matters of "finance and influence." Bin Laden is believed to have extended generous funding to the JeM.<sup>21</sup> The JeM has also been extraordinarily successful in motivating second-generation South Asian Muslims in the West

to join the *jihad*. These include Ahmed Sayeed Omar Sheikh, one of the conspirators in the 9/11 attacks in the U.S., and Daniel Pearl's killer; as well as "Abdullahbhai," a Birmingham (UK) resident, the suicide bomber in the Badami Bagh incident of December 2000 in Jammu & Kashmir.

*Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM)* is numerically the largest terrorist formation operating in J&K, with a cadre base drawn from both indigenous and foreign sources. It was, at one time, the most important in terms of its effectiveness in perpetrating terrorist violence, but has been progressively marginalized by the LeT and JeM, as those groups became more central to Pakistan's strategic objectives in India. More recently, with the LeT and JeM bases and networks in Pakistan coming under increasing international scrutiny, there has been some effort to restore HM's operational ascendancy in J&K, though with limited success, since the group's operational leadership has been systematically decimated over the past years.<sup>22</sup> HM is a proscribed terrorist group in India, the United States and the European Union. It continues, however, to operate openly from its headquarters at Muzaffarabad in Pakistan-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 multi-group conglomerate of India-directed *jihadi* organizations supported by the Pakistani state and also headquartered at Muzaffarabad. The HM came into being in the Kashmir Valley in September 1989 as the militant wing of the Jamaat-e-Islami Jammu & Kashmir (JeI-JK), with Master Ahsan Dar as its chief. Dar was arrested by Indian security forces in mid-December 1993. The JeI-JK was tasked with setting up the Hizb by Pakistan's ISI, to counter the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), which had advocated complete independence of the State. The Hizb, by contrast, advocates the integration of J&K with Pakistan. Since its inception, the HM has also campaigned for the Islamization of Kashmir. Overseas, HM is allegedly backed by Ghulam Nabi Fai's Kashmir American Council and Ayub Thakur's World Kashmir Freedom Movement in the U.S. Early in its history, the Hizb established contacts with Afghan *mujahideen* groups such as Hizb-e-Islami, as part of which some of its cadres allegedly received arms training. The proscribed Students Islamic Movement of India is also believed to



have links with the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen.<sup>23</sup>

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, including some that boast substantial Indian membership.<sup>24</sup> The most important among them in recent years has been the *Student's Islamic Movement of India (SIMI)*. SIMI has been involved in terrorist activities, principally as a facilitator to various Pakistan-based groups, since the 1990s, providing a range of services, such as couriers, safe havens and communication posts, for specific terrorist operations or terrorist cells. Since 9/11, however, SIMI's significance in Pakistan's strategic projections has grown, as Islamabad came under increasing international pressure to dismantle the terrorist networks it had constructed and deployed. Pakistan has sought, consequently, to project an increasing proportion of its operations in India as "indigenous terrorism" purportedly sparked by "discontented Muslims" in "Hindu India," and the role of "indigenous terrorists" has seen an abrupt spike. SIMI's role in these operations has gradually increased. Initially, its cadres joined with the various Pakistani groups to participate in collaborative operations, and eventually, in the Ahmedabad and Delhi bombings of July and September 2008, respectively, operating "independently" under the identity of the "Indian Mujahideen." Crucially, however, the top leadership and cadres of SIMI receive safe haven and training in, and resources from, Pakistan, and it is there that they locate their operational command centers.<sup>25</sup>

## ISLAMISM AND SOCIETY

Islamism in Indian society occupies a continuous ideological spectrum. Indeed, many of the root ideologies that have fed terrorism in South Asia find their sources on Indian soil—though, as already stated, 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 Wahhabi doctrines and support and funding from



Saudi Arabia.

*The Deobandis*, the earliest of these four groups, date back to 1867 and the establishment of the Dar-ul-Uloom seminary at Deoband, a small town in western Uttar Pradesh in India. 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 increasing concerns regarding Westernizing 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). The issue of the demand for a separate state of Pakistan split the JUH, and the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) came into being in 1945, uniting the votaries of Partition, who lent their 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, even as they have directly contributed to and shaped the course of sectarianism, extremism and militancy in, and exported from, Pakistan. The Taliban in Afghanistan, and the Harkat Triad in India, claim Deobandi affiliation. Significantly, however, the *ulema* of the Dar-ul-Uloom Deoband have repeatedly and explicitly condemned all aspects of terrorism, stating, “there is no place for terrorism in Islam” and declaring it an “unpardonable sin.”<sup>26</sup> 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.”<sup>27</sup>

*The Barelvi order*, established by Ahmed Raza Khan toward the end of the 19th century in Uttar Pradesh state, also adhered to an interpretation of the Hanafi School, but at wide variance with the Deobandi reading of it. The Barelvi School, in fact, sought 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, they attributed extraordinary, indeed, many divine qualities to the Prophet, conceiving of him more as holy presence than mortal man. They likewise believed strongly in the power of the intercession of holy personages and saints, and gave 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 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.

*The Ahl-e Hadith* is a relatively small movement that has benefited enormously from Saudi support in recent times, and represents one of the most radicalized elements within Sunni fundamentalist factions in 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 sought to restore Islam to the purity of the original Faith, as articulated in the Koran and the *Hadith*. They formally claimed to be distinct from the Wahhabis, but their beliefs and practices have much in common with the dominant creed of Saudi Arabia. While the Ahl-e Hadith insist that they do not follow any one of the four schools of Islamic jurisprudence, they have moved progressively closer to the Hambali interpretation that is also the basis of Wahhabi 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 their 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, subsequent to its creation, in the history of 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, indeed, even further, 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.”<sup>28</sup> Maududi sought to “enunciate an all-inclusive school of Islamic thought,” and one that was “not bound by any school of law.”<sup>29</sup> To a large extent, Jamaat practice follows upon interpretations of Maududi’s vision.

*Hizb-ul-Mujahideen* and the Students’ Islamic Movement of India trace their roots to Jamaat ideology. Nevertheless, the Jamaat-e-Islami Hind 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 & Kashmir.

*Tablighi Jamaat (TJ)* is a radical Muslim revivalist movement, founded by Muhammad Ilyas in 1926 in Mewat (in the present Indian State of Haryana), which reaches out to Muslims in 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 a total control on its activists.”<sup>30</sup> 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.<sup>31</sup>

Today, some of the Indian Muslim community's disadvantages are structural, and relate to accidents of history and of geography. The partition divested the community of its leadership and its elites across North India, and Muslims have remained largely directionless and mired in backwardness over the intervening decades. On virtually all social indicators, Muslims are worse off than other major religious communities in India. Higher poverty and illiteracy levels in the community (38.4 percent of Muslims below the poverty line in urban areas and 26.9 percent in rural areas, as against an Indian average of 22.8 and 22.7 percent, respectively; 59 percent literacy among Muslims, as against a national average of 65 percent)<sup>32</sup> limit capacities for productive employment, especially at higher levels. The distribution of Muslim populations has crucial impact on these factors: The community is disproportionately located in some of the poorest, most backward and ill-governed States of India. In 2001, for instance, just four of India's 28 States and seven Union Territories—Uttar Pradesh (31.8 million), Bihar (17.5 million), West Bengal (20.2 million), and Assam (8.3 million)—with some of the poorest human-development profiles in the country, accounted for 56.3 percent of India's Muslim population.<sup>33</sup> Relatively higher Muslim population growth, disproportionately concentrated in the most backward regions and among the most disadvantaged population segments, exacerbate existing ills. Higher poverty and illiteracy levels are directly related to higher reproduction rates among the Muslims, though rates have declined proportionately among segments of the Muslim population that have escaped these blights. Significantly, in many of the better administered and more prosperous States, the gap between the general population profile and the Muslim population profile tends to diminish on a number of variables. In Kerala, for instance, Muslim literacy in 2001 stood at 89.4 percent, compared to a State average of 90.9 percent.<sup>34</sup> 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 the Indian *madrassa* has 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, in Bangladesh as well.

There are no authoritative estimates of the number of *madrassas* in India, but current approximations put the figure at between 30,000 and 45,000.<sup>35</sup> Divergent estimates put the proportion of Muslim children going to *madrassas* variously at 2.3 and 4 percent of the 7-19 years age group. The proportion is higher in rural areas and among males.<sup>36</sup> The government runs programs supporting modern curricula in *madrassas*, and a significant number of such institutions have accepted such curricula.<sup>37</sup> Crucially, *madrassas* are often found to be providing the only option for schooling in areas where the state's education system has failed.

Nevertheless, a fraction of *madrassas* have been found to have some linkages with the Islamist extremist enterprise, and there has been a particular growth of such institutions—obviously funded from the outside—along the most porous stretches of India's borders. In February and March 2006, for instance, officers of a border security agency disclosed that 2,365 mosques and *madrassas* had sprung up on the Indian side of the Indo-Nepal border, and some 700 on the Nepal side, over the preceding decade, of which some 50 or 60 were considered “sensitive.”<sup>38</sup> A significant rise in the number of *madrassas* along the Indo-Bangladesh border also has been reported.<sup>39</sup> At least some terrorist incidents have been linked backward to networks established among elements within the mosque-*madrassa* complex in the country.<sup>40</sup>

## ISLAMISM AND THE STATE

“India's secular democratic constitution,” scholar and diplomat Husain Haqqani observes, “empowers the country's Muslims more than their co-religionists in Muslim majority states.”<sup>41</sup> India's constitutional and legal order is rigorously secular<sup>42</sup> and goes out of its way to protect minorities or to accommodate them through “reverse discrimination” provisions.

Nevertheless, Muslims—along with other disadvantaged groups—do endure significant discrimination in a deeply inequitable and iniquitous 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, despite the elaborate framework of statutory provisions. While the broad trajectory of trends in “communal violence” is not discouraging,<sup>43</sup> periodic bloodbaths—the most recent of these in Gujarat in 2002, where some 2000 persons were killed, primarily Muslims—continue to poison relationships between communities, and undermine the confidence of the minorities in the institutions of the state. Crucially, such violence often “bears the imprimatur of the state,”<sup>44</sup> as parties in power abandon constitutional values and subvert the agencies of the state.

Among the most visible indicators of systemic discrimination against Muslims in India is their share in government employment, which recently stood nationwide at 4.9 percent of the total number of such employees, when Muslims constituted 13.4 percent of the country’s population. When tallied in 2006, Muslims made up just 3 percent of the Indian Administrative Service, 1.8 percent of the Indian Foreign Service and 4 percent of the Indian Police Service.<sup>45</sup> Much of this is, however, a consequence of poor education and the relatively 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 is a cause of concern.”<sup>46</sup>

Despite the popular narrative, however, the successes of Islamist radicalism demonstrate no coherent correlation to specific grievances, atrocities or deprivations among the Muslim community.<sup>47</sup> Islamist extremism is, in fact, rooted in a powerful, sustained process of ideological mobilization that has its 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. Clearly, areas with heavy Muslim concentrations would have greater vulnerabilities to such extremist mobilization, and these vulnerabilities are compounded where these areas lie along borders with hostile neighbors, particularly Pakistan and, at least until recently, Bangladesh. The growth of *madrassas*, particularly where these are substantially foreign-funded, along and

on both sides of India's borders, is, in this context, a matter of deep concern, though only a small minority of all *madrassas* in the country have proven to be susceptible to radicalization.

The critical element of India's abiding success against radical Islamist mobilization, within this dismal picture of responses, is the constitutional and civilizational underpinnings of secularism within the country. It is, of course, the case that Indian society and politics is yet to become "socially and emotionally secular,"<sup>48</sup> despite Constitutional secularism and long histories of co-existence—and 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. Thus, 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—as, for instance, in the Gujarat riots—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 an asymmetric war of attrition, Indian responses have remained largely fitful, event-led and *ad hoc*. Indeed, India has no clearly articulated counterterrorism policy.<sup>49</sup> This deficiency is compounded by endemic deficits of capacity in the security, intelligence and justice systems,<sup>50</sup> which make any planned and comprehensive response impossible. As noted elsewhere,

The absence of strategy and the incoherence of tactics have long afflicted India, as the country finds itself responding continuously and insufficiently to provocations by its neighbours, and to a rising tide of subversion and terrorism. Worse, the pattern of responses has, with rare exception, reflected a quality of desperation and directionlessness that, after decades of contending with these problems, is impossible to fathom. With over 25 years of Pakistan sponsored Islamist terrorist activity on Indian soil, the country is still



to correctly define the problem that confronts it, or to craft an appropriate 'strategic architecture' and to derive policies and practices that are in conformity with such an overarching design.<sup>51</sup>

If Islamist terrorism, nevertheless, gains little traction, and if the state is still able to achieve significant successes against both terrorists and against extremist ideologies, the credit must go to small handfuls of exceptionally dedicated individuals in the intelligence and security community, on the one hand, and an enveloping culture that rejects terrorism on the other. India's democracy, which has gone great lengths to accommodate minority sentiments, is part of this culture, and it is through the instruments and dynamics of democracy that extremism is constrained.

## ENDNOTES

[1] The current population of Muslims in India is 160,945,000 according to the *Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life*, October 2009, <http://pewforum.org/docs/?DocID=451>.

[2] Indeed, low grade *jihadi* subversion and Pakistani incursions commenced almost from the moment of Partition. See Praveen Swami, *India, Pakistan and the Secret Jihad: The Covert War in Kashmir 1947-2004* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2007).

[3] Violence in J&K peaked in 2001, with 4,507 fatalities in that year, and remained continuously at the high intensity conflict level between 1990 and 2006. All data from the *South Asia Terrorism Portal* database, "J&K: Annual Fatalities in Terrorist Violence, 1988-2009," [http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/jandk/data\\_sheets/annual\\_casualties.htm](http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/jandk/data_sheets/annual_casualties.htm).

[4] Swami, *India, Pakistan and the Secret Jihad*.

[5] "J&K: Annual Fatalities in Terrorist Violence, 1988-2009."

[6] See, for instance, Ashley Tellis, Testimony before the House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia, March 11, 2010, [http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/0311\\_testimony\\_tellis.pdf](http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/0311_testimony_tellis.pdf).

[7] See Institute for Conflict Management, *South Asia Terrorism Portal*, "Major Islamist Terrorist Attacks outside Jammu & Kashmir and Northeast since 2000," n.d., [http://satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/database/OR\\_9-11\\_majorterroristattacks.htm](http://satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/database/OR_9-11_majorterroristattacks.htm); and "ISI related modules Neutralised outside J&K and Northeast, 2004-09", <http://satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/database/ISImodules.htm>.

[8] On November 26, 2008, a group of ten terrorists from Pakistan, affiliated with the Lashkar-e-Taiba, with demonstrated connections with the ISI-Army-State structure in Pakistan, attacked multiple targets in the coastal city and India's financial capital, Mumbai. 166 persons were killed in this terrorist outrage. The attack was covered live virtually throughout the 62 hours of its execution by India's many television channels. 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 Army officers there. See, *Ministry of Home Affairs, Annual Report 2008-09*, Government of India, p. 20; *Mumbai Terrorist Attack: Dossier of Evidence*, <http://www.hindu.com/nic/dossier.htm>; Rajeev Deshpande, "26/11 Probe: US may ask for Pak major's extradition", *Times of India*, December 9, 2009; "Five army officers held for link with Chicago suspects," *Daily Times*, November 25, 2009; "Headley Link: 5 Pak Army officers held," *Hindustan Times*, December 23, 2009.

[9] Ajai Sahni, "South Asia: Extremist Islamist Terror and Subversion",

in K.P.S. Gill and Ajai Sahni, eds., *The Global Threat of Terror: Ideological, Material and Political Linkages* (New Delhi: ICM-Bulwark Books, 2002), esp. 212-229; Tellis, Testimony before the House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia; Swami, *India, Pakistan and the Secret Jihad*.

[10] The expression was used by the then-Indian National Security Advisor, M.K. Narayanan, to describe the global network of al-Qaeda-linked organizations. See Bruce Tefft, "LeT is part of al Qaeda Compact," *The Hindu*, August 14, 2006.

[11] See, Ajai Sahni, "Offensive from Pakistan," *Wars within Borders*, n.d., <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/ajaisahni/09fablime04.htm>.

[12] See, for instance, Aarish Ullah Khan, "The Terrorist Threat and the Policy Response in Pakistan," Stockholm International Peace Research Institute *Policy Paper* no. 11, September 2005, 22. Khan notes, "The land for building the complex was given by the government of President Zia ul-Haq, with a huge investment from Abdul Rehman Sherahi, as a gift to Markaz al Dawa wal Irshad during the *jihad* years..."; See Mariam Abou Zahab and Olivier Roy, *Islamist Networks: The Afghan-Pakistan Connection* (Hurst: London, 2004), 32; and Amir Rana, "Jamaatud Dawa splits," *Daily Times* (Lahore), 18 July 2004.

[13] Wilson John, "Lashkar-e-Toiba: New Threats Posed by an Old Organization," *Jamestown Foundation Terrorism Monitor* 3, iss. 4, May 5, 2005, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=314](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=314).

[14] "Pakistan," in U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, *International Religious Freedom Report 2008* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, 2009), <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108505.htm>.

[15] These include [www.jamatuddawa.org](http://www.jamatuddawa.org); an Urdu weekly called *Gazwa*; an English monthly, *Voice of Islam*; an Urdu monthly, *Al Dawa*; an Arabic monthly, *Al Rabat*; an Urdu youth magazine, *Mujalae-Tulba*; and an Urdu weekly, *Jihad Times*.

[16] Vishwa Mohan, "India to take up fake currency note issue at global fora," *Times of India*, August 4, 2009.

[17] Ajit Kumar Singh, "Subversion sans Borders," *Outlook India*, November 20, 2006, <http://www.outlookindia.com/article.aspx?233169>; Tara Shankar Sahay, "Hijackers with Pak military intelligence, says ISI ex-chief," *rediff.com*, January 3, 2000.

[18] Aman Sharma, "Economic Terror no Fake Threat," *India Today*, August 5, 2009, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/site/Story/551771/LATEST%20HEADLINES/Economic+terror+no+fake+threat.html>. See also, for further details, Ajai Sahni, "Blood Money," *Defence & Security of India*, April 2009, <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/ajaisahni/09ASdsivw.htm>.

[19] See, for instance, Jan McGirk, "Kashmir: The Politics Of An Earth-

quake,” OpenIndia, October 18, 2005, [http://www.opendemocracy.net/conflict-india\\_pakistan/jihadi\\_2941.jsp](http://www.opendemocracy.net/conflict-india_pakistan/jihadi_2941.jsp).

[20] Numbers compiled from the *South Asia Terrorism Portal's* “Time-lines,” [www.satp.org](http://www.satp.org).

[21] See, for instance, Jamal Afridi, “Kashmir Militant Extremists,” Council on Foreign Relations *Backgrounder*, July 9, 2009, <http://www.cfr.org/publication/9135/>.

[22] See Kanchan Lakshman, “J&K: Dying Embers of Terror,” *South Asia Terrorism Review* 7, no. 29, January 7, 2009; Praveen Swami, “A homecoming for yesterday’s jihadists?” *The Hindu* (Chennai), August 21, 2009.

[23] “Hizb-ul-Mujahideen,” *South Asia Terrorism Portal*, n.d., [http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/jandk/terrorist\\_outfits/hizbul\\_mujahideen.htm](http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/jandk/terrorist_outfits/hizbul_mujahideen.htm).

[24] A detailed listing and profile of principal groups can be found at “India: Terrorist, insurgent and extremist groups,” South Asia Terrorism Portal, n.d., <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/terroristoutfits/index.html>.

[25] See, for instance, Praveen Swami, “Islamism, modernity and Indian Mujahiddeen,” *The Hindu* (Chennai), March 23, 2010; “The Lashkar-e-Taiba’s Army in India,” *The Hindu* (Chennai), January 17, 2009; “Lashkar trained Indian terrorists pose growing threat,” *The Hindu* (Chennai), December 19, 2008.

[26] “Darool-Uloom Deoband says terrorism is anti-Islam,” Reuters, February 26, 2008.

[27] *Ibid.*

[28] Abu A’la Maududi, “Political Theory of Islam,” as cited in K.K. Aziz, *Pakistan’s Political Culture* (Lahore: Vanguard, 2001), 265.

[29] Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, *Mawdudi & the Making of Islamic Revivalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 114.

[30] Yoginder Sikand, “Plane ‘Plot’: Media Targets Tablighi Jamaat,” *The Milli Gazette*, August 19, 2006, <http://tablighijamaat.wordpress.com/2008/06/16/plane-plot-media-targets-tablighi-jamaat/#more-19>; See also Yoginder Sikand, *The Origins and Development of the Tablighi Jama’at (1920-2000): A Cross-Country Comparative Study* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2001).

[31] Praveen Swami, “Shattered certitudes and new realities emerge in terror link investigation,” *The Hindu* (Chennai), July 8, 2007.

[32] *A Report on the Muslim Community of India: High Level Committee Report on Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India* (Sachar Committee Report), November 2006, (New Delhi: Akalank Publications, January 2007), 159-160.

[33] *Ibid.*, 265.

[34] *Ibid.*, 287.

[35] Manzoor Ahmed, in his study of Indian Muslim education, esti-

mated the number of *madrassas* at around thirty thousand. Manzoor Ahmed, *Islamic Education: Redefinitions of Aims and Methodology* (New Delhi: Genuine Publications, 2002), 32. Yoginder Sikand puts the number at about 30,000. Yoginder Sikand, *Bastion of the Believers: Madrassas and Islamic Education in India* (New Delhi, Penguin India, 2005), 95. Shabeeb Rizvi's estimate goes as high as 45,000. Shabeeb Rizvi, "The rise and rise of Wahabism," *Telegraph* (New Delhi), May 10, 2009, [www.telegraphindia.com/1090510/jsp/7days/story\\_10942907.jsp#](http://www.telegraphindia.com/1090510/jsp/7days/story_10942907.jsp#).

[36] Sachar Committee Report, 77.

[37] See Yoginder Sikand, "Voices for Reform in the Indian Madrasas," in Farish A. Noor and Yoginder Sikand, eds., *The Madrasa in Asia* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008), 31-65, esp. 59-64.

[38] Vishwa Mohan, "A New Terror Trail Leads to Nepal," *The Times of India*, February 12, 2006; "1900 madrassas mushrooming along Indo-Nepal border," [rediff.com](http://www.rediff.com/news/2006/mar/24border.htm), March 24, 2006, <http://www.rediff.com/news/2006/mar/24border.htm>.

[39] Union Minister of Home in the Ministry of Home Affairs Vidyasagar Rao, Rajya Sabha (Upper House of Indian Parliament), Unstarred Question no. 700, March 6, 2002.

[40] See, for instance, Praveen Swami, "Fortresses of Faith," *Frontline* 23, iss. 20, October 7-20, 2006; K.P.S. Gill, "Gujarat: New Theatre of Islamist Terror," *South Asia Intelligence Review* 1, no. 11, September 30, 2002, [http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/sair/Archives/1\\_11.htm](http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/sair/Archives/1_11.htm).

[41] Husain Haqqani, "India's Islamist Groups," in Hudson Institute *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 3, 2006, 22.

[42] Justiciable "fundamental rights" under the Constitution, for instance, guarantee equality before law and equal protection by the law; prohibit discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex and place of birth; freedom of conscience and right to freely profess, practice and propagate religion; right to manage religious institutions and affairs; protection of minorities right to conserve language, script or culture; right to establish and administer educational institutions of their (minorities') choice, etc.

[43]

Year 2002\* 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008

Incidents 722 711 677 779 698 761 943

Fatalities 1130 193 134 124 133 99 167

Injured 4375 2261 2132 2066 2170 2227 2534

\*The spike in year 2002 principally reflects incidents in Gujarat.

2002-2007 Data is drawn from Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, *Status Paper on Internal Security Situation*, September 1, 2008, 41. 2008 data is drawn from Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, *Annual Report 2008-09*, 2009, 48.

[44] Neera Chandoke, "The new tribalism," *The Hindu* (Chennai), April 4, 2002.

[45] *High Level Committee Report on Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India* (New Delhi: Akalank Publications, January 2007), p. 165.

[46] *Ibid.*, 166-67.

[47] See, for example, Praveen Swami, *India, Pakistan and the Secret Jihad: The Covert War in Kashmir, 1947-2004* (London: Routledge, 2007), 2.

[48] Partha S. Ghosh, "Demographic Trends of Muslim Population in India: Implications for National Security," *Demographic Dynamics in South Asia And their Implications on Indian Security* (New Delhi: Institute for Conflict Management, unpublished 2006), 29.

[49] For a detailed assessment, see Ajai Sahni, "Counter-terrorism and the 'Flailing State,'" *Eternal India* 1, no. 5, February 2009, <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/ajaisahni/09AS-7EtInd.htm>.

[50] For details, see Ajai Sahni, "Strategic Vastu Shastra," *South Asia Intelligence Review* 7, no. 24, December 22, 2009; Ajai Sahni, "The Peacock and the Ostrich," *South Asia Intelligence Review* 8, no. 7, August 24, 2009.

[51] Ajai Sahni, "Counter-terrorism and the 'Flailing State.'"