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**MUSLIMS, TERRORISM AND RISE OF
THE HINDU RIGHT IN INDIA**

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In 1990 he became a Fellow at the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, where he published extensively on South Asia and the Indian Ocean. He is the author of *India's Rise to Power*, published by the Macmillan Press. In 1996 he was appointed Special Adviser, Intelligence, in the Australian Federal Police and in 1997 he became Coordinator of Intelligence at the AFP, a position he held until 1990. In that year he became Co-Chair of the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Transnational Crime Working Group and a member of the National Expert Advisory Committee on Illicit Drugs.

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This paper represents the author's views alone. It has been drawn entirely from open sources, and has no official status or endorsement.

Abstract

India is located in the heart of a region in which more puritanical forms of Islam have been gaining ground for several decades. This radicalisation of Islam in South Asia has been furthered by the 'war on terror', and particularly the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Against this background, elements within India's predominantly Hindu population have been seeking to 'Hinduise' India's secular polity, sometimes directing violence against India's 130 million Muslims in the process.

In response to these regional and domestic developments, a small minority of Indian Muslims outside Kashmir has chosen to take up the bomb and the Kalashnikov. This movement is closely tied to violent *jihadi* movements in neighbouring countries, especially the Gulf and Pakistan.

The recently ousted Hindu-led coalition government that has governed in New Delhi for the last seven years has at times responded harshly to this terrorism. Were it to continue, such a response could precipitate a classic downward spiral into terrorism and counter-terrorism. Any such development would have profound implications for India and the region.

This paper examines the prospects for such a development in the context of the recent election of a more secular, Congress-led coalition in New Delhi. It argues that while the new government will seek to return India to its secular roots, now that the Bharatiya Janata Party is out of office at the centre, elements within the Hindu Right are likely to foment unrest between Hindus and Muslims, particularly at the periphery of Indian politics, in order to 'claw back' political power at the centre. Any such tactics may well cancel out the secular strategies of the new government.

Muslims, Terrorism and Rise of the Hindu Right in India

Sandy Gordon

Introduction

Hinduism in its traditional form is diverse and syncretic. The 'Hindu Right'¹ has in recent decades, however, been seeking to recreate Hinduism as a more defined religion that commands a dominant political hold over India. This experiment with India's secular settlement is being undertaken against a background in which Wahhabi and Salafist interpretations of Islam have spread from Saudi Arabia, diminishing the Sufi and other more liberal traditions of Islam of India and its neighbours. The so-called 'war on terror', the attack by the US and its allies on Afghanistan and especially the 2003 war in Iraq have also intensified the radicalisation of Islam in South Asia. The rise of Hindu politics and radical Islam are now interwoven into a tight fabric that will prove difficult to unravel.

One little recognised outcome of the rise of the Hindu Right has been the advent of 'home-grown terrorism'² perpetrated by disaffected Indian Muslims in response.³ Such terrorism is still confined to a very small percentage of Indian Muslims and is by no means the most prevalent form of terrorism in India. The Maoist and separatist campaigns in central, eastern and northeastern India are probably more serious in terms of loss of life and property. However, given the spread of India's 130 million Muslims throughout the country and the potential linkages with radical Islamic organisations in the region, especially Pakistan, the potential of the terrorism perpetrated by disaffected Muslims to destabilise the country is far greater. As this paper will argue, moreover, the potential for terrorism by disaffected Muslims to enter a downward spiral remains strong, despite the victory of secular forces in the just-completed national elections.

The Hindu-leaning Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its coalition partners fought those elections initially on a platform of a 'shining' India that called for all religions to 'rise on the same tide'. Once this strategy appeared to be failing, the BJP attempted openly to woo the Muslim vote, a strategy that also failed given the party's basic negative view of Muslims. In assessing the future of communal relations in India, it remains to be seen how the BJP will assess this electoral failure and what kind of leadership it will establish to replace the defeated one. In this context, it is noteworthy that under the BJP-led government, the needs of governance and presence in the central

government of 'statesman-like' figures such as former Prime Minister Vajpayee meant that the party's position on communal issues was far more moderate at the centre than in the states and at the grass-roots. Moreover, there is evidence that the attempt to woo Muslim voters at the last election was tactical rather than indicative of a change of heart on the part of the Hindu politicians. Finally, the relatively narrow loss of the Hindu-oriented parties suggests they may seek to stir up further communal unrest as they struggle to regain their political hold.

Such unrest in the past resulted in the destruction of the Babri mosque at Ayodhya (henceforth the Ayodhya mosque) in 1992 and the vicious Gujarat riots of early 2002. With hindsight, these events may come to be seen as a 'defining events', just as we now regard the 1983 riots in Sri Lanka as the defining event that triggered the long civil war between Tamils and Sinhalese. But were Ayodhya and Gujarat defining events? And can India – a country in which Muslims are in a majority in only one state (Kashmir) and 4 per cent of electorates – be likened to Sri Lanka, where Tamils are in a clear majority in the north and north east, and in which they can therefore subscribe to policies of autonomy and even independence? And if India were to enter into a downward spiral of terrorism and counter-terrorism, what would such a development portend for the future of India and the region?

Given the size of the Muslim community in India, the consequences of any such development would be profound. Gujarat, which has been at the epicentre of anti-Muslim violence in recent years, is just across a long and porous border from Pakistan. Should the current attempt to improve relations between India and Pakistan fail (a possibility further discussed below), problems over the border would provide an excellent opportunity for Pakistan to 'fish in troubled waters', just as it has in Kashmir.

An aggressive and sustained program of terrorism would also slow the economic growth spurt India has experienced in the last decade of economic liberalisation and could lead to decades of economic stagnation. Much of the terrorism to date has occurred in the commercial and industrial heartland areas of Mumbai (formerly Bombay), Maharashtra and Gujarat. Maharashtra is the most industrialised state in India. Its economy constitutes about 20 per cent of India's GDP. It commands approximately 30 per cent of India's exports and its ports handle 50 per cent of India's trade.⁴ The value of cheque transactions in Mumbai is 10 times that of its nearest Indian competitor city.⁵ We should also note that recent communal unrest in Hyderabad triggered a frisson of fear on the part of foreign investors that the burgeoning call centre industry would collapse as a result of instability.⁶

Such episodes illustrate the vulnerability of high technology investment to any perceived instability.

Any downward spiral into violence would also seriously circumscribe India's emergence as a key Indian Ocean power. It would cause India's military to focus even more than it now does on domestic developments. It would cut the financial roots that sustain India's program of military modernisation. It would provide an almost endless cadre upon which international *jihad* could draw. Finally, it would feed into the powerful sense of grievance already evident amongst Muslims from Europe to Southeast Asia.

A downward spiral into terrorism is by no means certain, however. India's constitution and some of its major institutions are still predominantly secular in both declaratory and operational manifestations. A secular government is now in power in New Delhi. Above all, India is so large and diverse that any unrest in one place is quickly dissipated into the polity as a whole. Nevertheless, as we shall further explore, the destruction of the Ayodhya mosque and riots in Gujarat have already contributed to a steady rise in terrorist incidents perpetrated by disaffected Muslims.

This paper examines the historical legacy bequeathed at Independence, which was one of apparent secularism. It then identifies those economic and political forces that are acting to undermine these conditions within India. It assesses the role of external conditions such as Islamic militancy in surrounding countries, and especially Pakistan. And finally, it seeks to assess whether we are witnessing the commencement into a downward spiral of violence and counter-violence in India, or whether India's size, diversity and vibrant liberal-democratic traditions will be sufficient to minimise any such development.

India's secular traditions and their erosion

The freedom struggle led by Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru left a powerful legacy of secularism and inclusion that should have provided for the national integration of Muslims. Article 25 of the Indian Constitution enshrines the right of all citizens to profess, practise and propagate their religion. Individual Muslims have been able to achieve prominence in national life. The first President, Maulana Azad, was a Muslim and there is even a Muslim president today (Abdul Kalam) appointed under the just-defeated Hindu-led coalition. Indian cultural, economic and political life has been replete with Muslim film stars, musicians, cricketers, judges, politicians and industrialists. There are numerous institutions supporting

inter-communal national life and a wealth of non-government organisations maintaining a vigorous civil society. In short — or so the argument runs — Muslims are fully integrated into the life of the nation and have no need to resort to large-scale violence.⁷

Indeed, as Ashutosh Varshney's study of communal violence shows, in most of India civic institutions still act to mitigate and defuse any violence by providing a means within which inter-communal communication can occur. Consequently, such violence is manifest mainly in a few, large urban locations subject to rapid social change, rather than in the vast extent of the country.⁸

Juxtaposed to this view of an India in which secularism has taken deep root, however, is a picture of an India in which '... secularism is a thin new crust beneath which Hinduism roils'.⁹ In its most base form, Hindu politics seeks to harness this visceral attitude to obtain electoral traction and further its agenda. According to Paul Brass, for example, communal rioting constitutes 'learned' and manipulated behaviour supported by networks of 'specialists', some of whom are Hindu nationalist politicians. This process involves not only manipulation of riots themselves, but also of the subsequent interpretation of the causes of the riot in order to support the political purposes of the dominant community. Brass argues, moreover, that communal unrest is 'endemic' in India, not just confined to the cities identified by Varshney.¹⁰ Brass's work is hotly contested by Varshney and in turn strongly defended by Brass himself.¹¹

Varshney's work was published just before the 2002 Gujarat riots. Although those riots do not overturn his findings, they seem to illustrate the fact that social change has become so rapid and the attendant breakdown in institutions so pronounced that cities hitherto considered inured to communal violence are no longer so. For example, Varshney compares Surat favourably to Ahmedabad as being resistant to communalism.¹² However, Surat was an important location of the 2002 Gujarat riots, which did not touch the old city in which Varshney's social structures remained intact, but swept through the new slums built up at the urban fringe.

More importantly, Varshney's findings relate to incidents of communal violence rather than terrorism. Although the two are related, since one act (communal violence) can trigger the other (terrorism), the distinction in terms of the present paper is important.

Communal violence is usually a spontaneous affair that is quickly over, after which life usually returns to normal. As Varshney shows throughout his work, it is usually amenable to the effective functioning of the civil society.

It has been a feature of Indian life, particularly urban life, for a considerable period. Terrorism, in contrast, is secret, planned and constant. It almost always has a political purpose, whereas communal violence can have such a purpose but often does not. Terrorism can be conducted well away from the locations in which it is spawned. It can be assisted from outside the country and can therefore constitute an important strategic tool in international competition. Crucially, its secret, on-going nature allows for 'rational players' to engage in it for long-term goals even though it may initially damage their community.

Given the structural differences between terrorism and communalism and the quickening pace of social and economic change in India, arguments concerning institutionalised secularism as a buffer preventing a downward spiral into chronic terrorism may not apply, or may no longer be as relevant as they once were. However, Muslims are a minority in all areas of India except Kashmir (where they are a majority in revolt against Indian rule) and the Laccadive Islands. This fact seems to support another argument to the effect that, as a minority, Muslims can only lose from violent confrontation with the *status quo* powers. As the veteran Indian journalist Khuswant Singh points out, in all communal violence in India since Independence, over 75 per cent of the casualties – in terms of lives lost and property destroyed – were Muslim.¹³ Singh's view is generally reinforced by official findings of a Minorities Commission study into communal riots between 1985-87.¹⁴

Equally, it could be argued, there is no incentive for Muslims to challenge the *status quo* through peaceful political means, since they are in a majority in only four per cent of electorates. Given India's 'first past the post' voting system, it would be most unlikely Muslims could ever gain a significant voting bloc in the parliament, far less exercise a balance of power. Muslims themselves often argue that it makes more sense to align with the secular party that has best prospects rather than to form an independent electoral bloc. For example, in the context of the aftermath of the Gujarat riots of 2002, some Muslims flirted with forming a separate political party. Important Muslim leaders, however, strongly opposed such a move on the grounds that it would further divide the Muslim vote, thus working in favour of the 'Hindu groups' – sound advice as it transpired in the context of the election.¹⁵

The political restraints within which the Muslim community in India is required to operate, and the fact that Muslims tend to be the losers in terms of direct recourse to communal violence (as distinct from terrorism), could be important indicators of a future recourse to terrorism, should governments

in India fail to deal sensitively with the issue of communal relations. However, as argued below, neither in political nor economic life is the position of Muslims in India all it should be, and it may even be deteriorating.

The changing economic situation of Muslims in India

As a minority, Muslims were considered by the British to be less threatening than the Hindu majority and therefore to be cultivated.¹⁶ Like Sikhs, they were considered a 'martial race' and were present in significant numbers in the army, paramilitary and police. Many of the large landlords, particularly in the north, were Muslim, having emerged as revenue collectors and landowners under the Mughals. Muslims were also prominent in the handicrafts, especially weaving and brass work.

Since Independence, however, their position has significantly declined. The handicraft industry has been largely destroyed by economic modernisation and they have not maintained the position they enjoyed under the British in public sector employment.

The Indian Army comprised 30-36 per cent Muslims at the time of Partition. Many of these, of course, opted to transfer to Pakistan. But since then, Muslim representation has reduced to two per cent, well below their overall representation in the community. In independent India only two Muslims rose to the rank of Lieutenant General and only six attained Major General.¹⁷ In 1985, George Fernandes, who became Defence Minister under the BJP-led coalition government, admitted: 'The Muslim is not wanted in the Armed Forces because he is always suspect — whether we want to admit it or not. Most Indians consider Muslims a fifth column for Pakistan'.¹⁸ The Army is crucial in quelling communal riots and its intercession is still welcomed by Muslims as relatively neutral and professional. However, some reports claim that the Army balked at being brought in to quell the original Ayodhya incident in 1992 because a Hindu confrontation with the Army could have affected the loyalty of the largely Hindu troops.¹⁹ If true, this would represent a worrying departure.

Prior to independence, Muslims constituted 40 per cent of the Indian police, meaning that they were over-represented. They constitute only 7 per cent today, thus being under-represented.²⁰ However, Wilkinson has convincingly argued that there is no correlation between Muslim police representation by state and the performance of the states in dealing with communal unrest.²¹ This being the case, the lack of representation amongst police may be important not so much in terms of the capacity of police to quell communal unrest, but rather in terms of perception. Such under-representation could also be symptomatic of a wider lack of Muslim

representation in government institutions that would have important economic implications, given the economic importance of government employment in developing countries. To add to the economic woes of Muslims, they constitute only three per cent of the élite of the civil service, the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and only 4.4 per cent of employees in the central bureaucracy as a whole.²²

In addition to these problems of representation, Muslims have suffered disproportionately because they were strongly represented in important crafts like brass working, formerly a major industry in cities such as Moradabad in Uttar Pradesh (which has subsequently suffered from severe communal unrest) and handloom weaving, which was an important craft in the southern state of Tamil Nadu. The decline of these industries has induced severe poverty amongst some former practitioners.

Recent work by India's National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) indicates that Muslims are economically disadvantaged in relation to Hindus. Generally, Muslims in the towns fare worse than those in the country. In rural areas, 48 per cent of Muslims above age seven are illiterate compared to 44 per cent of Hindus. In cities, the figures are 30 per cent of Muslims and 19 per cent of Hindus. India's 43 million Urdu speakers are being further pushed into 'functional illiteracy' as a result of the decline of Urdu script. Muslims also consume less. In towns, 40 per cent of Muslims belong to the bottom 20 per cent in terms of consumption, whereas the figure for Hindus is only half that, at 22 per cent. In the country, the gap is narrower, at 29 and 26 per cent respectively. A higher percentage of Muslims is landless or only marginal in terms of landholding. Only 27 per cent of Muslim families in towns had a working member whereas the figure for Hindus is 43 per cent. The NSSO data also show that the situation of Muslims *vis à vis* Hindus in relation to all these indicators actually worsened during the 1990s.²³

But the economic position of Muslims, while distressing, is not their major problem. That comes from a profound change in the Indian political framework in favour of a more robustly Hindu outlook.

Muslims and the rise of Hindu politics

Hindu politics in India speaks with many voices. Moderates, such as the former Prime Minister, A.B. Vajpayee, avow that they support India's secular institutions. His former deputy, L.K. Adwani, is less supportive. However, below that, the range of Hindu advocacy extends to the vicious and violent, often manifest at the grass-roots. The problem for the BJP hierarchy is, however, that the party is dependent upon the grass-roots

electoral cadre for much of its political success. As such, the leadership often finds itself 'riding the tiger' of strident communalism.

The oldest and most extensive of these Hindu-oriented, cadre organisations is the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS – National Volunteer Corps). The RSS is ostensibly a social organisation with no political aspirations. But it is much more than that. It is shadowy, with no membership lists or public accounts, and does not pay taxes. It contains within it a cadre of Hindu young men (no women) dressed in brown shirts and shorts reminiscent of the Hitler Youth. These cadre cells now number 25,000. Although no actual membership numbers are kept, we can assume from the number of cells that the membership would be from 250,000 to several million.²⁴ Collectively, the Hindu political interests are known as the 'Sangh Parivar' (Sangh Family). This grouping consists of the RSS; the political manifestation of the Sangh Parivar, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP – Indian People's Party); the cultural and religious mobilisation wing, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP – World Hindu Council); the paramilitary wing, the Bajrang Dal; and the service wing, the Seva Vibhag.²⁵ The Bajrang Dal practises the type of violence reminiscent of Hitler's 'Brown Shirt' street thugs.

The agenda of the Sangh Parivar is to unite a hitherto highly disparate Hindu grouping into a unified, dominant community. According to the Sangh Parivar, Indian government and institutions – far from being secular as laid down in the Constitution – should reflect the innate 'Hindu-ness' (known as *Hindutva*) of Indian society. Minorities (especially Christians and Muslims, who, unlike Sikhs, Jains and Parsis, are not considered 'people of the soil') should keep a low profile and reflect their overall *Hindutva* qualities in terms of culture. Muslim family law, which still exists within the secular Constitution, should be abolished. Kashmir's separate rights under Article 370 of the Constitution should also be abolished. Hindus should throw off the perception that they are accommodating and 'weak' and India should take its place in the world as a strong nation. For, in the words of an earlier RSS leader: 'It is significant that all Hindu gods are armed.'²⁶

In practice, this agenda has involved violence against Christians and Muslims and manipulation of the state apparatus – especially in relation to education and policing – in those states in which the BJP has been in power. Tribal people, who have in the past gravitated away from Hinduism to Christianity because of their low status, have been coerced (including by beatings and 'tonsuring' of women) back into the fold. Tribals were, for the

first time, a significant factor in the anti-Muslim rioting that took place in Gujarat in 2002.

According to A.A. Engineer, the Sangh Parivar depends on riots, nexus with the police, 'ethnic cleansing' (although he doesn't use the term) and violence as stepping-stones to political power. They first tried such methods in the vicious Ahmedabad riots of 1969 and, finding them successful there, applied them to the whole of India. The destruction of the Ayodhya mosque in 1992 was only one such stepping stone, if the most important.²⁷

The mosque, located near the northern city of Ayodhya, was allegedly built on the birth-place of the Hindu God Ram (Ram *janmbhoomi*). Ram is an important God for the Sangh Parivar because he is widely popular (especially in the north) and seen as a unifying force of the diverse Hindus. Significantly, the forces that led to the destruction of the mosque were led by the former Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Adwani. Although Adwani's leadership role in the destruction of the mosque was patent, in a highly controversial decision the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) decided to lay no charges against him.²⁸

The Sangh Parivar continues to extract mileage out of the Ayodhya mosque issue by seeking to build a temple to Ram on the site of the destroyed mosque, still owned by the Muslim authorities that controlled it. The Archaeological Survey of India has reported that there are remains of a pre-existing temple on the site. However, a number of leading academic archaeologists have been critical of the standard of work that led to this conclusion.²⁹

Partly as a result of these activities, and partly due to the collapse of the Congress party, a weak, Hindu-led coalition first emerged in Indian politics in 1996, to be further consolidated (although still in coalition) in 1998. However, well before that, the political climate for Muslims had been vitiated by the use of the 'communal card', both by the Congress party and the BJP, in order to garner votes.³⁰

Once in power at the centre, both the coalition nature of the BJP's dependence on power and the needs of governance dictated a more moderate approach by the party on Hindu issues. However, as a party, their political power was heavily dependent on the other components of the Sangh Parivar, and especially those activists working near or at the grass-roots. This meant that power was always likely to be exercised with less constraint close to the grass-roots. Often these grass-roots activities are generated by local concerns, but are also part of a wider strategic aim to garner electoral success for the BJP.

Although Hindu power was exercised with restraint at the centre, the advent of a Hindu-oriented central government provided scope for more radical agendas at the state and grass-roots levels. For example, in education (a state-level function under the Constitution), the Sangh seeks to emulate the Muslim system of *madrassas* (parochial schools). The Vidya Bharati Akhil Bharatiya Shiksha Sansthan network, created by the RSS in 1978, focuses on moral, extracurricular and physical education for 'mind, body and spirit'. The Vidya Bharati system supervises over 18,000 schools across India, with 1.8 million students and 80,000 teachers. A shared curriculum is used across the country. The system also operates 60 graduate institutions. About 5,000 Vidya Bharatis are endorsed by Education Boards, primarily in states where the BJP is in power or influential. According to Chatterji, 'As the Sangh infiltrates into regulatory bodies and actively leads the rewriting of textbooks and reorganisation of the curriculum, the classroom transforms it into an agent of Hindutva'.³¹

At the grass-roots political level, the program of the Sangh has been even more troubling. For example, in Chickmagulur, Karnataka, local-level Hindu chauvinists are reported to be attempting to 'Hinduise' a famous Sufi shrine, the Baba Budan Dargah, noted for its syncretic form of worship. This agitation is touted as the 'Ayodhya' of southern India and is linked to the 2005 state-level elections in Karnataka. While the BJP benefits politically, the actual campaign is in the hands of the more extremist organisations such as the Bajrang Dal and VHP. The High Court of Karnataka has ruled against the Hindu claims, but the Karnataka state government has been reluctant to intercede for fear of alienating the Hindu vote, so the agitation continues unchecked.³²

Even in the southern state of Kerala, noted for its tolerance and high levels of education, the Sangh Parivar has reportedly been active in fomenting communalism and practising a form of 'ethnic cleansing'. According to one account, on 2 May 2003, in Marad, Kozhikode District, nine Hindus were killed by Muslims. The source claims that the local RSS/BJP had used this event to push all Muslims from Marad. However, the killings by Muslims were, in fact, revenge for the killing of Muslims by Hindus the year before — those Hindus killed being the alleged perpetrators of the earlier killing.³³

Problems of Hindu extremism at the grass-roots are likely to be exacerbated as a result of further BJP victories at state-level elections in 2003. In Madhya Pradesh, for example, the Chief Minister, Uma Bharti, a noted Hindu holy woman or 'nun', is seeking to implement policies of cow protection reminiscent of the campaign of the 1960s that was used to mobilise Hindus against the beef-eating Muslims.³⁴

Often extremism amongst the Hindu community is explained or justified by the existence of Muslim extremism, especially as allegedly exported by Pakistan. For example, retired Lieutenant Colonel Jayant Chitale reportedly started a group near Abarmath, Thane (near Mumbai), which raised alleged 'suicide squads' against the 'enemy country' [Pakistan]. In the Thane camp 45 young Hindus aged between 16 and 29 allegedly underwent training. Following this training in 'suicide attacks', they were to wait a year to see if Muslim terrorism abated before launching attacks.³⁵

This last case is an example of a strange symbiosis between extremist actors on both sides of the India-Pakistan border. In an odd way they each need the other. This is further illustrated by an interview conducted by Jessica Stern with the public-affairs director of the Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT), a Pakistan-based extremist organisation about which we will hear more. According to Stern:

The Lashkar-e-Toiba public-affairs director told me he was 'happy' about the growth of the Hindu extremist group Bajrang Dal, the arch-nemesis of the Pakistani militant groups. It provides a *raison d'être* for Islamic fundamentalism in Pakistan, he said. 'What is the logic for stopping the *jihadi* groups' activities if the Indian government supports groups like Bajrang Dal?'³⁶

The use of communal riots and attacks on Muslims to garner political power reached its apotheosis in the state of Gujarat in 2002. Gujarat has an important history for the Sangh Parivar. As noted, the Sangh was able to capitalise on the dreadful 1969 riots in Ahmedabad to consolidate its hold. When the police eliminated a leading Muslim Gangster called Latif, this further weakened the position of Muslims, who had nobody to protect them from the Hindu gangs who were mobilised by the Sanghis. After the BJP captured power in the state in 1993, the situation began further to worsen.³⁷

The riots of April-May 2002 were thus a culmination of a long process of deliberate erosion by the Sangh Parivar of secular institutions in Gujarat and of use of communal violence for political ends. In fact, the BJP government, led by Narendra Modi, faced scheduled elections in March 2003 — elections some felt it was likely to lose, but subsequently won, probably assisted by the government's role in the riots.³⁸

The riots themselves were triggered by an attack on a train containing Hindu activists. The attack, allegedly undertaken by local Muslims at the town of Godhra, involved the torching of the train and the killing of 58 Hindus. The resulting pogrom against Muslims killed 900 according to

official figures of the state government, but some accounts put the figure nearer 2000.³⁹ Allegedly, the police stood by and refused to assist Muslim victims. Rioters apparently came prepared with lists of Muslim properties, presumably provided by municipal authorities.⁴⁰ The Home Minister, charged with maintaining order, was himself allegedly involved in encouraging the rioters.⁴¹ In addition, tens of thousands of Muslims were kept in camps in appalling conditions following the riots. Prior to Gujarat's state elections, they were turned out of these camps with nowhere to go.

The Muslim reaction

As already mentioned, the Muslim reaction to the problems the community has suffered has been restrained by factors associated with its minority status and the way it is distributed throughout India. However, in view of the depth of the problems suffered, an element within the community has increasingly tended to react in terms of violent, secret, politically inspired action that meets all the definitional hallmarks of terrorism. This terrorism, moreover, is increasingly generated within those states of India outside the Muslim majority state of Kashmir.

Following the destruction of the mosque at Ayodhya in 1992, there was a spate of rioting around India, in which as many as 2000 Muslims may have died. This rioting was especially bad in Mumbai, fuelled by the activities of the Hindu chauvinist Shiv Sena party.⁴²

In the aftermath of this rioting, there occurred in Mumbai in March 1993 what was at the time one of the worst terrorist events anywhere in the world in terms of lives lost, and the worst ever in India.⁴³ This was a series of synchronised bombings around the city in which 257 people died in a single day and about 1,000 were injured.

Indian authorities allege that these outrages were committed by the Mumbai gang leader, Dawood Ibrahim, and two other leading gangsters, 'Tiger' Memon and Chhota Shakeel. They further allege that Ibrahim and his cohorts were assisted by Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI), which provided explosives, landed by 'country craft' north of Mumbai. They point out that the explosive used was RDX, normally available only to military forces. The Indians also allege that Ibrahim was subsequently given safe haven in Karachi. He is on the list of 20 alleged terrorists that India sought to extradite from Pakistan following the bombing of the Indian parliament in December 2001. Significantly, he was also recently placed on the United States' list of wanted terrorists, indicating that US authorities believe that the Indian allegation has some truth.⁴⁴

Ibrahim has never been brought to trial for the alleged offence and so his role, and the alleged role of the ISI, must remain somewhat conjectural. However, the central point is that the bombings were almost certainly conducted by Indian Muslims in revenge for the destruction of the Ayodhya mosque and subsequent rioting against Muslims. They also marked the start of a steady pattern of domestically inspired terrorist attacks by Muslims. These actions included bombing of trains and attacks on political headquarters of the Hindu right. Most significantly, many of the attacks were not perpetrated by Kashmiris as part of the on-going separatist movement in that state, but were seemingly perpetrated by non-Kashmiri Indian Muslims in revenge for Ayodhya and other perceived acts against Muslims. While they were a new phenomenon, they were containable and did not attract widespread international attention.

One commentator who has consistently pointed to the rise of home-grown terrorism since the destruction of the Ayodhya mosque, however, is B. Raman, a former additional secretary in the Cabinet Secretariat and senior member of the Indian external intelligence service, the Research and Analysis Wing (of Cabinet) (RAW). According to Raman:

This *jihadi* iceberg has been forming for years since the Babri *masjid* demolition of December 1992 – not only in Mumbai, but also in Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, New Delhi and other parts of India. While India focused on *jihadi* terrorism in J&K [Jammu and Kashmir], it did not pay the same attention to this iceberg threatening the rest of India.⁴⁵

Raman's voice has now been joined by others pointing to the effects of the Ayodhya mosque demolition and the 2002 riots in Gujarat in radicalising a section of India's Muslim population. For example, Praveen Swami wrote in the respected, Left-leaning journal, *Frontline*, that memories of the destruction of the mosque had started to fade amongst Muslims prior to the Gujarat riots of 2002, and not even the plight of Muslims in Kashmir raised much interest. However,

[Then] ... in 2002, came the communal massacres in Gujarat ... [LeT] cells based in Kuwait and Dubai have emerged as central to several major terrorist actions in India over the last two years. Many of those involved are not stereotypical seminary-educated fanatics, but people with jobs and families – with lives they seem willing to sacrifice to avenge one of India's worst communal pogroms.⁴⁶

Examples of terrorism since 1992 are given in **Appendix A**.⁴⁷ It should be stressed that this chronicle is by no means exhaustive of terrorism in India. It has been selected from a long list of available examples in order to illustrate points for this paper about Islamic terrorism. Furthermore, because of the concern of the paper with terrorism outside Kashmir, the list obviously does not deal with the violence there. A number of interesting trends emerge from these accounts of Muslim terrorism.

- Terrorism in India and the death and destruction wrought by terrorism is a serious problem by international standards. Terrorism perpetrated by disaffected Muslims is increasingly pronounced. These acts are fuelled by extensive availability of weapons and high explosives.
- Although some Pakistani and Indian Kashmiri Muslims have certainly been involved in attacks in Indian states other than Kashmir during the period under review, importantly, there is a significant *home-grown* element consisting of non-Kashmiri Indian Muslims involved in these activities. Moreover, in the many incidents in which Pakistanis and Kashmiris were involved outside Kashmir, they were often assisted by non-Kashmiri Indian Muslims.
- The involvement of home-grown terrorists increased sharply in the aftermath of the Gujarat riots. Within Mumbai, the suburb of Ghatkopar has suffered in particular in the aftermath of the 2002 rioting in Gujarat. Ghatkopar is home to many Gujaratis, suggesting that these are revenge attacks for the 2002 rioting against Muslims in Gujarat. The role of the Gujarat riots in radicalising Muslims is further reinforced by the statements of those arrested. The increase in home-grown terrorism post 2001 could also in part reflect the broader radicalisation of the Muslim community associated with the 'war on terrorism', attack on Afghanistan and especially the Iraq war.
- Outside Kashmir, the rising body of activism has focused on Mumbai, Gujarat and western India. Other terrorism 'hot spots' include western Uttar Pradesh and Hyderabad and Chennai (formerly Madras) in the South.
- The Muslim reaction has in part been fuelled by modern communications technology such as videos detailing the atrocities on Muslims perpetrated during the Gujarat riots and web sites devoted to the Gujarat atrocities.
- The organisers of the attacks are often members of the educated middle class rather than the poor and uneducated. As with terrorism more generally, however, the actual 'foot soldiers' undertaking the attacks are often less well educated and less well placed.

- In a number of instances, expatriate Indian workers in the Gulf have been involved. The Gulf countries most concerned have been Dubai (UAE), Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.
- Three organisations – which are further discussed below – appear to have been prominently involved in many of the attacks. These are the Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT), the Student’s Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) and Ahl-e-Hadith (also known as Ahle Hadees in the Urdu rendition). A further two organisations, al Ummah and Deendar Anjuman, have also been involved. Jaish-e-Mohammed has also been prominent, but has not been as closely identified with recruiting of Indians as LeT.
- The type of explosive most commonly used has been the classic ‘home brew’ used in many of the Mumbai bombings – the mix of ammonium nitrate, potassium chlorate and sulphuric acid. There has also been considerable use of gelignite (sometimes described as ‘gelatine’ or ‘gelatin’ by the Indian police and press) and the military explosive RDX. The significance of the types of explosive used is further discussed in the section on the role of Pakistan, below.
- Another interesting feature of the rise of terrorism in India has been the role of India’s so-called ‘mafia dons’ – that is, major organised crime figures. Not only have they had a role in protecting the Muslim community from Hindu inspired attacks (as in the case of the gangster Latif in Gujarat), but they have also apparently perpetrated such attacks themselves, as in the case of the alleged role of Dawood Ibrahim and his fellow gangsters in the 1993 Mumbai bombings. Additionally, the dons are likely to be heavily involved in channeling arms and explosives into India via smuggling routes from Pakistan, or indirect routes via Nepal and Bangladesh.⁴⁸ They are also extensively involved in terrorism financing through the operations of the informal money market, the *hawala* system.

Some commentators dispute the role of the Gujarat riots in causing a quickening pace of terrorism. Swapan Dasgupta, for example, argues that it is the growing number of ‘Muslim ghettos’ rather than ‘riot affected areas’ that are the main recruiting grounds. These include Assam, from which, he says, 300 Muslim youths were sent for training in Pakistan, Hyderabad and western Uttar Pradesh. He further argues that it is not rich, middle class professionals who are conducting terrorism but poor people motivated by ‘small-time maulvis [preachers] running obscure madrassas’ as is the case in the 25 August, 2003 Mumbai bombings. He also points to *madrassas*

funded by Pakistan and Arab money. He says that a 'jihadi' force within India was motivated by Harkat-al-Mujahideen as early as 1993 and that up to 5,000 (non-Kashmiri) Indians have been trained in Pakistani camps.⁴⁹

The causes of terrorism are complex and cannot be sheeted home to any one factor. Nevertheless, there seems little doubt that both Ayodhya in 1992 and Gujarat in 2002 were important factors in alienating some Muslims, whatever the role played by Pakistan or the existence of 'ghettos'. Moreover, nobody is claiming that Gujarat riot victims are themselves the only ones turning to terrorism. Rather, Gujarat has been a motivating factor within the Muslim community as a whole, especially given the graphic way the stories of the atrocities have been spread by modern technology.

It is true, on the other hand, that as a means of defending themselves against attacks by Hindus, Muslims have increasingly chosen to live in Muslim ghettos rather than mixed suburbs. This phenomenon goes back at least as far as the post-Ayodhya Mumbai riots of 1992-93 instigated by the Shiv Sena. But it has gathered pace and become something of a Muslim mantra following the Gujarat riots of 2002. These latter riots witnessed the brutal killing of a prominent Muslim parliamentarian, Ahsan Jafri, and his family. Jafri had gone out of his way to live and work inter-communally and the murder of he and his family was a particular shock to the Muslim community.

Following the Gujarat riots, Kaleem Kawaja, writing in the leading Muslim on-line journal, *The Milli Gazette*, argued that those who were in areas in which Muslims constituted over 20 per cent of the population fared much better in the riots than those in which they constituted only 10 per cent, in that they were better able to defend themselves through strength in numbers. The author concluded that the lesson to be drawn is that Muslims should establish their own Muslim-dominated areas.⁵⁰ As a result of such arguments and the deteriorating communal circumstances, walls are now being built between Muslim and non-Muslim suburbs. Even middle class Muslims are being forced out of mixed suburbs into ghettoised suburbs.⁵¹

If Varshney's argument that secular, inter-communal activities and institutions play an important role in defusing communal tensions is correct, then the separation of communities into suburbs and districts – some of them gated – can only be to the detriment of long-term communal harmony in India.

Finally, the intensive and on-going involvement of the Pakistan-based LeT and the large number of Pakistanis who have allegedly crossed into

Indian states outside Kashmir to undertake terrorism⁵² raises the issue of the nature of any on-going, official support from Pakistan for terrorism in India proper.

Lashkar-e-Toiba and the role of Pakistan

Many Indian commentators and officials believe that the rise of domestic terrorism in India proper has been inspired and assisted by the Pakistani authorities, especially the ISI. Such views are not confined to the present day BJP and Hindu-oriented parties, but are more widely held and have a relatively long history. For example, Indira Gandhi frequently alluded to the role of the 'foreign hand' of Pakistan in many of India's ills.

Today, the phenomenon of finding the hand of Pakistan in India's domestic terrorism problem has in no way diminished. B. Raman, for example, argues that the rise of home-grown terrorism in India was masterminded by the ISI using the four principal *jihadi* organisations operating in Kashmir. According to Raman, the ISI was keen to use the camps of the organisations in Pakistani Kashmir rather than camps in Pakistan proper, presumably to disguise the official Pakistani involvement. Raman further argues that the ISI decided to strike initially in Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Kerala 'because of their strategic significance in the eyes of Pakistan's military-intelligence establishment'. Mumbai is the economic and financial capital of India and all three states are important in India's nuclear and space establishments. Raman adds that, of the four *jihadi* organisations, only the LeT was able to take root in India.⁵³

The parent organisation and political arm of LeT is Markaz-Dawa-al-Irshad (now known as Jamaat-ud-Dawaa Wahhabi educational institution). LeT changed its name after the September 11 and Lok Sabha attacks of 2001 to Pasp-e-Ahle Hadith. However, it is still widely known as LeT. Hafez Sayeed is the 'Emir' of the group.⁵⁴ LeT and Markaz advocate the creation of two independent homelands for the Muslims of South and North India, as well as one embracing the whole of Kashmir and Pakistan. Despite its focus on Kashmir, LeT is as much a Pakistani as a Kashmiri organisation. It is also a member of Osama bin Laden's International Islamic Front for Jihad Against the US and Israel.⁵⁵ Of all the Pakistani *jihad* groups, LeT has developed the strongest international profile. It is active in the Gulf states, particularly Dubai, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia and even allegedly has adherents in far-off Australia.⁵⁶

LeT also apparently has links with Indian groups such as the SIMI. Again, as evidenced from the chronicle of events at **Appendix A**, SIMI has

been the most important of the home-grown elements in domestic Indian terrorism.

SIMI was originally an offshoot of Jamaat-i-Islami Hind (JIH). Until 1987, all presidents of SIMI had been senior members of JIH.⁵⁷ It was founded in 1977 by Dr Mohammad Ahmadullah Siddiqui, now an American academic. However, Siddiqui maintains the organisation has completely changed and doesn't agree with its militant direction.⁵⁸ It should also be stressed that JIH does not support violence. Raman maintains that SIMI became violent when a hard core of its membership (who came from Indian states other than Kashmir) was fighting the Soviets in Afghanistan. According to him, 'The ISI motivated them [the students] against India, gave them *jehadi* inculcation in Afghanistan and sent them back to India for starting a *jehad*.'⁵⁹

However, Upadhaya contends that SIMI was always a revolutionary Islamic organisation seeking establishment of an Islamic state in India and the return of the Caliphate along the lines advocated by the founder of the Jamaat-i-Islami (the parent body of the JIH), Sayyid Maududi. He maintains it is in touch with a wide range of like-minded organisations around the world. According to him, SIMI's hold on Muslim students was greatly strengthened by the destruction of the mosque at Ayodhya in 1992.⁶⁰

SIMI was banned by the Government of India in September 2001 following the September 11 attacks on the United States. In implementing the ban, Home Minister Pande claimed SIMI was associated with al Qaeda, had links with the ISI, was regularly visited by the head of Hamas, was in close touch with the Hizbul Mujahideen of Kashmir, disseminated 'anti-national' literature and allegedly instigated violence in Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. With the ban, the head of SIMI, Shahid Badra Falahi, was jailed.⁶¹ In July 2003, SIMI activists Mohammed Yasin Patel and Mohammed Afsal Jaffrey were also sentenced to five years under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) for being members of a banned organisation (SIMI) and seven years for sedition.⁶²

Another important organisation of which some of the members are allegedly associated with terrorism in India is Ahl-e-Hadith. Both Markaz and LeT are closely affiliated with this Wahhabi, 'fundamentalist' organisation. Ahl-e-Hadith has in recent years spread throughout India, even the South, where it has been popular with returned guest workers from the Gulf. It is also active in the Gulf States. As such, it provides an important recruiting base in India and the Gulf for LeT. At least some of those accused of terrorism in India were allegedly recruited through Ahl-e-Hadith.

If LeT, Ahl-e-Hadith and SIMI have been the important players in terms of terrorist activity in India, what, if anything, does this say about the role of Pakistan?

Despite the persistent accusations of Indian officials that ISI is directly involved in fostering terrorism in India, and despite the fact that at least some of the activists in India received training in Pakistan, there is little hard evidence of Pakistani *official* and *direct* involvement in terrorism in India, as distinct from Kashmir. That said, there are a number of pointers suggesting some kind of possible indirect involvement.⁶³

On many occasions the explosive RDX has been used in terrorist attacks in India or seized from terrorists in India (see **Appendix A**). These reportedly include the infamous 1993 Mumbai attacks. The *Times of India* reported on 16 September 2003 that as many as 10,000 police, coast guard vessels and naval helicopters were patrolling the 100 km long Thane-Raigad coast to interdict a ‘huge consignment’ of explosives (believed to be RDX) that ‘Intelligence’ said was being shipped from Pakistan. Police maintained the recent interrogation of Jaish-e-Mohammed terrorist Atiq Ahmed by Delhi police revealed a small consignment of RDX had already found its way in by sea.⁶⁴

RDX (cyclotrimethylenetrinitramine) is principally a military explosive produced in government factories for military purposes. Its main non-military use is for blasting caps. However, in that capacity it would be practically impossible to obtain sufficient quantities for terrorism. While RDX could have ‘leaked’ from a military environment – perhaps from the Indian Army – this is a less likely source than Pakistan, and especially the Pakistani military in the form of the ISI. It is also interesting to note that the South Asia Terrorism Portal website’s chronicle of events mentions several seizures of RDX in the possession of ‘ISI agents’ operating near the border with Pakistan, but well away from Kashmir.⁶⁵ It is possible, however, that these so-called ‘agents’ are LeT and other *jihadi* group operatives bringing arms and RDX originally supplied by the ISI *for purposes in Kashmir* into India for attacks outside Kashmir. Such a view is consonant with the clear intention of LeT to target India more generally.

However, the most common explosive used in India is not RDX but the classic ‘home brew’ used in many of the Mumbai bombings, the mix of ammonium nitrate, potassium chlorate and sulphuric acid. All these chemicals are easily obtainable within India. This formula has at times been available on the Internet and is broadly similar to the mix used for the Oklahoma and Bali bombings. Use of this explosive mix suggests that to a

significant degree India's terrorism problem is home-grown or, less likely, the result of training by Pakistan to disguise any involvement on its part.

The August 2003 Mumbai bombings, along with a number of other seizures and bombings, involved gelignite.⁶⁶ Gelignite is a form of dynamite and is a common explosive for mining and excavation. It would be readily available on the Indian black market. (It is also interesting to note as an aside that it appears to have been the explosive used in the bombings in Madrid of 11 March 2004.) The material used in the August 2003 Mumbai bombings was allegedly shipped over the border from Nepal. Nepal has previously been used by the ISI to smuggle goods and people into India in the context of activities in Kashmir. It is also a favoured smuggling route for Indian organised crime.⁶⁷ Use of the Nepalese route is not, of course, proof of Pakistani official involvement, but it could well be an indication of the on-going involvement of Muslim criminals in supporting terrorism in India.

In terms of the possible involvement of Pakistan, more telling than the type of explosives used is the intensive role of LeT in fostering terrorism in India and in training Indian terrorists in Pakistan. LeT, along with the other *jihadi* groups in Pakistan active in Kashmir, has had a very close relationship with the Pakistani authorities, especially the ISI. This relationship developed in the context of the Afghan anti-Soviet war and continued 'full-throttle' throughout Pakistan's campaign of proxy war in Indian Kashmir. It is difficult to envisage that a group like LeT could be involved in terrorism in India outside Kashmir – including training of terrorist cadre in Pakistan and provision of explosives across the border – without the knowledge and presumably tacit approval of Pakistani authorities. However, it should be noted that this type of tacit approval, or 'turning a blind eye', is not the same thing as direct involvement. It should also be noted that, following the Indian mobilisation after the attack on the Lok Sabha of December 2001, which brought the two nations close to war, Pakistan would probably be wary of any deliberate involvement in a group like LeT in terms of its Indian operations beyond Kashmir.

Indeed, a safer strategy for Islamabad – because less obviously associated with Pakistan – would be to proffer arms by way of support to Indian insurgents in the northeast of the country. The recent enormous haul of arms in Chittagong Port, Bangladesh, has all the hallmarks of some kind of official involvement, given the size and cost of the shipment.⁶⁸ But again, the origin, funding and destination of this shipment, while intriguing, must remain conjectural.

What does the targeting of terrorist attacks in India tell us about the possible role of Pakistan? It appears at first glance that the targeting does have a 'strategic hand' guiding it. This would explain attacks focused on important financial centres like Mumbai and IT locations like Bangalore, Hyderabad and Chennai. It is also possible, however, that those seeking to initiate terrorism in India – home-grown or sponsored from Pakistan – have targeted important economic targets like Mumbai according to their own strategic calculations or for other than strategic reasons. It is quite possible that the educated cadre of SIMI, for example, is capable of planning terrorism strategically.

Moreover, Mumbai is in many respects a logical choice for home-grown attacks mounted in revenge for Gujarat. As already observed, there are many Gujaratis living there and it is an important location of Gujarati business interests. It is noted for its high degree of communal unrest, partly because of the activities of the local Shiv Sena party. It is freewheeling and an important location of money laundering and gangster activity. It is the location of vast slums and a high degree of social dissonance. In short, there are many other explanations for the high incidence of terrorism in Mumbai and western India than any role of Pakistan.

Whatever the truth of any involvement by Pakistani authorities in terrorism in India, the central analytical point for this paper is that there has been a rise in *home-grown* terrorism by non-Kashmiri Indian Muslims since the 1992 destruction of the mosque at Ayodhya and especially since the Gujarat riots of 2002. While it was convenient for India's former Hindu-leaning government to attribute these attacks to the machinations of Pakistan, and while there may certainly be some help from Pakistan for such activities, to a significant degree they are a direct response by dissatisfied Muslims to events triggered by the Hindu Right elements themselves.⁶⁹ Any involvement of Pakistan is likely to consist of facilitation of an existing trend rather than the creation of that trend. But, at the very least, it can be noted that Pakistan has been tardy in cracking down on groups like LeT in whatever guise such groups are currently travelling.

In view of the apparent home-grown nature of recent terrorism, the crucial issue therefore remains: how has Indian government policy in response to these developments acted either to reinforce the terrorism tendency or to mitigate the circumstances that have given rise to it?

Government strategies and repression

The issue of the role of government in either mitigating terrorism in India or exacerbating the problem is complicated by India's federal structure. As already noted, at the state level, BJP governments, and in some cases even BJP-leaning governments, have acted to 'appease' what they see as the Hindu vote.⁷⁰

At the federal level, however, the policy direction has been more complex. After an initial delay in dispatching the Army to Gujarat to quell the 2002 riots, the policy framework set by then Prime Minister Vajpayee was more statesman-like. At the highest strategic level, the Vajpayee government was well aware of the economic consequences of any downward spiral into domestic violence in India and sought to moderate its policies accordingly. For example, even the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Adwani, who is noted for his close links to the RSS, reaffirmed faith in secularism in the context of his keynote address to inaugurate the Modi government's 'Vibrant Gujarat' campaign to attract international investment. In doing so, he said he would like to see Ahmedabad develop into a more "*cosmopolitan city*" (emphasis added).⁷¹

The BJP government even went so far in the context of the 2004 election campaign as to attempt to woo the Muslim vote, especially once it became apparent that it was losing support halfway through the extended election period. This strategy not only included the moderate Vajpayee, but also L.K. Adwani. Prior to the election, the latter set out on a *yatra* (journey) reminiscent of his 1990 *Rath Yatra* that was in turn a prelude to the destruction of the Ayodhya mosque. On the latter occasion, however, the *yatra* was not so much directed towards Hindu interests as the selling of a 'shining', predominantly secular image of India in which all religions and interests would 'rise on the same tide'. Ironically, this *yatra* attracted criticism from both the Left, which argued it was intended to replicate the 1990 *yatra* as a form of political 'dog whistling', and the Hindu Right, which saw Adwani's criticism of the Gujarat riots as a betrayal.⁷² However, as pointed out above, at the regional and local levels the Sangh Parivar has been anything but reflective of this moderate position.

Moreover, India's reaction to its terrorism problem has been similar to that of many Western countries – to tighten the legal framework in order to 'crack down' on terrorism. An early expression of the Indian legislation was the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA). According to Human Rights Watch, TADA is notorious for facilitating tens of thousands of politically motivated detentions, torture, and other human

rights violations against political opponents in the late 1980s and early 1990s. TADA was replaced by POTA in 2002. This act sets forth a broad definition of terrorism that includes acts of violence or disruption of essential services carried out with 'intent to threaten the unity and integrity of India or to strike terror in any part of the people'. POTA also makes it a crime not to provide authorities with 'information relating to any terrorist activity'. The Act allows for up to three months' preventive detention without charge.⁷³ It was under POTA, for example, that the Muslim college teacher, S.A.R. Geelani, was sentenced to death for involvement in the Lok Sabha attack of December 2001. However, the Delhi High Court released him on appeal saying there was no admissible evidence against him at all.⁷⁴

In recognition of the widespread abuse of POTA, in October 2003 the Act was amended to make the findings of the Union and State Committees that oversight its implementation mandatory and to ensure that where the same person was considered by POTA by state and federal authorities, the federal jurisdiction would prevail.⁷⁵

The converse of the draconian prosecution of some Muslims in India through TADA and POTA is the near failure of the authorities to obtain prosecution outcomes against Hindus in the context of the Gujarat riots. According to Harsh Mander, of the 240 people held by the Gujarat state authorities under POTA, 239 are Muslim, one is a Sikh and not one is Hindu. The four major petitions pending before the Gujarat High Court filed by respected writers, artists and activists have been deliberately delayed by the state authorities and the only one to have gone forward is the *Best Bakery* case. That case became notorious when the witness withdrew her evidence, allegedly as a result of intimidation from Hindu Right elements. However, recently the Indian Supreme Court has ruled that the *Best Bakery* case should be removed from Gujarat and heard elsewhere in India, since there is no guarantee of a fair hearing in Gujarat. To date, only one set of convictions of Hindus has been obtained as a result of the Gujarat riots – for a massacre of 14 Muslims at Ghodasar on 3 March 2003.⁷⁶

Despite the adjustment to POTA and the intervention of the Supreme Court in the *Best Bakery* case, the overall climate for human rights in India has been in decline in recent years. Legislation like POTA, poor resourcing, political interference and corruption have caused India's hard-pressed security services to act in a heavy-handed fashion towards Muslims and other minorities. Any further decline in behaviour on the part of the agencies could quickly produce that fatal violence-counter violence cycle so typical of terrorist insurgency. And once the gears of this cycle lock in, experience the world over shows that they are especially difficult to disengage.

Outlook

The destruction of the mosque at Ayodhya occurred twelve years ago. Over two years have passed since the terrible riots in Gujarat. Those two events have produced a worrying increase in terrorism perpetrated by non-Kashmiri Indian Muslims. Such people are apparently driven by a combination of factors, including continuing economic stagnation of the community, the repercussions of the so-called 'war on terrorism', the growing role of Wahhabi and Salafist forms of Islam in South Asia and frustration and despair at the growing power of the Sangh Parivar in Indian political life and the way the Hindu Right has used communalism to garner that power. Terrorism has become a constant of Indian life. While most acts of terrorism have been relatively minor, several have constituted major terrorism attacks by any standards.

India is so large and diverse that the level of violence has been somewhat obscured from the public gaze. Such violence has not yet jeopardised foreign investment and the economic renaissance that has attracted so much international attention. Even Mumbai and western India, which have been a focus of much of the unrest, continue to prosper. Present levels of terrorism are containable within the Indian polity.

Another positive factor is the election of the Congress-led central government. Congress will rely on the votes of 62 Marxists and 55 socialists, all of whom will have strong secular credentials. Congress itself has striven in recent years to reassert its secular credentials. There will be pressure on the new government by those elements on the Left to repeal or modify the hated POTA legislation. Congress is likely to meet these demands on POTA and also intervene in education departments to ensure that a secular position is reasserted.

Congress has also pledged to continue former Prime Minister Vajpayee's resolute efforts towards a settlement with Pakistan of the Kashmir issue. Although such a settlement would not entirely solve communal problems between Hindus and Muslims in India, it would certainly help to remove the sense in India that Muslims are a 'fifth column' for Pakistan.

However, these positive elements suggesting an improvement in the lot of Muslims and a diminution in the threat of home-grown terrorism may not be as effective as could be hoped.

With or without Vajpayee, the *jihadi* groups in Pakistan will do their best to derail the peace initiative through a significant terrorist attack. But what is even more troubling is that the Hindu Right out of office may well

seek to act as a spoiler of any attempt at rapprochement with Pakistan. Indeed, former Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Adwani hinted as much in an interview prior to the election.⁷⁷ The presence of the Hindu Right as spoiler would make it more difficult for a Congress-led government to give any ground on Kashmir. It would also make it more difficult for the government not to blame Pakistan for any substantial terrorist event perpetrated by *jihadi* groups as they attempt to derail the peace process.

And, despite the secular victory, there are many other uncertainties that cloud the future. Each of these is potentially interconnected in a mutually reinforcing 'witch's brew' of possibility. These include the great difficulty of ensuring that India's vast security framework continues to uphold basic human rights norms, the propensity of the Sangh Parivar to act out its communal role forthrightly at the grass-roots level, where it is still in government in a number of important states, the prospect of further political instability in Pakistan with possibly a greater role for Islamic interests and the prospect for a 'change of guard' from the Vajpayee leadership of the BJP to that of L.K. Adwani, or some other figure who would likely be more chauvinist, particularly with the party now out of office.

In this latter respect, the recent loss of the national election by the BJP does not auger well. The more strident elements within the Sangh Parivar already have knives out for the moderate leadership, arguing that their policy of seeking Muslim votes and peace on Kashmir 'betrayed' Hindus and caused the electoral loss.⁷⁸ This presages a shift to more militant political methods reminiscent of the original Ayodhya campaign. For example, out of office, the Hindu Right is likely to push much harder for the construction of a temple to Ram on the mosque site than they could while exercising the responsibilities of office. In this respect, it is ironic that a victory for the secular forces in the national election may well have a worse outcome for peace with Pakistan and better communal relations in India than a solid BJP victory would have.

Notes

- ¹ The term 'Hindu Right' is in some ways unsatisfactory. As we shall see in this paper, it covers a wide spectrum of views about the role of Hinduism in politics. However, it is a better term than 'Hindu chauvinism', 'Hindu extremism' or 'Hindu fundamentalism'.
- ² By 'home-grown' I mean terrorism perpetrated by Indian Muslims who are neither originally from Kashmir nor Pakistan. This terminology is in no way intended to imply that Kashmiris from Indian Kashmir are not Indian. The term 'terrorism' is notoriously difficult to define. By terrorism I mean planned or actual acts of violence by sub-national groups against persons or property that are indiscriminate, directed at non-combatant members of the disciplined services or civilians and intended to cause general fear in order to achieve political, religious or ideological outcomes separate from the actual physical damage planned or occasioned. I do not include acts of advocacy or legitimate industrial advocacy or unrest. Although states can act in a terrorist-like fashion against their own or another people, I do not include them because the types of remedial action needed are quite different.
- ³ However, for a persistent voice drawing attention to the advent of home-grown terroristic behaviour on the part of India's Muslims, and the alleged Pakistani involvement in it, see B. Raman's writings on the web site of the South Asia Analysis Group, <http://saag.org>.
- ⁴ 'The economic powerhouse', *The Hindu*, Vol. 20, Issue 23 (<http://flonnet.com/fl2023/stories/20031121004510600.htm>).
- ⁵ 'The economic powerhouse', *The Hindu*, Vol. 20, Issue 23 (<http://flonnet.com/fl2023/stories/20031121004510600.htm>).
- ⁶ 'Riots give call centres the jitters', *Times of India*, 9 December 2003 (<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/cms.dll/articleshow/347268.cms>).
- ⁷ This view of course relates to Indian Muslims outside Kashmir. The 'traditional' view is probably best captured by the classic text on government in India: W Morris-Jones' *The Government and Politics of India*, (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1971), p. 252 .
- ⁸ Ashutosh Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), *passim*. Varshney examines a series of 'matched' cities and discovers that rioting can only be said to be endemic in about 24 places in the entirety of India.
- ⁹ Robert W. Stern, *Changing India: Bourgeois revolution on the subcontinent*, Cambridge University Press, (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press [Foundation Books in India], 1993), p. 26.
- ¹⁰ Paul R. Brass, *The Production of Hindu-Muslims Violence in Contemporary India*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003), pp. 6-15.
- ¹¹ For Brass's reply to Varshney's review of Brass's book, see 'Response to Ashutosh Varshney by Paul Brass', *The Mail Archive*, 5 December 2003 (<http://www.mail-archive.com/sapac@www.residentlounge.com/msg00137.html>).
- ¹² Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life*, pp. 282-3.

- ¹³ *SoundVision.com*, 'Profile of Muslims in India', (<http://www.soundvision.com/info/india/profile.asp>).
- ¹⁴ The Minorities Commission found that, in this period, 60% of deaths were of Muslims and 73% of losses were incurred by Muslims. See Steven Wilkinson, 'Putting Gujarat in Perspective', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 27 April 2004, p. 2, (<http://www.epw.org.in/showarticles.php?root=2002&leaf=04&filename=4387&filetype=html>).
- ¹⁵ Yoginder Sikand, 'No separate Muslim political party: JUH', *The Milli Gazette*, 1-15 February 2004 (<http://www.milligazette.com/archives/2004/01-15Feb04-print-edition/011502200486>).
- ¹⁶ Asghar Ali Engineer subscribes to both the 'divide and rule' interpretation and to the élite determination theory:
- Communalism ... is not the product of religion; it is, in fact the product of politics of the élite of a religious community ... And when a third party in the form of a colonial authority is present it [communalism] assumes grave proportions. Though the British colonial rulers cannot be solely held responsible for the genesis of communalism, they did play a vital role in promoting it as well as in its genesis. Right from the day the British rulers sensed the damage Hindu-Muslim unity could cause to their empire, they began dividing the two communities ...
- 'Gujarat Riots in the Light of the History of Communal Violence', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 14 December 2002, p. 2 (<http://www.epw.org.in/showArticles.php?root=2002&leaf=12&filename=5265&filetype=html>).
- ¹⁷ The following is from A.G. Noorani's review of *Khaki and Ethnic Violence in India: Army, Police and Paramilitary Forces During Communal Riots* by Omar Khalidi (New Delhi: Three Essays Collective, 2003). The review appeared in *Frontline*, 'Book Reviews', 13 October 2003 as in 'Muslims in the Forces', *CounterCurrents.org*, 15 October 2003 (<http://countercurrents.org/comm-noorani131003.htm>).
- ¹⁸ Noorani's review of *Khaki and Ethnic Violence in India: Army, Police and Paramilitary Forces During Communal Riots* by Khalidi, p. 3.
- ¹⁹ Noorani's review of *Khaki and Ethnic Violence in India: Army, Police and Paramilitary Forces During Communal Riots* by Khalidi, p. 4.
- ²⁰ Noorani's review of *Khaki and Ethnic Violence in India: Army, Police and Paramilitary Forces During Communal Riots* by Khalidi, p. 5.
- ²¹ Steven Wilkinson, 'Putting Gujarat in Perspective', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 27 April 2002 *passim* and Table 1, p. 4, (<http://www.epw.org.in/showarticles.php?root=2002&leaf=04&filename=4387&filetype=html>).
- ²² 'Common questions, uncommon answers', *The Milli Gazette*, 1 November 2002 (<http://www.milligazette.com/Archives/01112002/0111200254.htm>); Omar Khalidi, *Indian Muslims Since Independence*, Vikas Publishing House Private Ltd, p. 77.
- ²³ C. Rammanohar Reddy, 'Deprivation Affects Muslims More', *CounterCurrents.org* (<http://countercurrents.org/comm-reddy070803.htm>).

- ²⁴ For the number of RSS cells (chakas) see the RSS website at http://www.rss.org/New_RSS/History/Evolution.jsp.
- ²⁵ 'The Foreign Exchange of Hate: IDRF and the American Funding of Hindutva', Sabrang Communications Mumbai and The South Asia Citizens Web, France (<http://www.stopfundinghate.org/sacw/part2.html>).
- ²⁶ Golwaker, the second head of the RSS, quoted in K.R. Mulkani, *The RSS Story* (New Delhi: Impex, 1980, p. 42).
- ²⁷ Asghar Ali Engineer, 'Gujarat Riots in the Light of the History of Communal violence', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 14 December 2002 (<http://www.epw.org.in/showArticles.php?root=2002&leaf=12&filename=5265&filetype=html>), pp. 11-12.
- ²⁸ A. G. Noorani, 'How Advani went scot-free', *The Hindu*, Vol. 21/2, 17-30 January 2004.
- ²⁹ For one such critique see a report of an interview with Professor Suraj Bhan, 'It was not a temple', *Frontline*, Volume 20, No. 19, September 13-26, 2003.
- ³⁰ One of the most effective charges levelled against the Congress party by the Hindu parties was that it attempted to 'appease' Muslims to garner their vote. Mrs Gandhi, however, also had a propensity to emphasise Hindu values in her political rhetoric. In her political comeback in the South following the Emergency, she even attempted to portray herself as a goddess by arriving in a jeep in villages late at night illuminated from below. (Recounted to the author by one of her entourage).
- ³¹ Angana Chatterji, *Asian Age*, 12 November, 2003 as in [Countercurrents.org](http://www.countercurrents.org), 24 November 2003 (<http://www.countercurrents.org/comm-angana1121103.htm>).
- ³² Parvathi Menon, 'A communal campaign', *The Hindu*, 8 December 2003 ([http://www.hinduonnet.com/the_hindu/thscrip/print.pl?file=20031219002604100.htm&date ...](http://www.hinduonnet.com/the_hindu/thscrip/print.pl?file=20031219002604100.htm&date...)).
- ³³ Mukundan C. Menon, 'Marad: Untold Story of an RSS "Liberated Area" ', [Countercurrents.Org](http://www.countercurrents.org), 26 May 2003 (<http://countercurrents.org/comm-menon260503.html>).
- ³⁴ See Ram Puniyani, 'Uma Bharti's Cow Agenda', [Countercurrents.org](http://www.countercurrents.org), 3 March 2004 (<http://countercurrents.org/comm-puniyani250204.htm>).
- ³⁵ *The Milli Gazette*, Sunday 13 July 2003. The group was reportedly an offshoot of the Pune-based Maharashtra Military Force (MMF). Although this reference is from a Muslim source, the MMF is itself well documented. (<http://www.milligazette.com/Archives/01122002/0112200286.htm>).
- ³⁶ Jessica Stern, *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill* (New York: Ecco, 2003) p. 263.
- ³⁷ Asghar Ali Engineer, 'Gujarat Riots in the Light of the History of Communal violence', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 14 December 2002, pp. 11-12 (<http://www.epw.org.in/showArticles.php?root=2002&leaf=12&filename=5265&filetype=html>).
- ³⁸ Engineer, 'Gujarat Riots in the Light of the History of Communal violence', *Economic and Political Weekly*, p. 14.

- ³⁹ 'Guilty verdict in Gujarat case', BBC News, 24 November 2003 (http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/south_asia/3234604.stm).
- ⁴⁰ '...though we have witnessed government inaction or indifference ... we have never seen governmental machinery involved in executing the riots and the chief minister justifying it instead of controlling it'. (Engineer, 'Gujarat Riots in the Light of the History of Communal violence', *Economic and Political Weekly*, p.16.)
- ⁴¹ Manus Dasgupta, 'Pandya instigated the mob, alleges witness', *The Hindu*, 18 July 2003 (<http://www.hinduonnet.com/stories/2003071804280100.htm>).
- ⁴² The term 'chauvinist' is used advisedly in the case of the Shiv Sena.
- ⁴³ The bombing of the US marine barracks and French troops in Beirut in 1983, allegedly by Hezbollah, resulted in a higher number of deaths. Depending on one's definition of terrorism, the attack on unarmed civilians in Punjab at Jallianwala Bagh in 1919 was a far worse event. In that attack, the official death toll was 379, but the number who died was probably greater. However, some definitions of terrorism do not include 'state terrorism'.
- ⁴⁴ For a good account of the bombings and the above list of accusations, see Praveen Swami, 'The spreading tentacles of terror', *The Hindu*, 31 August 2003 (<http://www.hindu.com/2003/08/31/stories/2003083100251400.htm>).
- ⁴⁵ B. Raman 'Mumbai: Tip of the jihadi iceberg', *Asia Times*, 1 September 2003 (<http://www.atimes.com/atimes/printN.html>), p. 2.
- ⁴⁶ *Terrorism: Lethal Remittance*, by Praveen Swami, Vol. 21, Issue 1, 3-16 January 2004 (<http://www.hinduonnet.com/fline/fl2101/stories/20040116003202600.htm>).
- ⁴⁷ This compilation has relied heavily on the South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP) website, which gives timelines for 2000-4 at [http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/timeline/2000\(01-03\).htm](http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/timeline/2000(01-03).htm). Press extracts are also used but not acknowledged. They are mainly drawn from the Internet versions of *The Hindu* and *The Times of India*.
- ⁴⁸ See for example, *The Times of India*, 12 March 2003, which claims extensive smuggling of arms takes place across the border and that Ibrahim is in collusion with the ISI to destabilise the border area. (<http://timesofindia.com/cms.dll/xml/uncomp/articleshow?msid=243342>).
- ⁴⁹ Swapan Dasgupta, 'Gujarat is not the main recruiting ground for jihad', Rediff.com, 8 September 2003 (<http://www.rediff.com/news/2003sep/08guest.htm>).
- ⁵⁰ Kaleem Kawaja, 'Muslims in India: live together to survive', *The Milli Gazette*, Vol. 3, No. 23 (<http://www.milligazette.com/Archives/01122002/0112200266.htm>).
- ⁵¹ See 'Ahmedabad's ghettos', by Dionne Bunsha, *Frontline*, Vol. 20, Issue 20, net version (<http://www.flonnet.com/fl2020/stories/20031010003303900.htm>), pp. 1-5.
- ⁵² See **Appendix A**. However, the Appendix was not framed with a view to demonstrating the extent of Pakistani border crossings. A better indication of that is provided by the SATP site at footnote 47, above.

- ⁵³ B. Raman 'Mumbai: Tip of the jihadi iceberg', *Asia Times*, 1 September 2003 (<http://www.atimes.com/atimes/printN.html>), pp. 2-3. See also 26 August 1998, B. Raman 'Markaz Dawa al Irshad: Talibanisation of Nuclear Pakistan', SAAG Papers, <http://www.saag.org/papers/papers6.html>. The four jihadi organisation are: Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HuL); Harkat-ul-Jihad-ul-Islami (HUJI); Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT); Jaish-e-Mohammed (JEM).
- ⁵⁴ 'Lashkar-e-Toiba: its past, present and future', B. Raman, Paper 175, South Asia Analysis Group (<http://www.saag.org/papers2/paper175.htm>); Jessica Stern, *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill* (New York: Ecco, 2003) p. 108.
- ⁵⁵ 'Lashkar-e-Toiba: its past, present and future', B. Raman, Paper 175, South Asia Analysis Group (<http://www.saag.org/papers2/paper175.htm>).
- ⁵⁶ The presence of the LeT in the Gulf is alluded to throughout this paper and is evident from **Appendix A**. In a recent Australian case, a medical student and the alleged terrorist Willie Brigitte were both alleged to have trained with LeT in Pakistan.
- ⁵⁷ R. Upadhaya, 'Students [sic] Islamic Movement of India', South Asia Analysis Group, paper No. 825, 30 October 2003, p. 2 (<http://www.saag.org/papers9/papers825.html>).
- ⁵⁸ Interview with Siddiqui (who is now an academic in the US) by Rediff.com on 2 September 2003 (<http://www.rediff.com/news/2003/sep/02inter.html>).
- ⁵⁹ B. Raman (a retired public servant) 'Islamic Terrorism in India: The Hydra-Headed Monster', South Asia Analysis Group paper 526, 3 October 2002, p. 1 (<http://saag.org/papers6/papers526.html>).
- ⁶⁰ Upadhaya, 'Students [sic] Islamic Movement of India', pp. 2-5.
- ⁶¹ Onkar Singh, 'Ban result of SIMI's anti-national activities: Swami', Rediff.com, 27 September 2001 (<http://www.rediff.com/news/2001/sep/27simi1.htm>).
- ⁶² *The Hindu*, 22 July 2003, 'SIMI activists sentenced' (<http://www.hinduonnet.com/stories/2003072207640102.html>).
- ⁶³ By direct assistance I mean a terrorist activity in India actually planned and supported by Pakistani officials. Indirect assistance might include official assistance to a Pakistani or Kashmiri group that is known to be carrying out terrorism in India outside Kashmir.
- ⁶⁴ Somit Sen, 'Police launch massive operation on west coast', *Times of India*, 16 March 2004 (<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/cms.dll/articleshow?msid=183368>).
- ⁶⁵ <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/timeline/2000-04.htm>.
- ⁶⁶ Interestingly, the Indian government laboratory analysing the explosive reported it to be RDX. The police, however, insisted it was 'gelatine'.
- ⁶⁷ *The Times of India* claims that a leaked intelligence report said:
 Dawood 's [Ibrahim] D company colluded with the ISI to create political instability and lawlessness and was concentrating on districts along the Indo-Nepal border, the report said.

The report further concerned smuggling drugs and arms from Kathmandu to India, *Times of India*, 12 March 2004 (<http://timesofindia.com/cms.dll/xml/uncomp/article/gow?msid=243342>).

- ⁶⁸ Haroon Habib, 'A deadly cargo', *Frontline*, Vol. 21, Issue 10, 8-21 May 2004, <http://www.flonnet.com/fl2110/stories/20040521000206100.htm>. One possibility is that the shipment does not involve another state sponsor, but is for insurgent groups such as the ULFA that has acquired funds by illicit drug dealing.
- ⁶⁹ See 'Pandya murder trial begins today', Praveen Swami, *The Hindu*, 1 October 2003 (<http://www.hindu.com/2003/10/01/stories/2003100109891200.htm>). This provides a picture of a local Muslim cleric who actively sought out financial assistance from a Pakistani group, Lashkar-e-Toiba, while he was in the Gulf, to start a terrorist cell. Financial support was subsequently allegedly provided.
- ⁷⁰ Even the AIADMK government of Jayalithaa in Tamil Nadu, which was in alliance with the BJP-led government at the centre, has acted in ways likely to alienate minorities in order to shore up its position. See S. Viswanathan, 'The Spread in the South: Tamil Nadu', *Frontline*, Vol. 21, Issue 6, 13-26 March 2004.
- ⁷¹ 'Advani reaffirms faith in secularism', *The Hindu*, 29 September 2003 (<http://www.thehindu.com/2003/09/20/stories/2003092906150100.htm>).
- ⁷² 'Advani's riot talk draws ire', *The Times of India*, 9 March 2004 (<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/msid-548063,prtpage-1.cms>).
- ⁷³ Human Rights Watch, World Report 2002: India, p. 5 (<http://www.hrw.org/wr2k2/asia6.html>).
- ⁷⁴ Siddharth Narrain, 'Reversing a verdict', *Frontline*, Vol. 20, Issue 23 (<http://flonnet.com/fl2023/stories/20031121005002000.htm>).
- ⁷⁵ *The Hindu*, J. Venkatesan, 'Ordinance to amend POTA promulgated' (<http://www.hindu.com/2003/10/28/sories/2003102808990100.html>).
- ⁷⁶ *The Times of India Online*, 24 November 2003 (<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/msid-301359,prtpage-1.cms>).
- ⁷⁷ See Siddharth Varadarajan, 'BJP may play spoiler in foreign affairs', *The Times of India Online*, 15 May 2004 (<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/msid-676324,prtpage-1.cms>).
- ⁷⁸ See Sultan Shahin, 'BJP: You can cry if you want', *Asia Times Online*, 15 May 2004 (http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/FE15Df04.html).

Appendix A

Some major incidents of terrorism from 1993 to the present

1993

March 1993

serial blasts in Mumbai – 257 killed. The bombings were allegedly masterminded by the gangsters Dawood Ibrahim, Chhota Shakeel and ‘Tiger’ Memon in response to the destruction of the Babri mosque at Ayodhya and the subsequent anti-Muslim riots. The RDX explosives allegedly came from Pakistan and Dawood Ibrahim was allegedly subsequently given safe haven in Pakistan.

8 August 1993

bombing of the RSS office in Chennai (then Madras), 11 killed. This attack was the alleged work of a South Indian extremist Muslim organization, the Al Ummah (or Al Umah). Imam Ali, of Al Ummah, was trained in camps in Pakistani Kashmir. Al Ummah was allegedly started with the connivance of the LeT.

December 1993

bombings of five trains – two die, 22 injured. A group of Muslims were convicted. They were allegedly seeking to revenge the Ayodhya mosque destruction.

1998

February 1998
1998

bombing at Virar, Mumbai – 9 killed
serial bombing in Coimbatore – kills 58, injures 250, also blamed on Al Ummah.

2000

2000

passim – Andhra and Karnataka serial bombings of churches. These activities are allegedly linked to Deendar Anjuman, an orthodox Islamic organisation believing Christians are also Muslims.

17 January 2000

police arrest three persons, including a Pakistani, in Delhi, and recover 860g of RDX, two ABCD timers and four electronic detonators from them. The Pakistani national was arrested earlier in 1998 for circulating counterfeit currency.

- 3 August 2000 police raid the residence of a top leader of the Deendar Anjuman in Nuzvid, Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh, and recover 200 timer devices.
- 11 August 2000 one person is killed and 45 injured in a powerful explosion in Ahmedabad, Gujarat.
- August 2000 bombing of the Sabarmati Express near Faizabad, Uttar Pradesh. Student's Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) activists allegedly involved.
- 3 September 2000 SIMI activists – Mohammed Maroof and Abdul Mobin – confess to their role in a series of bomb blasts in Uttar Pradesh on the eve of Independence Day. They also reveal that a new terrorist outfit called Qaafila-e-Saaqt Jaan (QSJ) has been founded in Uttar Pradesh.
- 10 October 2000 Delhi police arrest a medical student who is a supporter of the Tehriq-ul-Mujahideen (TuM) and seize some explosives and one million rupees.
- 24 November 2000 Maharashtra Police says an estimated 150 LeT terrorists are suspected to have infiltrated into India to kill important leaders.
- 6 December 2000 Delhi Police arrest an ISI agent, a resident of Lahore, Pakistan and seize 10 kg of RDX, some arms, ammunition and documents.
- 22 December 2000 attack on an army barracks at the Red Fort, three killed. This was attributed to Kashmiri members of the LeT.

2001

- 17 January 2001 Delhi Police arrest a Pakistani terrorist of the Al Badr with one kg of RDX and a detonator. Police arrest two suspected 'ISI agents' in Bihar's Maharajgang district, while attempting to cross over into India from Nepal.
- 17 February 2001 Intelligence Bureau (IB) alerts district police chiefs in Bihar on the activities of Islamist terrorist outfits – linked to Osama Bin Laden – along the Nepal border. The IB says they might try to recruit youth for *jihad* in Kashmir.
- 18 April 2001 three Pakistani terrorists are killed in an encounter in Gontinagar area, Lucknow. Nearly

- two kg of high quality chemical explosives, two AK rifles, and other arms and ammunition are recovered.
- 19 April 2001 police arrest three suspected supporters of the JeM in Allahabad for helping the terrorists killed in Lucknow a day earlier.
- 14 May 2001 the Uttar Pradesh government admits a rise in ISI activities in the state and says seven organisations, including the HM, LeT and HuA, are primarily responsible for cross-border terrorism along the Nepal border.
- 21 May 2001 an 18-inch IED containing about 750 grams of 'gelatin' and having a time mechanism and electronic detonator is found near the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), a Hindu religious organisation, office in Nagpur.
- 24 May 2001 police detect and defuse a time bomb near the headquarters of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in Nagpur.
- 15 June 2001 Delhi Police Special Cell foil an alleged plot by Osama bin Laden, to be executed through his aides, to blast the United States Embassy in New Delhi, by apprehending two suspected terrorists. Six kg of RDX, detonators and timers are recovered from one of the accused, a Sudanese national. His Indian accomplice is identified as Shameem of Bihar.
- 31 August 2001 a Delhi Court sentences a Kashmir terrorist to 14 years rigorous imprisonment for smuggling 1.4 kg of RDX, five detonators, and Pakistani currency to deliver to terrorists in Delhi.
- 27 September 2001 a report says ISI recruitment in Andhra Pradesh, in Hyderabad; Nalgonda, Warangal, Nizamabad and Karimnagar districts might have commenced in 1991. Recruits were sent to Pakistan for arms training, the report claims.
- 27 October 2001 14kg of RDX, two AK-47 rifles, two pistols, 296 pistol cartridges, an assortment of electronic detonators and timing devices and other explosives are seized near the India-Pakistan border at Santalpur, Patan district, Gujarat.

- 13 December 2001 attack on the Indian Parliament, 16 killed, including terrorists. Allegedly perpetrated by LeT and Jaish-e-Mohammed. The attack involved use of firearms and RDX.
- 26 December 2001 the annual year-end report of the Ministry of Home Affairs, for the year 2001, says 101 'ISI modules' were unearthed countrywide. The report holds that heightened challenges posed by foreign sponsored terrorist attacks characterised the internal security situation.

2002

- 5 January 2002 Delhi Police arrest a *hawala* (illegal money transaction) operator from Lal Kuan area of North Delhi for alleged involvement in financing ISI agents.
- 22 January 2002 attack on the American Centre, Kolkata. Four killed, allegedly by ARCF/HuJI.
- 23 January 2002 Farhan Malik, a Dubai-based criminal with links to the ISI and several terrorist outfits of Pakistan claims responsibility for the January 22 terrorist attack on the American Centre, Kolkata. He also threatens to execute more such attacks at other places. CBI informs the FBI that the ransom money taken by Aftab Ansari, the perpetrator of the American Center attack, to release a Kolkata businessman was used to finance Mohammed Atta, leader of the September 11 terrorist strikes in the US.
- 12 February 2002 reports say Aftab Ansari admitted meeting senior officials of the ISI in Dubai and Rawalpindi (Pakistan) at least five times since 1999. Five gangsters of the Dawood Ibrahim group are arrested and a huge cache of foreign-made firearms are recovered from their possession at the Mulund-Thane check-post near Mumbai. CBI say e-mail messages revealed Aftab Ansari's links with the Al Qaeda.
- 2 March 2002 two Hizb-ul-Mujahideen terrorists, including a founder member of the SIMI, are arrested in Kolkata, and large quantities of explosives are seized.

- 8 March 2002 Union Minister of State for Finance, Gingee N. Ramchandran, says in the Lok Sabha that preliminary investigations into recent cases of *hawala* transactions *prima facie* indicate linkages with terrorist activities. Forty-five *hawala* dealers have been arrested in Delhi and other parts of the country during the last three years, he adds.
- 19 March 2002 Minister of State for Home, Vidyasagar Rao, says the government is considering enacting new legislation to check the receipt and utilisation of foreign funds by *madrassas* and other organisations. He adds that there are 31850 *madrassas* in the country – 1453 in border areas – and that the ISI is trying to manipulate and mislead scholars there.
- 3 July 2002 media reports say the Coast Guard has intercepted an abandoned Lebanese ship in the high seas 84 nautical miles off-Ratnagiri in Maharashtra. Two AK-47 rifles, with the inscriptions ‘Allah’ and ‘Yusuf’ are seized from the ship.
- 9 July 2002 five terrorists of the HM are arrested in Moradabad and a huge quantity of arms and ammunition, including three AK assault rifles, ammunition and RDX, are recovered from them.
- 11 July 2002 MDMK general secretary and Member of Parliament Vaiko is arrested by Madurai police in Chennai under POTA for making pro-LTTE speeches and statements. He is immediately taken to the Central Prison in Madurai.
- 14 August 2002 police arrest an alleged Al Ummah Mujahideen terrorist reportedly trained in Pakistan, while trying to set up a base in Delhi.
- 28 August 2002 Delhi Police arrest two LeT terrorists from Nizamuddin area and seize 4 kg RDX, a Chinese pistol, two detonators and bullets.
- 31 August 2002 LeT terrorists held in Ahmedabad for plotting to assassinate Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi and some senior Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) members.
- 4 September 2002 Andhra Inspector General of Police (Intelligence), A. Siva Shankar, says the ransom of 30 million

- rupees paid for the release of Kolkata industrialist Partha Roy Burman ultimately reached the perpetrators of the September 11 terrorist attacks in the US.
- 18 September 2002 Abu Salem, underworld don and a key accused in the 1993-Mumbai serial bomb blasts, is arrested in Lisbon, Portugal.
- 24 September 2002 around 35 persons are killed and nearly 100 injured when heavily armed, suspected LeT terrorists storm the Akshardham temple of the Swaminarayan sect in Gandhinagar, Gujarat. Allegedly perpetrated by LeT and Tehhreek-e-Qisas.
- 21 November 2002 suspected LeT terrorists set off blast near a temple in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh.
- 29 November 2002 Defence Minister George Fernandes says India has intelligence information and "human evidence" to support the charges that the ISI and the Al-Qaeda are using Bangladeshi territory for anti-India activities.
- 1 December 2002 police in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, arrest two extremists of the hitherto unknown Muslim Defence Force (MDF), an Islamist terrorist group, from a city suburb, and some detonators, gelatin sticks and other bomb-making material are seized.
- 2 December 2002 police begin to investigate the financial operations of the MDF. Chennai Police Commissioner K. Vijay Kumar says the MDF has links with the LeT and that it planned to set off blasts across the State. Reports say its chief, Abu Hamsa, resides in Saudi Arabia.
- 6 December 2002 Bombay Central Railway Station blast injures 25. Attributed by police to SIMI and LeT. Use of a 'crude' bomb.
- 22 December 2002 Ghatkopar (Mumbai) bus blast, 3 killed. Six people are arrested. The police allege they are LeT, Ahl-e-Hadith and SIMI associated. The explosive was ammonium nitrate, potassium chlorate and sulphuric acid. The network appears to have originated with expatriate Indians in Dubai, recruited through LeT. The

alleged principal, Imran Rahman Khan, was of a poorly educated background and was allegedly activated to commit *jihād* by the Gujarat riots of 2002. He was allegedly influenced by Lashkar commander Abdul Bari, a one-time Hyderabad (India) resident, who had spent the last 12 years shuttling between his base in Saudi Arabia and Dubai and other Gulf states on organisational work. Bari's collection of video-tapes on riot carnage convinced Khan to join an assault team being sent to Mumbai. Members of SIMI also seem to have cooperated with the Lashkar in setting up several Gulf-based cells. Mohammad Altaf, a long-time SIMI activist from Parbhani, Maharashtra, was a trained chemical engineer working in Dubai when the Gujarat pogrom began. He made contact with Bari soon after and, through him, he came to know Khan.

22 December 2002

nine more Muslim Defence Force (MDF) activists are arrested in Sivaganga, Tirunelveli and Tuticorin districts, in Tamil Nadu.

2003

9 January 2003

Mumbai Police arrest the main accused in the December 2002 blasts in a bus in Ghatkopar, Mumbai, Imran Rehman Khan, under POTA immediately after his deportation from Dubai.

13 January 2003

Ghatkopar bus blast main accused Imran Rehman Khan discloses that he was summoned by the LeT to Dubai to formulate a plan "to avenge Gujarat killings".

16 January 2003

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J Jayalalitha declares the entire state as a "notified area" under section 4 (possession of certain unauthorized arms) of POTA.

18 January 2003

a report says the LeT is establishing branches in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and some European countries.

26 January 2003

Mohammed Altaf, a SIMI activists and accused in the 2 December 2002 bomb blast in Ghatkopar, Mumbai, is deported from Dubai. He had

- allegedly supplied explosives and funds used in the incident.
- 27 January 2003 Vile Parle, Mumbai train blast, 1 killed, 30 injured.
- 29 January 2003 Mumbai Police suspect the LeT and SIMI were involved in the blasts near Vile Parle railway station, Mumbai. United Arab Emirates (UAE) based LeT terrorist Abu Hamza is suspected to have organised the blasts. The government is asked to seek his deportation.
- 31 January 2003 India and Thailand agree to convene a Joint Working Group on Security and cooperate in four areas: extradition, mutual legal assistance on criminal matters, work on security issues with or without international strategic content, and drive against narcotics.
- 22 February 2003 Deputy Prime Minister Advani reiterates in Himachal Pradesh the government's resolve to combat terrorism and divisive forces. He adds 171 'ISI centers' at 151 locations were unearthed.
- 1 March 2003 Delhi Court sentences to 10 years rigorous imprisonment two associates of the Babbar Khalsa, arrested on 14 October 2000, with 29kg RDX.
- 5 March 2003 POTA Court frames charges against nine persons, including six Pakistani nationals, for allegedly plotting to kill President APJ Abdul Kalam and attack the Bhabha Atomic Research Center, Mumbai, as well as other vital installations in Delhi.
- 13 March 2003 Mulund Station, Mumbai, train blast, 12 killed, 71 injured. This bombing took place one day after the 10 year memorial of the 1993 serial blasts. SIMI and Ahl-e-Hadith personnel were allegedly involved. One of the alleged accused in this blast, Ahmed, is a former aide of alleged terrorist, Dr Jalees Ansari, alleged mastermind of 60 bomb blasts in India. The blasts were detonated in the first class ladies carriage. Explosive used was a mix of ammonium nitrate, potassium chlorate and sulphuric acid.

- 16 March 2003 Deputy PM Advani says SIMI and JeM were responsible for the Mulund blast of 13 March, in Mumbai.
- 26 March 2003 assassination of former Home Minister of Gujarat, Haren Pandya. Pandya, the most bitter political opponent of Chief Minister Narendra Modi, was killed allegedly for his involvement in instigating mobs to conduct attacks during the Gujarat riots.¹ Pandya's father blamed the BJP – with L.K. Advani in turn blaming Pakistan's ISI.² Two groups were arrested for this event, one of four Gujaratis by the Gujarat police, including the imam of a mosque, and another of 14 Kashmiris by the Delhi CBI. Each police force alleged they had the correct culprits. The explanation might have been that, whilst the event was staged by Kashmiris, support was provided by Gujaratis. An article also refers to 10 of the accused having been sent to Pakistan for training.³
- 27 March 2003 Deputy PM L. K. Advani says in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, the killing of former Home Minister Haren Pandya was a "brutal act of terrorism" and accuses "the terrorist-underworld nexus" for the killing.
- 4 April 2003 speaking in Indore, Madhya Pradesh, Deputy PM L. K. Advani says that the LeT is behind the killing of former Gujarat Home Minister Haren Pandya, Nadimarg massacre in J&K and Mulund train blast in Mumbai.
- 19 April 2003 while speaking in New Delhi, Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) Director General S. C. Chaube says that Pakistan is using Bangladesh and Nepal to support subversive activities in the northeastern region.
- 21 April 2003 Under POTA, Mumbai Police arrest Ghulam Akbar Khotal, an alleged SIMI activist from Ratnagiri, Maharashtra, in connection with 13 March Mulund railway station blast-case.
- 13 May 2003 an arms dump, including RDX and AK-46 rifles, allegedly belonging to the SIMI and LeT is

- recovered at Padgah in the Thane District of Maharashtra.
- 29 July 2003 Ghatkopar, Mumbai, bombing of a bus – three killed, 34 wounded. Allegedly SIMI, Ahl-e-Hadith and LeT were involved. This event was similar to five previous explosions since December 2002, in the use of the mix of ammonium nitrate, potassium chlorate and sulphuric acid.
- 30 July 2003 Mumbai Police says that two suspected LeT terrorists and a member of the Ahle-Hadees, an Islamist extremist group affiliated to the Saudi Arabia-based Wahabi sect, are responsible for the 29 July bomb blast.
- 17 August 2003 an unnamed security official says that Pakistan-based terrorist outfits LeT and HuJI are luring youths from different places of Gujarat and sending them to terrorist training camps in Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) through Poonch district in Jammu and Kashmir.
- 25 August 2003 Mumbai blasts. 52 killed in two separate, timed explosions, one at the Gateway to India and one at the Jhaveri (jewelry) bazaar. Police arrest four – Syed Mohammed Hanif, his wife Fehmida Hanif, their daughter Farheen Hanif and Arshad Shafiq Mohammed – whom the police refer to as ‘mere couriers’. All are India born. Police are also seeking a suspect, Nissar Ahmed Ansari (aka ‘Nassir’), whom they believe is in charge of the ‘terror nodule’ operating since the December 2002 bombings. Police believe Nissar provided the team with explosives. The explosive was in each case allegedly 25 kg of ‘gelatin’. It is noteworthy that 235 ‘gelatin’ sticks, 13 alarm clocks and 22 detonators were subsequently recovered from Hanif’s house in a slum in suburban Andheri. Similar recoveries were made from Delhi Railway Station around the same time.⁴ On 2 October, Zahid Patne, alias Patni, was arrested, allegedly for involvement in the August 25 twin blasts and Ghatkopar blast of

July 2003. He is said to have been named by Arshad Ansari – who accused him of ‘brainwashing’ Ansari and Haneef. He is allegedly closely linked to Nissar, the alleged controller of the module. Police said the blast accused revealed links with conspirators in Hyderabad, Ernakulam and Chennai. They claimed the conspiracy was hatched in the Dubai office of LeT. Nissar was killed along with another man when police sought to stop them in a car. Documents, detonators and explosives were subsequently located in Nissar’s house. Documents suggest that Nissar was planning another bombing on 11 September. As more arrests were made, the Mumbai police became progressively more confident of the important role of the LeT in orchestrating and planning the terrorist campaign – including many, if not most, of the blasts in Mumbai since December 2002. The police also referred to an ISI ‘mole’ called Asgar Ali, recruited by ISI agents in Andhra Pradesh.

19 September 2003

a prime accused, Toufiq alias Chittu alias Rafique alias Yasar, in the 2 December 2002 bomb blast in Ghatkopar reveals that the decision to trigger the blast was taken in the Gulf by LeT operative Abu Hamza and was funded by the ISI.

10 November 2003

Mumbai Police seize 750 grams of RDX from the shop of Hasan Batterywala, an accused in August 25 twin bomb blasts in Mumbai, at Kurla.

3 December 2003

police at Chaderghat, near Hyderabad in Andhra Pradesh, arrest a Pakistan-trained ‘Inter Service Intelligence’ (ISI) agent, a resident of Yakutpura.

2004

10 January 2004

six youths, suspected to be agents of the Inter Service Intelligence (ISI), Pakistan’s external intelligence agency, are arrested from Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, and Siddipet in Medak district.

Notes

- 1 Manas Dasgupta, 'Pandya instigated the mob, alleges witness', *The Hindu*, 18 July 2003 (<http://www.hinduonnet.com/stories/2003071804420100.htm>).
- 2 Dionne Bunsha, 'Probe or Prosecution?', *Frontline*, 18 May 2003, as in Countercurrents.org (<http://countercurrents.org/commbunsha180503.htm>).
- 3 B. G. Rajeswar, 'Police mole knew of Mumbai plot', *Times of India*, 4 September 2003.
- 4 Lyla Bavadam and Mahesh Vijapurker, 'Inter-state hunt for Mumbai terror controller', *The Hindu* (<http://www.hinduonnet.com/thehindu/thscrip/print.pl?file=2003090307760100.htm&date=2>).

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