

Trends in Militancy across South Asia

A REGION ON THE BRINK

A Report of the CSIS Transnational Threats Project and the CSIS Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Program

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CSIS | CENTER FOR STRATEGIC &
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES



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Map of South Asia



Preface

South Asia is rapidly approaching a period of profound transition amid numerous, potent threats to its stability. New leaders may be elected in Pakistan (2013) and in Afghanistan and Bangladesh (2014), while India votes for a new Parliament in 2014. Nepal is at a standstill over its Constitution. And in Pakistan, General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, chief of the Army staff and perhaps the most influential state official in South Asia, steps down in November 2013. Each of these leadership changes is unfolding as violent extremist groups are gaining momentum and as the troops of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) are withdrawing from Afghanistan through December 31, 2014.

The stakes could not be higher; nor could the need for improved security and socioeconomic progress be greater. South Asia is home to 23 percent of all humanity—nearly one in four people on the planet lives on this land mass that is less than half that of the United States. Pakistan and India, which have been sworn enemies since the 1947 partition, possess roughly 100 nuclear warheads in their respective arsenals.

All the countries in the region rank very poorly on the United Nations' Human Development Index and Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index.¹ The region is indeed struggling with conditions that make alternative actors more appealing to communities long targeted for both recruitment and violence.

Lurking across this shifting and fractured landscape is a web of violent extremist groups. Their arguments find receptive minds. Militant organizations offer respect, empowerment, and a target to assign blame. Thousands of madrassas in Pakistan testify to the thorough lack of public schooling, multiple levels of official corruption, and the danger of bottomless foreign funding. Ultimately, countless boys and some girls are radicalized and then directed toward violence.

Poor governance and insecurity, due to state weakness and, more troubling, state complicity in violence and crime, provide sanctuaries from which militant groups can operate—from Nepal's Terai Valley to India's "Red Corridor," from Pakistan's chaotic cities and lawless frontier towns to the poppy-rich lands of Afghanistan's Helmand Province. All these and similar places point to a problem, and the path often leads back to pitiful governance.

Our fieldwork and extensive research suggest that militancy in South Asia also flows from ethnic identity and hatred, economic marginalization and competition, bare-knuckle politics,

1. For 2011 Human Development Index country rankings, see UN Development Program, "International Human Development Indicators," <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/>. For 2012 Corruption Perceptions Index country rankings, see Transparency International, "Corruption Perceptions Index 2012," <http://cpi.transparency.org/cpi2012/results/>.

and regional competition. Open borders, readily available weapons, activist diasporas, innovative technology, extremist ideologies, and illicit trafficking all facilitate militant groups' activities.

Economies of survival often drive militancy and related crime. Time and again, our interviews pointed to struggles over cross-border trading routes, extortion, and kidnapping for ransom, as means to finance militant groups' operations. The picture that emerges from our fieldwork is of a region struggling with lawlessness and state incapacity amid economic and social deprivation.

South Asia's asymmetric combat laboratory—pitting states against transnational, networked actors—is reflected in the author Moisés Naím's observation that “micropowers, while seldom winning, are making life harder for . . . the world's large and expensive defense establishments.”²

Though India's counterinsurgency forces are gaining against the country's Maoist insurgency, and Western military and intelligence forces have degraded some networks in Afghanistan, these groups are ultimately resilient and driven—and enjoy wide sanctuaries in which to thrive. To get ahead, states need to address their own inaction as much as militants' actions.

Even tactical successes have ripple effects worth considering. Our field research in Pakistan highlighted concerns over the structural and operational effects of targeted killings of senior militant leaders. Such successful leadership decapitation induces the remaining deputies of militant groups to conduct spectacular attacks to distinguish themselves and to attract personnel and funding. And because new leaders do not always inherit the senior leaders' financial patrons, they may expand further into criminal behavior to make ends meet.

The ensuing criminal activity reveals another trend: a move by some groups toward “for-profit” militancy. The greater emphasis on crime is enabled by porous borders and an absence of authority. Criminal activity will likely deepen with ISAF's drawdown. With fewer opportunities to extort ISAF projects and convoys, militants will more likely need to run criminal operations for financial support.

As militant groups increase their involvement in criminal activity, they become more financially (and thus operationally) autonomous from state sponsors, and also may move further away from their founding ideology. Deeper ties to criminal groups also present other risks for these militant organizations: competition, violence, internal decay, and ideological confusion—as well as a channel for intelligence and law enforcement penetration.

The authors hope that this report's findings will stimulate new thinking among policymakers, security practitioners, and the wider public as they consider new approaches to a region of deep importance to the globe.

Tom Sanderson
Project Director

2. Moisés Naím, *The End of Power: From Boardrooms to Battlefields and Churches, to States—Why Being in Charge Isn't What It Used to Be* (New York: Basic Books, 2013), 107.

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While this report benefited greatly from these individuals’ guidance, the content is the sole responsibility of the authors and should not be construed to represent the individual opinions of any external contributors.

The following contributing authors deserve credit for their research and writing, which were fundamental to the report:

Neha Ansari	Emma Barnett	Annie Hudson	Brian Park
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1 | Introduction

Purpose

The bulk of international counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, and related efforts over the last decade have focused on targeting a select few extremist organizations such as al Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban. Yet looming security transitions, international fiscal strictures, demographic trends, religious and ethnic tensions, popular dissatisfaction, and weak governance are likely having significant and worrying effects on a wide array of militant actors around the world. A narrow focus on those groups perceived to be the most immediate threats has, at times, come at the cost of a broader understanding of militancy and how it may manifest in a given region.

This void can, in part, be blamed on the often-necessary structural limitations placed upon the analysis of violent extremism and militancy. Territorial and functional boundaries, combined with the need to respond to today's exigencies, limit practitioners' ability to consider threats on a regional basis. This inability to "see the whole board" can prevent practitioners from identifying commonalities, nascent trends, and strategic shifts among groups. Without a sense of how militancy may evolve in the future, nations have no choice but to adopt atomized and reactionary security policies.

Because of these shortfalls, additional efforts must be made to detect and understand the strategic and tactical changes that may be afoot among militant groups. This report seeks to address this need by identifying regionwide trends so that holistic and comprehensive strategies to combat militancy may be enacted.

Methodology

This report is the first in a three-phase investigation of violent extremism across the so-called Arc of Instability. The arc represents a swath of vulnerable states, regions, and communities from South Asia through the Middle East and into North, West, and East Africa.¹ The report focuses on militancy in South Asia, which the authors define to include Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, and Nepal.

1. In this context, the usage of the term "Arc of Instability" is not intended to suggest that militancy within these regions is necessarily linked, but instead simply to note that there is a relatively high concentration of militant groups and activity across this geographical arc.

Extensive research using a variety of primary and secondary sources informs our results. Significant portions of these data were gathered through fieldwork in all five nations of the region, including visits to Peshawar (Pakistan), Biratnagar (Nepal), Ranchi (India), Kabul (Afghanistan), and Dhaka (Bangladesh)²—among several other important locations in each country.

CSIS project staff conducted interviews with U.S. and host-nation government officials (including active and retired military officers, police officers, and intelligence officers), local and Western journalists, businesspeople, religious scholars, academic experts, community activists, criminal figures, and the militants themselves. The research team also interviewed dozens of subject matter experts and officials in Washington. The goal of all these interviews was to solicit as diverse a set of opinions and insights as possible.

The information presented in this CSIS report was obtained through personal interviews in conflict areas occupied by the very militants and criminals under examination. To protect the identities of contributors, this report notes only the profession of interviewees or the city and country in which the interviews occurred.

Additionally, it was sometimes impossible to quantify changes in militant group behavior or other phenomena that are not observable in a particular place. Where this occurred, and where we have relied on anecdotal information from local sources, we simply qualify what we believe to be taking place. The combination of field interviews, media and scholarly sources, expert meetings in Washington, and a full text review by multiple outside readers give us confidence that we offer a substantive and accurate report.

To help policymakers and practitioners better conceptualize potential future developments in South Asian militancy, this report explores emerging patterns and trends in behaviors and characteristics across a wide array of violent extremist groups, rather than simply focusing on the dynamics of a single organization, group type, or location. For the purposes of this report, these behaviors and characteristics have been divided into four sections:

- Ideology: What is the rationale for existence and action?
- Structure: How are the groups configured?
- Sustainment: How do groups ensure their financial survival?
- Operations: How do groups execute their plans?

This report presents broad trends for each of these four behaviors, and analyzes the potential effects and manifestations of these trends in the next one to five years. Particular attention is paid to the potential disruptions likely to accompany the departure of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan at the close of 2014. The report highlights the implications that these trends will have for the international and regional communities, and offers recommendations to capitalize on or counteract them.

2. While research was conducted in Bangladesh, low levels of militant activity do not merit the inclusion of Bangladeshi militant groups in the trends discussed in this report. The research team did not travel to Sri Lanka due to sharply lower levels of militancy coinciding with the end of fighting between government forces and the Tamil Tigers in 2009.

Biographical Sketches of Key Groups

While a wide range of militant groups operate across South Asia, this report focuses on those groups whose current and future trajectories are likely to have the greatest impact on the regional and global landscapes. The rest of this introductory section gives brief overviews of these key groups.

MILITANT GROUPS FROM AFGHANISTAN

The Afghan Taliban. The Afghan Taliban emerged as a grassroots movement in 1994 after a period of power politics and civil war that followed the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan in 1989. By 1997, the Taliban had captured large swaths of southern Afghanistan and Kabul, and had established a new government based upon its own strict interpretation of *sharia* law.³ The Taliban regime, until its overthrow by U.S. and allied forces in 2001, was characterized by relative order enforced through vicious authoritarian rule. Since 2001, the group has reconstituted itself as a violent insurgent force in Afghanistan, with a shadow government organized around a ruling council (*shura*) based in Quetta, Pakistan. The Taliban's pre-2001 incarnation hosted a range of foreign jihadist groups, including al Qaeda, that were engaged in revolutionary and pan-Islamist struggles abroad, a fact that contributed to the regime's overthrow. The Afghan Taliban now focuses on domestic enemies and goals, partly in an effort to avoid repeating its previous mistakes.⁴ The Taliban remains one of the largest obstacles to a stable, democratic Afghanistan.

The Haqqani Network (HQN, or the Network). The Haqqani Network is one of the most potent insurgent actors within Afghanistan. The organization is built around close familial, clan, and tribal connections.⁵ The elder Haqqani, Jalaluddin, was a well-respected mujahideen fighter from the anti-Soviet jihad. During the 1980s, he forged extensive connections to foreign fighters from around the Muslim world and attracted funding from the Middle East.⁶ Jalaluddin Haqqani capitalized on these connections following the collapse of the Taliban regime in 2001, allowing the organization to become a prominent insurgent force, which is now run by his son Sirajuddin. Its leadership is based out of Miram Shah, North Waziristan, Pakistan.⁷ While ostensibly part of and subordinate to the Afghan Taliban, in practice the Haqqani Network maintains a great deal of autonomy both to decide targets and carry out operations. The Network's operations mainly target the Afghan government and Coalition

3. For an extensive history of the Taliban regime, see Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil, and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2010), 21–30.

4. Hosting foreign fighters was an issue of fierce debate among the Taliban leadership. See Alex Strick van Linschoten and Felix Kuehn, *An Enemy We Created: The Myth of the Taliban / Al Qaeda Merger in Afghanistan, 1970–2010* (London: Hurst, 2011); Arnaud de Borchgrave, “Osama bin Laden—Null and Void,” UPI, June 14, 2001, http://100years.upi.com/sta_2001-06-14.html; and Thomas Ruttig, “How Tribal Are the Taleban?” Afghanistan Analyst Network, June 2010, <http://www.aan-afghanistan.org/index.asp?id=865>.

5. Anand Gopal, Mansur Khan Mahsud, and Brian Fishman, “Inside the Haqqani Network,” *Foreign Policy*, July 3, 2010, http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/06/03/inside_the_haqqani_network_0.

6. On the extensive connections to foreign groups and money sources, see Don Rassler and Vahid Brown, *The Haqqani Nexus and the Evolution of al-Qa'ida* (West Point, N.Y.: Combating Terrorism Center, 2011), http://www.ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/CTC-Haqqani-Report-Rassler-Brown-Final_Web.pdf.

7. Gopal, Mahsud, and Fishman, “Inside the Haqqani Network.”

forces, but it also operates numerous criminal enterprises. The Haqqani Network maintains close ties with other militant groups, including the Uzbek Islamic Jihad Union, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, Lashkar-e-Taiba, and al Qaeda. The Network elevated its terrorist brand by carrying out several complex assaults in Kabul, including a June 2011 attack on the Inter-Continental Hotel, and a September 2011 multiple-hour assault on the U.S. Embassy.⁸

MILITANT GROUPS FROM PAKISTAN

Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). TTP is an umbrella organization that was formed in 2007 by a diverse collection of Pakistani militant groups and jihadi leaders partly in reaction to a Pakistani military operation against the Red Mosque (Ial Masjid) in Islamabad in July 2007. While the TTP has a stated affinity for the Afghan Taliban, the two are distinct in terms of leadership and focus. The TTP's primary target is the Pakistani government, and its principal objective is to implement an autonomous *sharia* based government in the western tribal areas of Pakistan. Baitullah Mehsud led the TTP until his death in 2009, whereupon leadership passed to his nephew, Hakimullah Mehsud.⁹ Recent reports suggest a growing power struggle at the top level between Hakimullah and his deputy, Waliur Rehman Mehsud; however, serious doubt has been cast upon this assertion.¹⁰

Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jamaat-u-Dawa (JuD). LeT emerged in 1990 as the armed wing of the Islamic charity Markaz al-Dawa wal-Irshad (MDI), which espoused a triple mission of peaceful public works, proselytization (*dawa*), and militant jihad.¹¹ The two groups preemptively split in December 2001 before a ban against LeT was implemented in January 2002.¹² MDI was subsequently renamed JuD. LeT is pan-Islamist, and its members have fought on numerous fronts, but its principal military goal is to wrest the disputed Kashmir region from Indian control, and it has launched numerous attacks against Indian interests throughout South Asia over the past two decades.¹³ Since the mid-2000s, LeT has expanded its regional focus to include Afghanistan.¹⁴ LeT has known contacts with the Haqqani Network, and is

8. "ISAF: Haqqani Network Leader Suspected in Kabul Hotel Attack Killed," CNN, June 30, 2011, http://articles.cnn.com/2011-06-30/world/afghanistan.kabul.attack_1_haqqani-network-afghan-police-afghan-interior-ministry?_s=PM:WORLD; Jack Healy and Alissa J. Rubin, "U.S. Blames Pakistan-Based Group for Attack on Embassy in Kabul," *New York Times*, September 14, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/15/world/asia/us-blames-kabul-assault-on-pakistan-based-group.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

9. Declan Walsh, "Air Strike Kills Taliban Leader Baitullah Mehsud," *Guardian* (Manchester), August 7, 2009, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/aug/07/baitullah-mehsud-dead-taliban-pakistan>.

10. "New Pakistan Taliban Chief Emerging, Will Focus on Afghan Fight," *Express Tribune* (Karachi), December 6, 2012, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/475968/new-pakistan-taliban-chief-emerging-will-focus-on-afghan-fight/>; Bill Roggio, "Pakistani officials promoting false split in Taliban leadership cadres, again," *Long War Journal*, December 6, 2012, http://www.longwarjournal.org/threat-matrix/archives/2012/12/pakistani_officials_promoting.php.

11. Sean Noonan and Scott Stewart, "The Evolution of a Pakistani Militant Network," Stratfor Global Intelligence, September 15, 2011, <http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/20110914-evolution-pakistans-militant-networks>.

12. Stephen Tankel, *Storming the World Stage* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 115–116.

13. "Lashkar-e-Taiba," Stanford University, <http://www.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/79#ideology>; Tankel, *Storming the World Stage*, chap. 2.

14. Alissa J. Rubin, "Militant Group Expands Attacks in Afghanistan," *New York Times*, June 15, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/16/world/asia/16lashkar.html?pagewanted=all>; Tankel, *Storming the World Stage*, 193–195.

widely believed to maintain close ties to Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI).¹⁵ Its most ambitious and infamous attack was the 2008 Mumbai assault, which struck deep within India, killing more than 160 people.¹⁶

Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ). LeJ was established in 1996 as a militant offshoot of the Pakistani political party Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP),¹⁷ but has since become “the collective armed wing of various Deobandi terrorist groups.”¹⁸ SSP is vehemently anti-Shia and was founded in the mid-1980s during the Iranian Revolution to protect Sunni interests in Pakistan.¹⁹ Through the early 1990s, SSP carried out numerous attacks against the Shia, including the assassination of an Iranian diplomat. International pressure, the Pakistani transition to civilian rule, and SSP's collective political aspirations led the group to disavow its terrorist activities. However, SSP is alleged to have secretly created LeJ to continue its violent sectarian agenda. Despite Pakistan's attempts to crack down on LeJ, it has proven resilient, and has increased its operations against Pakistan's Shia population, including the Hazara ethnic group.²⁰

MILITANT GROUPS FROM INDIA

Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI). SIMI was formed in 1977 in Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh, as a student organization that focused on rectifying structural inequalities and discrimination against Muslims across India and promoting the supremacy of Islam. Originally associated with Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JIH), a long-standing, hard-line Islamic social organization, SIMI more closely resembled the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood model than al Qaeda. However, SIMI and JIH distanced themselves from each other, as SIMI adopted an increasingly militant stance in the 1980s. By the early 2000s, it was voicing increasingly pro-al Qaeda and anti-United States rhetoric. The Indian government banned the group in 2001, throwing the organization into disarray and leaving a small contingent of radicals to maintain an informal network. It is unclear to what extent SIMI is still active, and it is uncertain as to how its former members now interact with the Indian Mujahideen.²¹

15. Bill Roggio, “Taliban Commander Linked to Lashkar-e-Taiba Detained in Eastern Afghanistan,” *Long War Journal*, July 3, 2010, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2010/07/taliban_commander_li.php.

16. Somini Sengupta, “At Least 100 Dead in India Terror Attacks,” *New York Times*, November 26, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/27/world/asia/27mumbai.html?pagewanted=all>.

17. Daud Khattak, “A Profile of Lashkar-i-Jhangvi Leader Malik Ishaq,” *CTC Sentinel*, January 14, 2013, <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/a-profile-of-lashkar-i-jhangvi-leader-malik-ishaq>.

18. Arif Jamal, “A Profile of Pakistan's Lashkar-i-Jhangvi,” *CTC Sentinel*, September 3, 2009, <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/a-profile-of-pakistan-s-lashkar-i-jhangvi-2>.

19. Jamal, “Profile.”

20. Jeffrey Stern, “The Taliban's New, More Terrifying Cousin,” *Atlantic*, February 26, 2013, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/02/the-talibans-new-more-terrifying-cousin/273502/>.

21. SIMI is alleged to have had a relationship with the political party Popular Front India (PFI). Formed in 2006, PFI functions as a network of Indian Muslims focused on rectifying perceived injustices perpetrated on Muslim communities through political and social activism. The group emerged as a collection of preexisting rights groups coordinating efforts for the political and economic empowerment of Muslims, Scheduled Castes, *dalits* (“untouchables”), and *adivasi*. There are allegations that it includes many former SIMI members and may act as a reboot for the banned organization. While PFI does not profess to support violence, its members have a history of engaging in isolated violent activities. PFI is best known for chopping off the right hand of a professor who failed to include “Prophet” as a prefix for Muhammad on a university exam question. PFI has significant support in southern India—namely, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka—where they organize rallies and camps to raise awareness of social issues.

Indian Mujahideen (IM). IM is a new but potent actor on the Indian militant landscape. The group was founded sometime in the mid-2000s, and is believed to have drawn heavily from the more radical elements of SIMI. IM is motivated by a desire for revenge for the Babri Mosque incident of 1992, the Gujarat riots of 2002, and discrimination against Indian Muslims in many parts of India. It emphasizes pan-Indian concerns rather than just those focused on Pakistan, Jammu and Kashmir, and the partition of the subcontinent. IM presents itself as the “Indian face” of Islamist terrorism, not as a foreign intrusion into India or the covert work of Pakistan, though allegations of ties to the ISI and LeT persist. IM has been implicated in numerous terrorist operations, including four high-profile attacks in Jaipur, Bangalore, Ahmedabad, and Delhi. The Indian central government banned the group in 2010.

Communist Party of India–Maoist (CPI-Maoist) movement. The widespread Maoist movement in India traces its roots to a 1967 peasant rebellion in Naxalbari, West Bengal. When the movement reemerged during the 1980s and 1990s, insurgents co-opted the plebeian and Maoist nature of the Naxalbari revolts. They continue to use elements of the original Naxalbari uprising as a unifying ethos. CPI-Maoist is the most prominent political organization of the left-wing insurgency active in India’s central and eastern states, most notably in West Bengal, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Andhra Pradesh. The group was formed in 2004 through a merger of the two largest Maoist factions, the Maoist Communist Centre of India (MCC) and the People’s War Group (PWG).²² The group is highly violent; in 2010 alone, over 1,000 deaths were attributed to the conflict between the Indian government and CPI-Maoist. CPI-Maoist is not a clandestine urban network like al Qaeda, but functions similarly to a traditional rural insurgency. The group is heavily involved in the extortion of industry within its zone of operations and is believed to derive significant profits from extorting the mining industry.

Hindutva extremist organizations. Within India, a number of organizations have coalesced around the ideology of *hindutva*, or Hindu nationalism. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) is India’s longest-standing and most deeply entrenched *hindutva* organization. The group was formed in 1925, ostensibly to promote Hindu political, religious, and cultural interests. While it is difficult to tie the group directly to militant violence, its ideology has served as the intellectual underpinning for various acts of communal violence and Hindu-led terrorism targeting Muslims. The RSS also maintains ties to a variety of other *hindutva* organizations, including the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), India’s major right-wing political party, the Shiv Sena, and the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), which has been linked not only to the 1992 destruction of the Babri Mosque but also to the 2002 riots in the state of Gujarat that targeted and killed hundreds, if not thousands, of Indian Muslims.²³ Hindu nationalists

22. While there are over 40 known left-wing extremist groups, the CPI-Maoist is by far the largest, best organized, and most active militant actor within the Maoist movement. Therefore, the literature, particularly within the popular media, is often ambiguous in distinguishing the CPI-Maoist from the broader movement, especially as many of the different groups are often merely branches or front organizations of the larger CPI-Maoist. Therefore, where applicable, this report refers to the CPI-Maoist specifically, but in other cases it interchangeably uses the broader umbrella term “Maoist” when it is unclear to which group the literature is referring.

23. Christophe Jaffrelot, *Communal Riots in Gujarat: The State at Risk?* Heidelberg Papers in South Asian and Comparative Politics (Heidelberg: South Asia Institute of the University of Heidelberg, 2003), <http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/volltextserver/4127/1/hpsacp17.pdf>.

have also been accused of instigating or participating in the bombings of the Mecca Masjid and the Samjhauta Express in 2007.²⁴

MILITANT GROUPS FROM NEPAL

A number of relatively small militant groups operate within Nepal, the majority of them centered on ethnic identities. The largest ethnic bloc with ties to militancy are the Madhesi, who live in the southern Terai region along the Indian-Nepal border, and have argued for increased autonomy over the previous decade. A large number of ethnic militant groups emerged in Nepal between 2007 and 2009. Mostly splintering off the Communist Party of Nepal–Maoist after it entered peace talks, these groups have contributed to significant violence in the Terai. However, their numbers have since dwindled and their activities are largely limited to petty criminality. While relatively benign, these groups could likely quickly be expanded and mobilized.

24. Aman Sharma, “Samjhauta Express Blast: NIA Confirms Hindutva Role,” *India Today*, April 2, 2011, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/national-investigation-agency-nia-has-confirmed-hindutva-role-in-samjhauta-express-blast/1/134135.html>.

2 | Trends in Militant Groups' Ideologies

South Asian militancy represents a broad ideological spectrum, including religious extremists, sociopolitically oriented insurgencies, revanchist movements, and violent separatists. A militant group's ideology encompasses the rationale for its existence and actions, as well as its goals and group identity. While a group's core ideology may serve as a primary motivation for its operations, this rationale is elastic and can rise and fall in importance.

Emerging trends in militant groups' ideologies are often subtle and challenging to determine; yet examining shifts in goals and grievances over recent years reveals patterns and nascent trends. Identifying and understanding these ideological trends and how they may manifest is vital for regional and international actors concerned with South Asia's stability.

In this context, one overarching trend among South Asian militants can be identified:

- I. *The ascendancy of locally focused ideologies:* Militant organizations drawing upon and emphasizing local grievances, identity politics, and sectarianism appear ascendant in several areas of South Asia. In some cases this trend is demonstrated by the growing importance of new groups, while in other cases existing groups have shifted toward local ideologies.¹

Trend I: The Ascendancy of Locally Focused Ideologies

Recent CSIS fieldwork in South Asia suggests that militant groups are experiencing a reorientation toward identity-based inequalities as well as local governmental inefficiency. In Afghanistan and Pakistan, the reshuffling of enemy hierarchies is likely being driven by the declining influence of al Qaeda core and the impending departure of the International Security Assistant Force (ISAF) alike, making foreign targets decreasingly present and less ideologically relevant to militants.

Militant groups in India and Nepal continue to focus on rectifying what they perceive to be state-level discrimination against and unequal treatment of selected minority

1. This trend is worrying as increasing "horizontal inequalities" (i.e., inequalities between identity groups, as opposed to between economic classes) can be powerful conflict drivers. See Gudrun Østby, "Polarization, Horizontal Inequalities and Violent Civil Conflict," *Journal of Peace Research* 45, no. 2 (2008): 143–162, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27640647>.

groups. This trend may in part show itself in the increased mobilization of grievances against local government, in addition to the rise of sectarian attacks. The subsequent sections of this report suggest that this reorientation of enemy hierarchies may have powerful effects on how groups mobilize ideologically, structure and sustain themselves, and carry out attacks.

A RENEWED FOCUS ON THE LOCAL

The shift by militant groups toward concentrating on domestic enemies and local governments may be most apparent among the Afghan Taliban, whose focus on foreign targets appears to be rapidly diminishing as ISAF draws down from the country. The Afghan Taliban is executing spectacular attacks against government ministries and representatives to demonstrate the Afghan government's weakness. These attacks include coordinated, high-profile strikes against supposedly secure areas of the country, including deep inside the capital city of Kabul.²

In addition to assassinating high-ranking government officials such as Burhanuddin Rabbani, the late leader of Afghanistan's High Peace Council, the Taliban is attempting to undercut governance by targeting lower-level officials. The number of civilian Afghan government employees killed by "antigovernment elements" reportedly increased 700 percent and Afghan military casualties more than doubled in 2012,³ even as U.S. deaths declined significantly.⁴ A senior Taliban spokesman has pledged that attacks against the Afghan government will continue, stating that government officials and employees "are directly involved in the protraction of our country's invasion and legally we do not find any difficulty in their elimination, rather we consider it our obligation."⁵

TTP in Pakistan also maintains a local focus, having united to fight against a Pakistani state its adherents view to be enabling ISAF action in Afghanistan.⁶ The one outlier to TTP's local focus is Faisal Shahzad's attempt to detonate a car bomb in Times Square in New York City in 2010, reportedly on behalf of TTP.⁷ This attack was likely a response to an alleged U.S. kinetic campaign in Pakistan, which had killed TTP leader Baitullah Mehsud in August 2009.⁸ It is unclear whether the attack was the result of a deliberate effort to strike inside the United

2. Barney Henderson and John-Paul Ford Rojas, "Taliban Attack in Afghanistan: As It Happened," *Telegraph* (London), April 15, 2012, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/9205333/Taliban-attack-in-Afghanistan-as-it-happened.html>.

3. Patrick Quinn, "Taliban Vow to Keep Targeting Afghan Officials," ABC News, February 21, 2013, <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/taliban-vow-targeting-afghan-officials-18554785>.

4. Heidi Vogt and Rahim Faiez, "Suicide Bombers Target Afghan Security Forces," *USA Today*, February 24, 2013, [http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2013/02/24/afghanistan-bomb-taliban-kabul/1942445/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed:+UsatodaycomWorld-TopStories+\(News+-+World+-+Top+Stories\)](http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2013/02/24/afghanistan-bomb-taliban-kabul/1942445/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed:+UsatodaycomWorld-TopStories+(News+-+World+-+Top+Stories)).

5. Quinn, "Taliban Vow to Keep Targeting."

6. Brian Fishman, "The Taliban in Pakistan: An Overview," in *Talibanistan: Negotiating the Borders between Terror, Politics, and Religion*, edited by Peter Bergen and Katherine Tiedemann (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 343.

7. Aaron Katersky, "Faisal Shahzad Please Guilty in Times Square Car Bomb Plot, Warns of More Attacks," ABC News, June 21, 2010, <http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/faisal-shahzad-pleads-guilty-times-square-car-bomb/story?id=10970094>.

8. Mark Mazzetti and Scott Shane, "Evidence Mounts for Taliban Role in Bomb Plot," *New York Times*, May 5, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/06/nyregion/06bomb.html?pagewanted=1&partner=rss&emc=rss>.

States or merely the result of TTP seizing upon an opportunity to do so. However, that this attack is a unique departure from TTP's regular operations may point to a lack of capacity or interest in carrying out attacks outside Pakistan and Afghanistan.

In India, the IM is emblematic of the ascending ideological importance of local injustices visited upon ethnic and religious minorities. In September 2001 SIMI, which had long espoused a global Islamist vision, was banned under India's Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.⁹ The ideological void created by SIMI's ban has been filled by IM, which conceives of Islamist militancy not as a means to establish a global Caliphate but as a response to perceived widespread discrimination against Indian Muslims.¹⁰

In addition to petty discrimination in housing and jobs, Indian Muslims have been subject to arbitrary detention, police brutality, and communal violence, highlighted by the destruction of the Babri Mosque in 1992 and the bloody 2002 anti-Muslim riots in Gujarat.¹¹ IM frequently references such domestic incidents as motivation for its actions in emails sent to the media before and after attacks that attempt to justify the activities.¹² These communiqués are consistently tied to local concerns, as in a 2008 IM statement sent before blasts in Ahmedabad, which was titled "The Rise of Jihad, Revenge of Gujarat."¹³ That email threatened to "target these evil politicians and leaders of BJP, RSS, VHP, . . . the wicked police force, . . . [the] fast-track courts, . . . [and the media's] propaganda war against the Muslims."¹⁴ This domestically focused ideology drives the declarations and actions of Indian Islamist militants, overshadowing the global focus of the earlier movement.

THE RISE OF SECTARIANISM AND IDENTITY-BASED MILITANCY

While identity-based conflict is not new to South Asia, rising localized militancy in important areas is aggravated by, and exacerbates the hardening of, ethnic and religious identities. For instance in Pakistan, although militant violence as a whole has declined in the country since 2011, sectarian violence reportedly rose by as much as 53 percent in recent years, with 139

9. "Terrorist Organization Profile: Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI)," National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), http://www.start.umd.edu/start/data_collections/tops/terrorist_organization_profile.asp?id=4255; C. Christine Fair, "Students Islamic Movement of India and the Indian Mujahideen: An Assessment," *Asia Policy* 9 (January 2010): 107, 111.

10. Human Rights Watch notes that many terrorist attacks in India have been justified by groups citing domestic grievances, including a lack of opportunity, Hindu nationalism, and anti-Muslim violence. See Human Rights Watch, *The "Anti-Nationals": Arbitrary Detention and Torture of Terrorism Suspects in India* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2011), 13, <http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/india0211W.pdf>.

11. Authors' field interviews with a security-focused journalist, May 14, 2012.

12. Ibid.

13. "Gujarat Constant, "Kashmir New in IM Mails," *Indian Express*, September 22, 2010, <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/gujarat-constant-kashmir-new-in-im-mails/685590/>.

14. "The Rise of Jihad, Revenge of Gujarat," *Outlook India*, July 29, 2008, <http://www.outlookindia.com/article.aspx?238039>.

attacks killing 397 people in 2011, and 213 attacks killing 563 people in 2012.¹⁵ In the first two months of 2013 alone, at least 200 people died in sectarian violence.¹⁶

LeJ, a Sunni militant organization with a virulent anti-Shia ideology, has driven much of this violence in Pakistan. Not only has LeJ killed hundreds of Shia in Quetta and elsewhere, but the group has loudly proclaimed its responsibility for such attacks through social media and other means, potentially attempting to inflame communal tensions and further spread its ideology.¹⁷ One letter by the group states “all Shi’ites are worthy of killing. We will rid Pakistan of unclean people. Pakistan means land of the pure and the Shi’ites have no right to live in this country. . . . Jihad against the Shi’ite Hazaras has now become our duty.”¹⁸ Section 4 of this report, which focuses on operations, gives additional attention to sectarianism.

Sectarian ideology has always been present among the larger Pakistani militant community, and in recent years it has once again come to the fore. Elements of the TTP have embraced an anti-Shia ideology since the organization’s foundation, and this trend may be escalating. In August 2012, militants from a branch of TTP stopped three buses on a rural road, then singled out and shot 22 Shia passengers.¹⁹ Following the attack, a TTP spokesman stated: “We have targeted them because they are enemies of Sunnis and conspire against us [and] we will continue such attacks in the future.”²⁰

Although much of the Shia reaction to such violence has taken the form of peaceful protests,²¹ there are suggestions that violent anti-Sunni ideologies may be emerging. In recent months, anti-Shia clerics and students in Karachi have become the targets of assassination attempts, many of which have been attributed to the newly emerged Shia Mehdi Force, which reportedly seeks revenge for anti-Shia violence.²² Further, some ethnic Hazara are preparing to take up arms. One Quetta resident recently stated: “Our community is only interested in education and business, but terrorists have forced us to take up whatever arms we have and take to the streets for our own security.”²³ As this spiral of violence escalates, militant sectarian identities and ideologies are only likely to grow more entrenched across Pakistan.

15. Gul Yousufzai, “Rights Group Warns Pakistan Faces Worsening Sectarian Violence,” Reuters, January 11, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/01/11/us-pakistan-explosions-idUSBRE90911P20130111>; “Policy Brief: Sectarian Violence,” Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies, January 2013, http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=Pakistan+Institute+of+Peace+Studies+report+sectarian+violence&source=web&cd=10&cad=rja&ved=0CHOQFjAJ&url=http://san-pips.com/download.php%3Ff%3D194.pdf&ei=j44KUan4DrHq0QH3oGIDA&usg=AFQjCNE7nMcbW5bInmKGx_CwXWTga-DPVg.

16. “Pakistan’s Hazaras to Take Up Arms Over Attacks,” *Dawn*, February 28, 2013, <http://dawn.com/2013/02/28/pakistans-hazaras-to-take-up-arms-over-attacks/>.

17. Stern, “Taliban’s New, More Terrifying Cousin.”

18. Amir Mir, “Blood Flows Freely in Pakistan,” *Asia Times*, October 5, 2011, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/MJ05Df01.html.

19. Salman Masood, “Pakistani Taliban Kill 22 Shiites in Bus Attack,” *New York Times*, August 16, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/17/world/asia/pakistani-taliban-kill-22-shiites-in-bus-attack.html?smid=pl-share&_r=0.

20. *Ibid.*

21. “Pakistan’s Hazara Shias Bury Their Dead,” *Al Jazeera*, February 20, 2013, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2013/02/201322055026708419.html>.

22. Matthew Green, “Insight: Spiral of Karachi Killings Widens Pakistan’s Sectarian Divide,” Reuters, February 24, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/02/24/us-pakistan-sectarian-idUSBRE91N00G20130224>.

23. “Pakistan’s Hazaras to Take Up Arms.”

In Nepal, ethnic and religious identities appear to be growing more defined, contributing to ideologically inspired politics and potentially to militancy. Prior to the Maoist conflict (1996–2006), ethnic or religious parties like Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF, or Madhesi People’s Rights Forum) lacked popular support. However, during the conflict, the Maoist insurgents convinced various minorities that they, as defined ethnic communities, had historically been oppressed by ruling elites. This strategy proved effective in organizing minority groups to support Maoist efforts against the monarchy. However, this mobilization has outlasted the Maoist conflict it was intended to support and has contributed to identity-based militant activity.

Identity politics have been especially pronounced among the Madhesi, a Nepali ethnic group that makes up a significant portion of the population in the southern Terai region. As Nepal struggled to establish a new Constitution after the 2006 cease-fire and peace talks, groups like the MJF found themselves shut out of the political process and increasingly agitated for a government based upon ethnic federalism, which would serve to grant them significant autonomy. Ideological mobilization around this issue likely contributed to the emergence of dozens of Madhesi militant organizations between 2007 and 2009 and the ensuing violence across the Terai.²⁴

The gridlock of Nepal’s constitutional process may cause minority communities to grow frustrated with politics and return to militancy, especially if MJF’s role in consensus politics in the capital of Kathmandu begins to be viewed as nonproductive or counterproductive. In this case, militant groups based upon ethnic identity could quickly be mobilized for renewed violence.

While some individuals are placing increasing importance on their Muslim identity in Nepal, the potential for militancy among the wider Nepali Muslim community is limited.²⁵ Nepali Muslims do not represent a significant percentage of the Nepali population, are traditionally well integrated into society, and have not trended toward violent activity. However, given the Nepal’s weak security capacity and the general lack of attention to militancy, a relatively small number of militants could have a surprising and harmful impact on the nation and potentially the region. Shifting ideologies in the region due to the transition from monarchy to weak democracy, along with continued struggles to fill power vacuums in Kathmandu, merit more focused consideration.

Conclusion

In the immediate future, an emphasis on local over international concerns will likely grow. When ISAF draws down from Afghanistan in 2014, the most visible and easily targeted international presence in the region will have been removed, and with it, much of the impetus for militant groups to advance global ideologies. Furthermore, where once Islamist militant organizations embraced al Qaeda core’s global ideology to garner new recruits and funds, the targeting of internationally focused militants by the United States and its partners, which

24. Interview with Nepali academic, Biratnagar, Nepal, September, 2012.

25. Ibid.

contributed to al Qaeda core's subsequent decline, appears to have fomented a return to more locally focused (and inherently less conspicuous) ideologies.²⁶

While a few groups may continue to attempt attacks in the United States, in Europe, or against Western interests in their respective regions, current trends suggest that a far greater number of groups will simply refocus further on domestic enemies, be they local governments, ethnic populations, or religious groups. Though this trend may be positive for the United States and its allies, inasmuch as attacks against international targets may decline, the risks to regional stability will remain.

A great deal of militant energy—especially among Islamists—over the past decade has been ideologically centered on and directed against those international forces and systems that are usually able to sustain high levels of insecurity and violence. If the full measure of this militant energy is refocused on local governments and polities, their inability to deal with such high levels of violence may yield significant consequences.

26. Thomas Hegghammer, "The Ideological Hybridization of Jihadi Groups," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 9 (November 18, 2009), <http://www.currenttrends.org/research/detail/the-ideological-hybridization-of-jihadi-groups>.

3 | Trends in Militant Groups' Structures

The structure of militancy described in this section encompasses how groups organize themselves to achieve tactical and strategic goals. These configurations are influenced by a group's ideology and objectives, by the personalities of its key leaders, and, perhaps most significantly, by its operational environment. In recent years, South Asian militant groups have faced increased security pressure from a range of sources, with corresponding effects on organizational structures. Subjected to often-withering counterterrorism pressure designed to dismantle and disrupt their organizational capacities, militant groups have sought or been forced to adopt new structural configurations.

Project research indicates three accelerating or emerging trends in South Asian militant groups' structures:

- I. *A transition away from hierarchical structures:* Across South Asia, hierarchically structured militant organizations appear to be waning. Hierarchies, which can foster unity of effort, are relatively susceptible to decapitation strategies. Some groups have adapted to these strategies by flattening their structures and limiting the relevance of key leadership positions. Groups that have clung to hierarchical structures may have splintered, factionalized, or gone dormant as a result. These shifts sometimes increase short-term violence and criminality, and may make militant organizations more difficult to target and disrupt.
- II. *Integrating militancy with political and social structures:* While the structural distinctions between militant organizations and political and social entities have always been difficult to discern in some areas of South Asia, this trend toward a blurring of structures appears to be accelerating. In some instances preexisting social or political components have grown in importance within groups, while in others militants have created structures or built ties to organizations providing social services and political engagement. This structural integration of the militant with the political and social may provide groups with increased influence and adaptability within specific communities and serve to strengthen their sustainment and operational activities.
- III. *A network of networks:* Over the past decade, an array of increasingly flat, decentralized militant groups have built stronger ties with each other and have collaborated on operations against common enemies, while sharing information, tactics,

and resources. However, this “network of networks” structure may undergo rapid and profound changes in the near future, especially as ISAF draws down from Afghanistan.

Trend I: A Transition away from Hierarchical Structures

Hierarchical structures enable efficient communication, coordination, and a unity of effort. However, in recent years clear hierarchical structures have declined in prominence among South Asian militant groups. The same structures that ensure direct command-and-control authority also increase groups’ vulnerability to counterterrorism pressure.

The persistent targeting of militant leadership has, in many cases, either forced leadership underground, thus preventing interaction between leadership and cadre elements, or, in cases of repeated successful group decapitation, hampered or dissuaded leadership succession. An important result of counternetwork operations is that command-and-control authority increasingly resides in lower-level actors, inducing greater group autonomy and unpredictability. Militant group structures are decentralizing, flattening, and moving toward horizontal structures—sometimes as a discrete strategy and sometimes simply out of necessity.

The Afghan Taliban exemplifies this trend. A common description of the Taliban suggests that it is organized hierarchically in three tiers, with the core leadership *shura* (likely located outside Afghanistan) and several lower-level committees that parallel the Afghan government at the top, regional governors and commanders spread throughout the provinces comprising the middle, and local commanders and foot soldiers at the bottom.¹ In 2005 and 2006, most Taliban field commanders were likely to have had some association with the pre-2001 Taliban regime that governed Afghanistan, ensuring strong ties between the Taliban leadership and local elements.

However, of Taliban fighters killed in the intervening years, a “significant number were field commanders, which amounts to the wholesale removal of a layer of local insurgent leadership.”² Fighters are now serving under the fourth or fifth generation of local leadership.³ Lacking a historical association with the Taliban as a governing body, this younger generation of militants is straying from the center’s guidance, laying the groundwork for dissent, insubordination, factionalism, and fragmentation. Furthermore, in many cases, eliminated leaders were well connected and sustained their movements through personal ties to external donors, charities, and benefactors in the Persian Gulf states. The new leadership cadre does not automatically inherit those funding links and networks, and sometimes they lack

1. Thomas Ruttig, “The Other Side: Dimensions of the Afghan Insurgency: Causes, Actors, and Approaches to Talks,” *Afghan Analysts Network*, July 2009, 14, <http://www.aan-afghanistan.org/index.asp?id=114>; Seth G. Jones, *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2008), 40–41, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND_MG595.pdf.

2. Anand Gopal, “Serious Leadership Rifts Emerge in Afghan Taliban,” *CTC Sentinel*, November 2012, 11–12, <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/CTCSentinel-Vol5Iss11-123.pdf>.

3. *Ibid.*

the notoriety and credibility to forge new ones. To cope, some evidence suggests that the new leaders are engaging in greater degrees of criminality to sustain their militant activities.⁴

As far back as 2009, this dichotomy between leadership and membership was likely limiting the senior leadership's ability to exert operational control over individual organizational elements.⁵ Though Taliban senior leaders located outside Afghanistan are not politically homogenous, they generally view themselves as a government-in-exile and are more inclined to negotiate future power arrangements than are the elements fighting in Afghanistan. The individuals actually fighting in Afghanistan are often younger, more aggressive, lack militant bona fides, and conceive of themselves primarily as insurgents seeking to destabilize the Karzai government rather than conceivably supplant it.

With the continued attrition of mid-level leaders, these younger and more aggressive fighters are continually promoted into mid-level leadership positions, increasing the potential for a division between senior leaders and field commanders in Afghanistan.⁶

While removing key leaders may force structural changes on groups and limit their capacity to launch attacks, group splintering can be highly problematic, as has been seen with groups outside South Asia like Jemaah Islamiyah in Indonesia and al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb.⁷ While groups may lose long-standing personal relationships with external patrons, criminality may fill that financial gap, further complicating the picture.

Trend II: Integrating Militancy with Political and Social Structures

Organizations across South Asia have adapted and expanded their structures to support not only militancy but also political and social activities. Some militant groups have created political structures to provide a facade of legitimacy and to grow their political visibility. Some have formed militant wings of previously nonviolent social movements, while others have established structures focused on outreach and activism to enhance their grassroots popularity. These political and social activities are largely intended to build popular support, often by filling gaps in state governance and providing goods and services like justice, health care, and education. Such efforts are not necessarily new; yet structures designed to support them appear to be growing more prevalent.

4. Authors' field interview with Pakistani journalist, January 17, 2013.

5. Eric Schmitt and Mark Mazzetti, "Taliban Haven in Pakistani City Raises Fears," *New York Times*, February 10, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/10/world/asia/10quetta.html>.

6. Author's field interview with Taliban analyst in Kabul, November 3, 2012.

7. E.g., some have suggested that the bloody January 2013 attack against a gas facility in In Amenas, Algeria, which left at least 38 hostages dead, was the result of factionalization among al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Mokhtar Belmokhtar, a former AQIM commander, reportedly launched the attack as a means of raising his own profile and reputation after having been ejected from his former organization due to internal conflicts. See "Profile: Mokhtar Belmokhtar," BBC, March 3, 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-21061480>; Angélique Chrisafis et al., "In Amenas: Timeline of Four-Day Siege in Algeria," *Guardian*, January 25, 2013, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/jan/25/in-amenas-timeline-siege-algeria>; and David Gordon and Samuel Lindo, "Jemaah Islamiyah," Case Study 6, CSIS, November 2011, http://csis.org/files/publication/111101_Gordon_JemaahIslamiyah_WEB.pdf.

For example, there are indications that Indian Muslim militancy is currently experiencing a structural shift toward political and social activity, likely as a strategy to deflect security pressure. Traditional militant groups such as SIMI allegedly built ties with or even contributed to the creation of the Popular Front of India (PFI), a legitimate political party and social organization. Working through an apparently legitimate political and social organization such as PFI may enable Indian Muslim militants to spread their message and foment violence.

PFI publicly seeks to unify Indian Muslims to address community grievances, increase their power, and provide social services. However India's National Investigation Agency has identified significant covert links between SIMI and PFI, including cross-membership, and alleges that PFI trains members in the use of conventional weaponry and improvised explosive devices. PFI members have also been implicated in violence against a Christian professor in Kerala and riots in Andhra Pradesh, yet the organization itself remains public and legal.⁸

In Pakistan, Lashkar-e-Taiba is the militant face of the social welfare group Jamaat-ud-Dawa, which works above ground to spread its ideology and sustain itself. In 2002, under pressure from both India and the United States, Pakistan banned LeT. However, prior to the proscription, LeT was able to orchestrate a split with its political wing, which was dissolved and subsequently replaced with JuD, with LeT's "former" leader at its head.⁹ Since the 2002 ban, there has been no functional separation between the two entities, with the charity operating openly despite its connections to LeT.¹⁰

JuD has been especially effective in providing emergency services during natural disasters such as the 2005 Kashmir earthquakes and the 2010 Pakistani floods, from which it gained credibility and prestige with the public.¹¹ While LeT has other sources of support, emphasizing its social structure has likely contributed to the group's continued operations. Working through JuD, LeT raises funds both at home and abroad, publishes propaganda material, and provides social services through a network of madrassas, hospitals, schools, blood banks, and other institutions and activities intended to garner group visibility and recruits.¹²

Trend III: A Network of Networks

With a flattening organizational hierarchy and growing relationships with other political and social organizations, militancy across South Asia is being conducted more often by

8. Rakesh K. Singh, "SIMI-Backed Party Alarms NIA," *The Pioneer* (New Delhi), February 19, 2012, <http://www.dailypioneer.com/home/online-channel/360-todays-newspaper/43821-simi-backed-party-alarms-nia.html>; and "SIMI Now in Social Activists' Garb, Claim State Intelligence Officials," South Asia Terrorism Portal, http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/detailed_news.asp?date1=3/8/2012&id=8.

9. Stephen Tankel, "Lashkar-e-Taiba: Past Operations and Future Prospects," National Security Studies Program Policy Paper, New America Foundation, April 2011, 10, http://newamerica.net/sites/newamerica.net/files/policydocs/Tankel_LeT_0.pdf.

10. JuD also operates through additional front groups to skirt technical strictures placed on it following the 2008 Mumbai attacks. The Falah-e-Insaniyat Foundation (FIF) is one example. See Tankel, "Lashkar-e-Taiba."

11. Ashley J. Tellis, "The Menace That Is Lashkar-e-Taiba," Policy Outlook, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 2012, 12–13, http://carnegieendowment.org/files/LeT_menace.pdf; Carlotta Gall, "In a Remote Camp, Help from and Unconventional Source," *New York Times*, October 18, 2005, <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/10/18/international/asia/18kashmir.html>.

12. "Lashkar-e-Toiba," South Asia Terrorism Portal, http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/jandk/terrorist_outfits/lashkar_e_toiba.htm.

interconnected assemblages cooperating and sharing knowledge and resources, and less so by discrete, identifiable groups. This trend can be thought of as a network of networks, and may well be the structural manifestation of unified enemy hierarchies between and among disparate groups. Networks of networks exist in Afghanistan and Pakistan, where common enemies may in some cases drive more intergroup collaboration, sometimes lessening the distinctions among them.

Within this milieu, the Afghan insurgency is often mistakenly labeled as a broad and monolithic movement, where actors are described as “Taliban” with little attention paid to individual motivations for militancy. Often included under the umbrella of the Afghan Taliban are the leaders of the former Taliban government in Afghanistan, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar’s Hiz-b-Islami, the Mansur Family Network, and the Haqqani Network.¹³

Individuals fighting on behalf of these organizations are “Taliban” inasmuch as they collectively oppose the presence of ISAF and the Afghan government. This common enemy has created a part-time fighting cadre whose commitment to the conflict is often more tied to opportunity and geography than membership in a particular group. Groups aligned against the Pakistani state are similarly networked. The umbrella group TTP contains distinct factions from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, Punjab, and the North-West Frontier Province. This Pakistan-focused setting also creates opportunities for cooperation between disparate groups, including more sectarian-based motivations like LeJ, with which TTP likely pools resources for attacks and criminal activity.¹⁴

The blurring lines between groups enable militant organizations to share tactics, techniques, and procedures. For example, a change in the tactics of Haqqani suicide bombings in 2011 may suggest collaboration with LeT. Though LeT is not known to use suicide bombers for its own operations, the style of the attacks closely resembled the signature complexity of LeT operations that use multiple attackers.¹⁵ As one military official at the time noted, “The suicide bombings are, we believe, predominantly requested and funded by Haqqani but facilitated by LeT and AQ. . . . The latter groups provide bombers and material in exchange for money. Haqqani chooses targets.”¹⁶ Such overlap leads to confusion. For example, attacks are often misattributed to LeT when in reality they are conducted by other Punjabi militant members of groups like JeM, LeJ, and SSP.¹⁷

In another example of networking among militant actors, an amorphous group dubbed the “Kabul Attack Network” reportedly has been carrying out sophisticated attacks targeting Afghanistan’s capital in recent years, including a lengthy assault on the Inter-Continental

13. See Ruttig, “Other Side,” 10; Fishman, “Taliban,” 351; and Aamir Latif, “Extortion, Kidnapping in Taliban Name,” OnIslam.net, February 6, 2013, <http://www.onislam.net/english/news/asia-pacific/461222-extortion-kidnapping-in-taliban-name.html>.

14. Fishman, “Taliban,” 343; authors’ field interview with crime reporter, Karachi, Pakistan, January 12, 2013; authors’ field interview with former Pakistani counterterrorism official, Lahore, January 14, 2013.

15. Alissa J. Rubin, “Taliban Bet on Fear Over Brawn as Tactic,” *New York Times*, February 26, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/27/world/asia/27afghanistan.html>.

16. Ibid.

17. See Tankel, *Storming the World Stage*, 197–198.

Hotel in June 2011.¹⁸ While the group is believed to be closely associated with the Haqqani Network, which reportedly provides fighters and resources, its membership is believed to be a mix of individuals from various Afghan and Pakistani groups, including the Taliban, the Haqqani Network, Hiz-i-Islami Gulbuddin, LeT, and even al Qaeda.¹⁹

The Kabul Attack Network is reportedly led by one senior member of the Haqqani Network and the Taliban's Kabul shadow governor.²⁰ However, divining the exact nature of the Kabul Attack Network or the associations of its members is a difficult and somewhat speculative endeavor. This difficulty is reflective of the fluid nature of militancy in the region, but also of an incorrect predilection toward understanding militant groups as discrete hierarchical organizations.

Discerning the affiliations of groups and individuals may be even harder in the near term. ISAF's 2014 drawdown is likely prompting groups and individuals to reexamine their enemy hierarchies, which in turn will affect how militant organizations view one another. In this respect, the competition among militant networks following the 1992 fall of Soviet-backed Afghan president Mohammad Najibullah may be instructive. Militant groups may forge new alliances and battle one another to fill the power vacuum created by ISAF's withdrawal, just as they did in the aftermath of the Soviet Union's departure.²¹ ISAF's drawdown could provide a similar moment for militants to reshape the contours of intergroup cooperation throughout Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Conclusion

Traditional hierarchies are now flatter and surviving groups are more resilient. In some instances, structures now incorporate social, political, and criminal activities, enhancing support and durability. As international forces begin to withdraw from the region, many of the structural linkages that have developed between groups may increasingly fray, potentially leading to infighting, realignments, and further violence—but also may create space for militants to form new alliances. These trends may well represent significant challenges for the region, and thus they bear close scrutiny in the coming years.

18. Amber Ramsey and Steven A. Zyck, "The Kabul Attack Network," Civil Military Fusion Center, July 2011, https://www.cimicweb.org/Documents/CFC%20Afghanistan%20-%20Public%20RFI%20Responses/CFC_Afghanistan_RFI_Kabul_Attack_Network-Jul2011.pdf.

19. Bill Roggio, "Suicide Assault Team Targets Civilian Guesthouse in Kabul," *Long War Journal*, August 10, 2010, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2010/08/suicide_assault_team_3.php.

20. Ibid.

21. Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos: The United States and the Failure of Nation Building in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia* (New York: Viking, 2008), 11–13.

4 | Trends in Militant Groups' Sustainment

Sufficient funding and matériel are essential for militant groups to function, carry out operations, realize strategic objectives, and survive. Yet the pursuit of funds often becomes an end in itself, driving groups to increasingly focus on sustainment activities, thus limiting their motivation or ability to conduct ideologically driven operations. Groups stray even further from their core mandate when they seek lucrative financial opportunities that enrich leadership. This so-called “for-profit” militancy expands group capacity and networks to take advantage of these new forms of revenue—perhaps at the expense of the ideological grounding that underpinned the formation of the group itself. The funding, political capital, and operational independence gained from for-profit militancy makes some groups harder to target, weakens others, and limits the operational influence of external patrons.

The declining ability of external patrons to influence militant behavior comes at a time when external patrons and states need such influence the most. As states attempt to exert themselves in the power vacuum left by ISAF, and as militant organizations reconsider their enemy hierarchies, influence over militant proxies will be crucial for states seeking to further their interests and prevent blowback. These dual incentives may drive states to provide avenues to funding for militant proxies, which ironically may only entrench militant group financial and operational independence.

In this context, two sustainment trends among South Asian militants have emerged:

- I. *The growth of “for-profit” militancy:* The death of key senior leaders, easy access to criminal opportunities, corrupt political systems, and a natural inclination toward financial independence all incentivize groups to support themselves through local and sustainable operations, even if doing so may be at odds with original group ideology. Such for-profit militancy is making groups more indistinguishable from criminal organizations, and limits outside influence. This dynamic also entrenches groups in their area of operations and makes them harder to target.
- II. *Renewed efforts to increase external influence:* To check against repercussions both of militant operational autonomy and of the pending ISAF withdrawal, regional power brokers and states may attempt to increase their level of influence over militant groups through the provision of further support. However, in some cases this additional support enables militants to grow even more financially and operationally independent, enabling groups to move further beyond their patron’s reach.

Trend I: The Growth of “For-Profit” Militancy

South Asian militant networks are developing the capacity and structures to conduct new and additional forms of illicit activity, giving them more financial autonomy and stability.¹ These new funding streams make them more vigorous, more difficult to cull from the wider criminal milieu, and less accepting of patron influence.² Their criminal activity largely takes the form of exploitation and extortion, kidnapping for ransom, and trafficking, with groups often prioritizing sources of revenue that are inexhaustible.³

EXPLOITATION AND EXTORTION

Since having taken over the leadership of the Haqqani Network from his ailing father, Sirajuddin Haqqani appears to have shifted the Network’s focus to conducting more for-profit militancy.⁴ Recent reports indicate that the group extorts trucking industries, construction projects, local businesses, and farmers in areas it controls by “effectively selling insurance against itself.”⁵ Through this extortion, HQN siphons 10 to 25 percent of the profits from all business conducted within its sphere of influence that straddles the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.⁶

ISAF-backed construction projects in Haqqani-dominated areas are a financial boon for HQN. For example, of the \$43 million ISAF paid to secure the Gardez-Khost Highway, between \$12 and \$30 million may have ended up in the hands of HQN or its trusted associates.⁷ As a businessman in North Waziristan said, “compared to extortion, everything else is peanuts.”⁸

As is discussed later in this section, the complicity or involvement of a state patron—in this case the Pakistani Inter-Service Intelligence agency—often enables militant groups to extort local businesses. However, the growth of HQN’s profits may ironically reduce what influence the ISI currently has over the group. One Pakistani religious figure commented that the Haqqanis were already financially independent from ISI.⁹ While the exact level of influence ISI wields over HQN is difficult to discern, HQN’s growing financial autonomy enables operational autonomy.

1. Vanda Felbab-Brown calls this development “the technology of illegality.” See Ania Calderón and Vanda Felbab-Brown, “Transnational Organized Crime: Wither Antidrug Policy?” *Journal of International Affairs* 66, no. 1 (Fall–Winter 2012), <http://jia.sipa.columbia.edu/whither-antidrug-policy>.

2. James D. Fearon, “Why Do Some Civil Wars Last So Much Longer than Others?” *Journal of Peace Research* (2004): 275–301.

3. Calderón and Felbab-Brown, “Transnational Organized Crime.”

4. Gretchen Peters, *Haqqani Network Financing: The Evolution of an Industry* (West Point, N.Y.: Combating Terrorism Center, 2012), 9, http://www.ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/CTC_Haqqani_Network_Financing-Report_Final.pdf.

5. The exception to extorted areas is the Haqqani’s ancestral turf of North Waziristan. See *ibid.*, 39–43.

6. *Ibid.*, 43.

7. Alissa J. Rubin and James Risen, “Costly Afghanistan Road Project Is Marred by Unsavory Alliances,” *New York Times*, May 1, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/01/world/asia/01road.html?pagewanted=print>; Peters, *Haqqani Network Financing*, 41.

8. Peters, *Haqqani Network Financing*, 40.

9. *Ibid.*, 38.

Similar to the how the generational shift between Jalaluddin and Sirajuddin Haqqani affected HQN's sustainment, the CPI-Maoist move from Andhra Pradesh to neighboring states has reprioritized extortion for organizational sustainment. While CPI-Maoist was mostly responsible for insurgency in the Indian states of West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh, Indian security pressure forced the group's members to abandon their homes and move to neighboring states like Chhattisgarh between 2005 and 2008.¹⁰ Predictably, a declining number of attacks in Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal corresponded with a rising number of attacks in Chhattisgarh.¹¹

However, the nature of the group's activities also changed as the Maoist cadre moved into a new sanctuary. Far from their original homes and less connected to the local population, Maoist cadres appear to be increasingly willing to exploit and entrench themselves in local industry, rather than advocating for underrepresented minorities.¹² Many members of the CPI-Maoist leadership have reaped substantial profits from both the illicit and licit mines that dot central and eastern India by taking a percentage of the mine's total output in protection money, rather than fighting the mining industry's exploitation of the local population.¹³

Some estimate that a conservative 5 percent taxation rate from illicit mines could total around \$500 million in funding for CPI-Maoist.¹⁴ While the percentage is relatively small and the organization very diffuse, the total profit potentially derived from the extortion is staggering, especially in light of the low cost of insurgency.

There are two additional benefits for CPI-Maoists' reliance on mining for subsistence. First, extorting from the illicit mines may allow the Maoists to decrease their extortion of the local population, thus improving relations between the two. Second, there are also material benefits for CPI-Maoist, which seizes large caches of explosives for use in its operations.¹⁵ For example, there is evidence to suggest that militants acquired 20 tons of explosives from a single 2006 attack, of which most has since deteriorated or been used.¹⁶

Indian Maoists are also sustaining their ranks with methods that run counter to their original ideology. Anecdotes from villagers and area experts describe Maoists murdering

10. Kristian Hoelscher, Jason Miklian, and Krishna Chaitanya Vadlamannati, "Hearts and Mines: A District-Level Analysis of the Maoist Conflict in India," *International Area Studies Review* 15, no. 2 (June 2012): 141–160; Sameer Lalwani, "India's Approach to Counterinsurgency and the Naxalite Problem," *CTC Sentinel*, October 2011, 8, <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/CTCSentinel-Vol4Iss102.pdf>.

11. Hoelscher, Miklian, and Vadlamannati, "Hearts and Mines"; Lalwani, "India's Approach," 8.

12. Authors' interview with foreign diplomats, Mumbai, May 6, 2012.

13. Authors' interview with retired Indian military officer, May 8, 2012; authors' interview with retired U.S. intelligence official, April 17, 2012.

14. Scott Carney and Jason Miklian, "Fire in the Hole: How India's Economic Rise Turned an Obscure Communist Revolt into a Raging Resource War," *Foreign Policy*, September–October 2010, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/08/16/fire_in_the_hole.

15. Mahendra Kumawat, "Responding to the Maoist Challenge," paper presented at Red Resurgence, a symposium on the Naxal/Maoist challenge to the state, New Delhi, March 2010, http://www.india-seminar.com/2010/607/607_mahendra_kumawat.htm. See also "Maoist Mayhem: Major Naxal Strikes in Last Two Years," *Economic Times* (Delhi), May 29, 2010, http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2010-05-29/news/27593052_1_landmine-blast-maoists-ambush-maoists-attack.

16. Carney and Miklian, "Fire in the Hole"; and authors' interview with U.S. expert on South Asian insurgency and criminal activity, April 17, 2012.

villagers and activists, destroying homes, and demanding unwilling “recruits” from indigenous families.¹⁷ Furthermore, in some instances the Maoists have reportedly taken to using financial, rather than ideological, incentives to attract new members. Extortion activities have allowed CPI-Maoist to offer relatively well-paid jobs to individuals in areas where employment opportunities are lacking. Yet many of these recruits lack a commitment to the group, and are relatively easily persuaded to abandon the cause by government promises of amnesty and cash rewards for surrendering.¹⁸

However, shifts in ideology and exploitation of the population, evident both in HQN and CPI-Maoist, are not likely to pose a severe threat to the financial independence of either group. What may present a challenge for these groups is a precipitous decrease in the funding derived from these activities.

For example, while HQN’s involvement in local contracting may currently be of the highest importance to groups like it, decreased international funding for construction in the wake of ISAF’s draw down could eliminate tens of millions of dollars from HQN’s coffers.¹⁹ It is estimated that “Western spending will probably drop to less than \$5 billion a year after 2014, compared to more than \$100 billion in 2011 from the United States alone.”²⁰ However, the Network has long proven adept at diversifying revenue streams to avoid a single point of failure. The ISAF drawdown will simply push groups like HQN to more renewable sources of funding. To wit, one former Pakistani general remarked that “once economic assistance is reduced to \$4 billion per year, then drugs, kidnapping for ransom, and parallel administration will rise.”²¹

KIDNAPPING FOR RANSOM

Given a large pool of potential abductees, kidnapping for ransom is attractive for militants because of its potential to provide a sustainable source of revenue.²² Between 2007 and 2009, groups like TTP, the Haqqani Network, LeJ, the Afghan Taliban, and al Qaeda began expanding their roles in kidnapping.²³ These groups are mostly operationally independent, yet they have entered into complex, if not trusting, syndicate relationships with one another to support these activities.

17. Dilip Simeon, “Permanent Spring,” paper presented at Red Resurgence, a symposium on the Naxal/Maoist challenge to the state, New Delhi, March 2010, http://www.india-seminar.com/2010/607/607_dilip_simeon.htm. Simeon cites a Maoist spokesperson explaining after the death of 25 tribals, “No people’s war can be so clinical as to have no civilian casualty.” For an anecdote of a nighttime village attack, see “India’s Naxalite Insurgency: Not a Dinner Party,” *The Economist*, February 25, 2010, <http://www.economist.com/node/15580130>. India field interviews with a human rights activist describes the murder of an activist nun (“the Maoists, contractors, and the company had her killed”). Rakhi Chakrabarty, “Maoist Eye on Girls Trained by CRPF,” *Times of India*, March 18, 2012, http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-03-18/india/31206804_1_saranda-crpf-maoists. Chakrabarty highlights the sense of Maoist threat by relating the stories of young girls who have fled forced recruitment in their villages.

18. Authors’ interview with U.S. expert on South Asian insurgency and criminal activity.

19. Mazzetti, Shane, and Rubin, “Brutal Haqqani Crime Clan”; Walsh, “Taliban Gaining More Resources.”

20. Dorronsoro, “Waiting for the Taliban in Afghanistan,” 8.

21. Interview with retired Pakistani Army general, Karachi, January 11, 2013.

22. Interview with Pakistani journalist, Peshawar, January 17, 2013; Walsh, “Taliban Gaining More Resources”; Peters, *Haqqani Network Financing*, 46.

23. Peters, *Haqqani Network Financing*, 46–47; Walsh, “Taliban Gaining More Resources.”

When conducting a kidnapping, one group may perform the abduction, another may hold and transport the captive, and yet another may negotiate the ransom.²⁴ Further complicating this syndicate relationship is the inclusion of low-level criminal groups, which often abduct individuals and then transfer them to more senior militant groups, normally located in North and South Waziristan.²⁵ The abductees are usually wealthy members of religious or ethnic minority communities.²⁶ The target profiles of these abductees suggest that the primary goal of kidnapping is monetary rather than political or operational gain.

In India, Maoists have employed kidnapping for somewhat different reasons. CPI-Maoist has increased kidnapping as a tool to rebuff governmental incursion into Maoist sanctuaries, to secure the release of captured brothers in arms, and to further extort illegal mine owners unwilling to pay a percentage of their take to CPI-Maoists.²⁷ Between 2008 and 2011, Maoists kidnapped 1,554 people and killed 328.²⁸ Recently, however, Maoists have been hindered by effective counterinsurgency pressure in states like West Bengal, where deaths of civilians, security personnel and insurgents declined from a nine-year high of 425 in 2010 to 4 in 2012.²⁹

The multiple ways in which militants may use kidnapping for ransom, the low barrier to entry, and the seemingly endless supply of targets will likely continue to make these operations lucrative for militants both in terms of increased financial autonomy and political capital.

TRAFFICKING

Like kidnapping for ransom, trafficking is another potentially renewable source of group sustenance. Taking advantage of weak states and porous borders, militant groups are cooperating with local criminals to traffic in a variety of goods, including currency, timber, drugs, clothing, foodstuffs, weapons, and people.³⁰ Two primary examples—trafficking in opiates and precursor chemicals and trafficking in counterfeit currency—provide windows into how groups are expanding their for-profit militant activities.³¹

24. Author's field interview with Pakistani journalist, Peshawar, January 17, 2013.

25. Declan Walsh, "Kidnapped American Makes Appeal to Obama in Qaeda Video," *New York Times*, May 7, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/08/world/asia/kidnapped-american-warren-weinstein-appears-in-qaeda-video.html?ref=declanwalsh>; Mazzetti, Shane, and Rubin, "Brutal Haqqani Crime Clan."

26. Walsh, "Taliban Gaining More Resources."

27. Srinivas K. Reddy, "Kidnaps Could Be a Failed Experiment for Maoists," *The Hindu*. May, 6, 2012. This number represents totals from nine Naxal-affected states, including Odisha, Chhattisgarh, and Jharkhand. See also Danish Raza, "The Maoist Mantra: Kidnap, Demand and Prosper," *Firstpost.India*, April 25, 2012, <http://www.firstpost.com/india/the-maoist-mantra-kidnap-demand-and-prosper-287806.html>.

28. While high death rates among hostages could potentially point to targeted abduction and killing as an end in and of itself, it is more likely that lack of clear decisionmaking authority among Maoists and a lack of Indian governmental concessions explain this grim trend. Thus, Maoist kidnapping activity should be considered a conservative means to sustain the group's ranks, funding streams, and sanctuaries rather than an operation undertaken with the intent of building influence.

29. Jason Miklian and Kristian Hoelscher, "Government Quells Maoist Rebellion in West Bengal," *India Ink* (blog), *New York Times*, January 14, 2013, <http://india.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/01/14/government-quells-maoist-rebellion-in-west-bengal/>; and "Fatalities in Left-Wing Extremism: 2005–2013," South Asia Terrorism Portal, http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/maoist/data_sheets/fatalitiesnaxal05-11.htm.

30. See Clint Watts, Jacob Shapiro, and Vahid Brown, *Al Qaida's (Mis)Adventures in the Horn of Africa* (West Point, N.Y.: Combating Terrorism Center, July 2007), <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Al-Qaidas-MisAdventures-in-the-Horn-of-Africa.pdf>.

31. Gretchen Peters, *Crime and Insurgency in the Tribal Areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan* (West Point, N.Y.: Combating Terrorism Center, 2010), 24, http://www.ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/Crime-and-Insurgency_Final.pdf.

South Asian opiate production and trafficking are not new to the region, but similar to kidnapping, militant groups are incorporating existing illicit structures designed to support these activities. Both the Pakistani and Afghan Taliban have moved from merely taxing poppy farmers for protection to actively engaging in heroin production and trafficking.³² According to one report, the Pakistani Taliban now operates its own drug labs and is moving “into the more profitable processing and exporting end of the business.”³³

As of 2010, U.S. officials were following more than three dozen smuggling operations that appeared to be subordinate to the Afghan Taliban.³⁴ This shift toward a vertically integrated drug-processing strategy brings militants into closer contact and cooperation with local criminals and foreign kingpins, who increasingly rely on the Afghan Taliban force to secure their shipments.³⁵

One militant group on which the Afghan Taliban may rely to support its drug trade is the Haqqani Network. In addition to its expansive extortion rackets, the Network also trades in the precursor chemicals, such as acetic anhydride (AA), which are necessary for processing heroin. Further utilizing its influence over local real estate, the Network uses hospitals as fronts through which it can order large quantities of AA.³⁶ These extra chemicals are then diverted for use in heroin production. Trafficking in AA is generally safer and sometimes more profitable than drug trafficking, due in part to the ISI’s alleged protection of AA trafficking, and also in part to the widespread availability of poppies.³⁷

LeT uses the 1,100-mile-long India-Nepal border to traffic in counterfeit currency, which may be serving to provide the group with additional resources to support its militant activities. To do so, the group has developed something of a criminal guild with local smugglers, which divvies up portions of the India-Nepal border into mutually supportive “spheres of influence.”³⁸ Through LeT, these criminal networks gain access to new markets through which they can move their goods. LeT benefits from the relationship by gaining logistical support and manpower.

The counterfeiting process likely begins in Pakistan with the production of 500- and 1,000-denomination Indian rupee notes. The high-quality counterfeit notes suggest Pakistani state involvement in the production process, as does the fact that Pakistani embassy officials have been caught in Nepal with counterfeit Indian rupees on multiple occasions.³⁹ The notes

32. *Ibid.*, ii.

33. *Ibid.*, 24.

34. *Ibid.*

35. Vanda Felbab-Brown, “Afghanistan Trip Report VI: Counternarcotics Policy in Afghanistan: A Good Strategy Poorly Implemented,” Brookings Institution, May 10, 2012, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2012/05/10-counternarcotics-felbabbrown>.

36. Peters, *Haqqani Network Financing*, 45–46.

37. The reliance of militant groups on external patrons like ISI is further discussed in Trend II. See Peters, *Haqqani Network Financing*, 45–46.

38. Jason Miklian, “Illicit Trading in Nepal: Fueling South Asian Terrorism,” *PRIO Paper*, January 27, 2009, 4, [http://www.prio.no/sptrans/1266723124/Illicit%20Trading%20in%20Nepal%20\(South%20Asia%20Briefing%20Paper%203\).pdf](http://www.prio.no/sptrans/1266723124/Illicit%20Trading%20in%20Nepal%20(South%20Asia%20Briefing%20Paper%203).pdf).

39. “Pak Agencies, LeT Pumping Fake Currency: Gov’t,” *Economic Times*, August 5, 2009, http://articles.economicstimes.indiatimes.com/2009-08-05/news/28460686_1_fake-indian-currency-notes-fake-currency-ficns.

are flown to Nepal, facilitated by corrupt airport officials, and distributed throughout Nepal and India through LeT's network of Nepali, Pakistani, and Kashmiri traffickers.⁴⁰

Nepali efforts to combat LeT's operations demonstrate the network's reach. According to recent reports, seizures rose dramatically from the equivalent of roughly \$52,000 annually in 2010 and 2011 to a staggering \$3.2 million in 2012.⁴¹ Local traffickers state that most of this money is moved over the border in small denominations via bicycle carts, and in larger denominations through ambulances.⁴²

The opacity of cross-border criminal operations and LeT's known connections with the ISI make the true strategy behind the counterfeiting manufacturing and currency trafficking difficult to discern, but three possibilities are worth considering. First, the profits from this activity may flow to Indian Muslim extremists in order to support militant activities within the country. Second, revenue from currency trafficking may be shared among elements of LeT, the ISI, and other institutions of the Pakistani state.⁴³ Third and finally, the Pakistanis may be attempting to flood the region with counterfeit currency for the sole purpose of aggravating India.

Regardless of the multiple strategies and parties potentially behind LeT's currency trafficking, the money generated by this activity can still have a substantial effect on LeT's estimated bottom line. Open source assessments gauge LeT's annual operational budget to be upward of \$10 million.⁴⁴ While it is not possible to determine whether or not proceeds from trafficking are included in that estimate, potential trafficking profits could enable the group to decrease its reliance on the support of Pakistani state institutions for funding.

Trend II: Renewed Efforts to Increase External Influence

As ISAF withdraws from the region, several militant groups will attempt to fill the resulting power vacuum. As such, external actors previously supporting militant groups will have strong incentives to either continue or increase support to those organizations that are best positioned to serve their interests. This state support may come in the form of direct contributions or through states providing access to renewable sources of funding.

40. Miklian, *Illicit Trading in Nepal: Fueling South Asian Terrorism*, 4-5; authors' field interview with illicit smuggler, Biratnagar, Nepal, September, 2012.

41. Kritika Sharma, "Fake notes flood Delhi: Police on alert as Pakistan pumps counterfeit cash through Nepalese border in 'economic terrorism' which funds criminal groups," *Daily Mail*, February 12 2013, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/indiahome/indianews/article-2277688/Fake-notes-flood-Delhi-Police-alert-Pakistan-pumps-counterfeit-cash-Nepalese-border-economic-terrorism-funds-criminal-gangs.html?ito=feeds-newsxml>.

42. Authors' interview with Nepali academic, Biratnagar, Nepal, September, 2012; authors' field interview with illicit smuggler, Biratnagar, Nepal, September, 2012.

43. Authors' meeting with Stephen Tankel, January 24, 2013.

44. Authors' interview with Jason Miklian, March 12, 2013.

The ISI has historically counted LeT as its most reliable proxy against India, and as such, has provided the group with financial resources and space to operate.⁴⁵ However, in empowering LeT, the state has helped foster growing popular support and operational independence for the group.⁴⁶ This support has come at some price to the Pakistani state, as LeT's increased popular backing makes it more difficult to take punitive action against the group without political fallout. Further, one of LeT's purported goals behind the Mumbai attack was to foment a war between Pakistan and India— which is very worrying considering the group's growing operational independence.⁴⁷

Some Western officials have suggested that LeT's attack on Mumbai may have come during a period of decreased ISI oversight.⁴⁸ As such, Pakistan may now seek greater control of a group with such high potential to cause internal and external problems for the country. Given that Pakistan has already provided the group with operational training, and that popular support can make internal sanctuaries self-sustaining, one of the few remaining avenues through which the ISI may be able to exert influence over the group would be to buy its quiescence.⁴⁹

However, allegiances are not so easily won, given two systemic problems with militant organizations. First, the ability of patrons to make deals with militants is predicated upon strong militant leadership—which, as seen in section 3 above on structure, has its own systemic issues. Second, financial independence and the availability of sanctuaries from which to operate enable militant groups to defect from accords they strike with external patrons. In short, the same preference divergence that makes it more difficult for commanders to exert control over their forces also makes it difficult for patrons to guide the behavior of their proxies.⁵⁰ The case of Pakistan's attempt to gain the allegiance of the recently deceased Mullah Nazir's South Waziristan-based Taliban faction is illustrative.

Inasmuch as Nazir targeted foreign forces in Afghanistan and not the Pakistani state, the Pakistani military had strong incentives to use Nazir's forces as a bulwark against TTP groups focused on targeting Pakistan. Nazir had allegedly signed mutual nonaggression pacts with the Pakistani military in 2007 and 2009, which may have made him a target for rival Taliban factions.⁵¹ In 2009, however, Nazir abandoned Pakistani support to join forces with rival TTP factions, declaring in an interview to al Qaeda's media arm as-Sahab "if they [the Pakistani state] coerce us or launch a military operation, then these mujahideen will be on their way to Islamabad."⁵²

45. Tankel, "Lashkar-e-Taiba," 10.

46. *Ibid.*, 10, 14.

47. *Ibid.*, 10.

48. *Ibid.*, 26.

49. Tellis, "Menace," 11: "This loyalty is owed partly to the common ethnic bonds among these entities and partly to the disproportionate support offered by the ISI."

50. See Watts, Shapiro, and Brown, *Al Qaida's (Mis)Adventures*.

51. Hafiz Wazir, "U.S. Drone Strike Kills Key Pakistan Taliban Commander: Sources," Reuters, January 3, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/01/03/us-pakistan-drone-idUSBRE90203G20130103>.

52. Afir Rafiq, "Killing the 'Good' Taliban," *Foreign Policy*, January 4, 2013, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/01/04/mullah_nazir_taliban_pakistan_jihad.

Such variances in loyalties among groups with strong leadership like Nazir’s portend badly for patrons’ ability to rely on proxies at all. Some have noted that “the military now relies on non-hostile jihadists like Nazir to counterbalance anti-state jihadists, but its proxies all too often morph into foes.”⁵³

The ensuing power vacuum created by Nazir’s death in January 2013 makes the trajectory of the group’s operations increasingly hard to visualize. As with Nazir’s demise, the decapitation of key militant leaders often does not attenuate the threat. Instead, it pushes command-and-control authority down to subordinate elements and makes already-unpredictable groups less likely to be vectored by interested patrons and more likely to be driven toward self-sufficiency. As the writer and columnist Moisés Naím states,

in an environment of decentralized conflict where the most useful tools are ones that are easily obtained, economic incentives are especially strong and the merits of obeying a command-and-control structure are correspondingly weak. . . . In other words, *orders* carry less weight in conflict today than *material incentives*.⁵⁴

In the ensuing power vacuum created by ISAF’s drawdown, states with very real concerns over the behavior of their proxies may necessarily rely on providing these groups with funding, as it may be their only mechanism of suasion. The reliability of this mechanism is increasingly questionable.

Conclusion

One mark of a successful militant organization is its ability to develop the capacity and networks that generate renewable income.⁵⁵ Militants with access to independent, sustainable funding streams are better able to perpetuate conflict than those that do not.⁵⁶ The financial and operational autonomy that comes with some of the most lucrative funding streams—among them extortion, kidnapping for ransom, and trafficking—make groups less subject to the command-and-control authorities of external patrons. In an effort to regain control of these more autonomous groups, patrons may attempt to provide more money and sanctuary to the groups as a means of suasion. Rather than mitigating militant groups’ operational autonomy, this strategy could actually exacerbate it.

53. Ibid.

54. Naím, *End of Power*, 126.

55. Calderón and Felbab-Brown, “Transnational Organized Crime.”

56. Fearon, “Why Do Some Civil Wars Last So Much Longer?” 275–301.

5 | Trends in Militant Groups' Operations

Operations are the constellation of activities that militant groups adopt in furtherance of their ideological and political objectives. As with the other functional categories of this report, operations are influenced by a wide range of variables, including leadership control, the domestic political and security environment, and opportunity. In this vein, the nature of militant groups' operations varies, from strategic strikes to alliance building to reactive measures.

Intense counterterrorism and counternetwork activity has degraded the operational capacity of some groups in South Asia. However, some groups—TTP, the Haqqani Network, and LeT among them—have adapted well to the pressure. Others, such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and al Qaeda senior leadership, have indeed suffered critical and destabilizing, if not irreversible, losses. Yet all these groups continue to operate, and the region shows signs of continued violence and instability.

High levels of government incapacity and weak governance—even willful government collusion—provide a variety of operational spaces for militants. To varying degrees, these groups have proven to be survivable because of their ability to create, expand, and utilize these sanctuaries. The ISAF drawdown in Afghanistan, political paralysis in Nepal, corruption in India and Pakistan, and political turmoil and violence in Bangladesh and Pakistan ensure that militants will continue to operate with a certain degree of impunity.

Yet another trend in operations is, in part, an unsavory by-product of government incapacity and deliberate neglect: the very sharp increase in violence at the local level in certain areas. As noted below, attacks on Shia in Pakistan have spiked dramatically in 2013 and show no signs of abating. High-profile attacks on Christian communities and senior government officials opposed to Pakistan's blasphemy laws offer additional, deeply unsettling signs of intolerance directed at domestic targets and audiences.¹ Loud and widespread popular support for the assassins reflects a wide and accommodating space for those attacking local officials and citizens with whom they violently disagree.

1. Declan Walsh and Waqir Gillani, "Attack on Christians Follows Claim of Blasphemy," *New York Times*, March 9, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/10/world/asia/explosion-rips-through-mosque-in-peshawar-pakistan.html?ref=world&r=0>. On January 4, 2011, Punjab State governor Salman Taseer was killed in Islamabad, by his own bodyguard, for criticizing blasphemy laws; see "Taseer's Murder: Religious Right Heralds the Assassin as 'Hero,'" *Express Tribune*, January 6, 2011, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/99797/taseers-murder-religious-right-heralds-the-assassin-as-hero/>. On March 2, 2011, only eight weeks after Governor Taseer's assassination, the minister of religious minorities, Shahbaz Bhatti, a Roman Catholic and outspoken critic of the blasphemy law, was assassinated in Islamabad; see "World Community Condemn Bhatti's Murder," *Dawn*, March 3, 2011, <http://dawn.com/2011/03/03/british-pm-condemns-unacceptable-pakistan-murder>.

Thus, the two operational trends emerging among South Asian militants are:

- I. *The creation and expansion of sanctuaries:* Some militant groups are expanding their control over political and physical sanctuaries in South Asia. Weak state capacity and local political collusion with militant networks often complement one another and expand the areas from which militant organizations can operate.
- II. *Enhanced attacks at the local level:* As their capabilities and sanctuaries continue to advance, violent extremist groups are also attacking more “local” targets. Vicious and sustained assaults in 2012 and 2013 on Shia minorities in Pakistan and local security forces in Afghanistan and Pakistan bear witness to this trend. Indian officials also fear the post-2014 possibility of growing violence in Kashmir. Long-standing grievances account for some of this activity, and the looming ISAF drawdown will surely prompt a new targeting hierarchy as Western, U.S.-led forces depart South Asia.

Trend I: The Creation and Expansion of Sanctuaries

Political and physical spaces are essential to militant groups’ functioning. Within these sanctuaries, groups can raise funds, recruit members, influence publics, establish alliances, plan and execute operations, and convalesce when injured. Two primary factors maintain and appear to be expanding militant group sanctuaries: weak states, and the collusion of local officials.

WEAK STATES

South Asia is replete with weak governments lacking the capacity to enforce borders and to police internally. Given the multitude of challenges to effective governance, these conditions are likely to persist, in turn enabling militants to operate more freely.

Section 4 illustrates how uneven counterterrorism pressure between Indian states enabled CPI-Maoist cadre to simply move from Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal to neighboring states like Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand between 2005 and 2008. The security forces of these neighboring states lacked the capability or professionalism to effectively target and combat the new arrivals, and thus militancy in these new sanctuaries spiked as a result.² Furthermore, counterterrorism advances in West Bengal were not sustainable. After the peak of the campaign to rid West Bengal of CPI-Maoist cadre, combined deaths of security personnel, civilians, and militants hit a nine-year high of 425 in 2010.³ It was only after recent state-level efforts to increase governance capacity were deployed in coordination with targeted counterterrorism pressure that Maoist violence declined precipitously.⁴

2. Author Gretchen Peters refers to this as the “squeezing the balloon” effect.

3. “Fatalities in Left-Wing Extremism,” South Asia Terrorism Portal.

4. Since the high in 2010, combined casualties fell four in 2012. See “Fatalities in Left-Wing Extremism,” South Asia Terrorism Portal; Miklian and Hoelscher, “Government Quells Maoist Rebellion.”

However, the uneven distribution of resources and training has a negative impact on India's ability to combat Maoist militancy. In fact, the number of paramilitary forces killed in recent years far exceeds Maoist casualties.⁵ These forces find themselves deficient in the skills they need most, including jungle warfare, counterinsurgency, and training to deal with improvised explosive devices.⁶

This challenge is exacerbated by the federal nature of the Indian governmental system, under which individual state governments wield considerable control over security efforts. Inconsistent capability and failed interstate communication and coordination have resulted in a national-level failure to address Maoist safe havens. However, new federal forces under the Central Reserve Police Force have been formed to attempt to address this deficiency.⁷ It remains to be seen whether efforts like these new federal forces will be an effective and sustainable counter to Maoist exploitation of governmental incapacity.

In much of northwest Pakistan, the government's ability to provide goods and services like security and disaster relief is severely limited if not altogether nonexistent. These areas—most notably the districts around Swat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and the seven Pashtun-majority tribal agencies—are the primary physical sanctuaries for militants inside Pakistan. Those parts of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas subject to government control are managed under the Frontier Crimes Regulation, a draconian system from the days of British rule that allows for collective punishment.⁸

The security agendas pushed by the military in northwest Pakistan are uneven and punitive and have “raised costs—human and economic—for civilians trapped in a cycle of violence between militancy and heavy-handed military force.”⁹ U.S. officials often aver that Pakistani military action (or the lack thereof) in the northwest is driven by the fear of the tactical and strategic advantages the militants possess over the Pakistani army.

Next door in Afghanistan, the situation is hardly better. As ISAF withdraws from the region, similar dynamics are only likely to worsen as Kabul's influence across the country further contracts and security capacity deteriorates. With only one of 23 Afghan National

5. Aman Sharma, “Home Ministry Proposes to Replicate Greyhounds of Andhra Pradesh in Five Maoist-hit States,” *India Today*, July 16, 2012, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/home-ministry-greyhounds-andhra-pradesh-maoist-hit-states/1/208420.html>.

6. Jonathan Dowdall, “India's Anti-Maoist Campaign Faces Training Deficiencies, Threatens Army Strength,” *Defense Report*, May 4, 2012, <http://defencereport.com/indias-anti-maoist-campaign-faces-training-deficiencies-threatens-army-strength/>.

7. Authors' interview with retired Indian military officer, May 8, 2012; “An Overhaul for State's Intelligence System,” *Times of India*, December 23, 2011, http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2011-12-23/kochi/30550718_1_intelligence-agencies-share-intelligence-intelligence-gathering. India's ability to identify, arrest, and prosecute terrorist suspects also remains low, and Indian legal structures may incentivize abuse of suspects. See Malavika Vyawahare, “India's Record on Terror Attacks Holds Lessons for Hyderabad,” *New York Times*, March 6, 2013, <http://india.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/03/06/indias-record-on-terror-attacks-holds-lessons-for-hyderabad-blasts-investigation/?src=recg>.

8. *Pakistan: Countering Militancy in the FATA*, Asia Report 178 (Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2009), http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/pakistan/178_pakistan__countering_militancy_in_fata.pdf; *Pakistan: Countering Militancy in the PATA*, Asia Report 242 (Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2013), <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-asia/pakistan/242-pakistan-countering-militancy-in-pata.aspx>.

9. *Pakistan: Countering Militancy in the FATA*.

Security Force (ANSF) brigades capable of independent combat operations as of late 2012 and ISAF transitioning to a limited size and role, sanctuaries may expand across eastern and southern Afghanistan.¹⁰

While ISAF forces have made significant gains and imposed a degree of stability in militant strongholds such as Kandahar and Helmand provinces, it is doubtful that ANSF will be able to sustain this progress. As ISAF draws down, there will likely be little preventing TTP, the Haqqani Network, and other militant groups from further exploiting expanded their sanctuaries in Afghanistan.

As it stands today, TTP and other Pakistan-focused militant groups operate against Pakistan and conduct business from sanctuaries inside Afghanistan (in Kunar and Nuristan provinces). This use of Afghanistan as a sanctuary was decried by senior Pakistan government officials interviewed in Islamabad, and was noted by others for the irony that militant groups, rather than the Pakistani military, have achieved “strategic depth” inside Afghanistan.¹¹ Given the nearly complete dearth of bilateral counterterrorism cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan, expanding havens on both sides of the Durand Line should be cause for immediate concern.

In Nepal, the role of militant groups does not approach the severity of those seen in Afghanistan or Pakistan. But diminished capacity for governance due to deadlock, high corruption,¹² and an open border with India make Nepal the quintessential haven through which illicit activity and militants may flow.

Such high levels of state weakness remain in Nepal, potentially providing the space for militancy to take hold or expand. While circumstantial, a field visit to a rural mosque revealed that at least some Nepalese Muslims are being influenced by foreign-funded madrasas led by foreign and local instructors educated at religiously conservative institutions in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.

Diplomats in Kathmandu intimated that foreign forces known to exploit Nepalese sanctuaries to move personnel and matériel into India may have stepped in to quell more vitriolic manifestations of the religion in order to maintain the low signature of the sanctuary.¹³ While Nepal may be a textbook example of militant sanctuary, it must be reemphasized that Nepalese Muslims are overwhelmingly nonviolent, well integrated in the society, and currently pose little to no threat of militancy.

10. See “Figure 22: ANA Operational Effectiveness Ratings in U.S. Department of Defense,” in *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, Report to Congress (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, 2012), 93, http://www.defense.gov/news/1230_Report_final.pdf.

11. Authors’ interview with a retired Pakistan Army general, Karachi, January 11, 2013.

12. In Transparency International’s “Corruption Perceptions Index 2012,” where a ranking of number 1 equals the least corrupt nation, India ranks 94, Nepal and Pakistan are tied at 139, and Bangladesh is at 144, while Afghanistan is tied for the world’s worst with North Korea and Somalia, all ranking at 174. See “Corruption Perceptions Index 2012,” Transparency International, <http://cpi.transparency.org/cpi2012/results/>.

13. Authors’ interview with foreign diplomats, Kathmandu, September 24, 2012.

COMPLICITY

In addition to governmental inability to combat terrorism, weak states might have financial and political incentives to allow militant groups some degree of sanctuary.¹⁴ Such is the case with India's Maoists, who, in addition to taking advantage of state incapacity, also collude with some state and local governmental officials. The central government in New Delhi allocates security and development funding to states based upon Maoist activity in a given area, creating a perverse incentive for local officials to tolerate or even inflate the Maoist presence in their states.¹⁵ For example, the Indian Home Ministry's "Security-Related Expenditure Scheme," designed to "supplement the efforts of States to deal with the naxalite [Maoist] problem," provides 100 percent reimbursement for a wide range of expenses related to counterinsurgency.¹⁶ Thus, the continued presence of a CPI-Maoist cadre in an Indian state provides officials with a financial incentive to tolerate at least some level of militant presence.

Politically, local government officials often accommodate the Maoists in exchange for peace or for the blocs of votes the Maoists can deliver.¹⁷ These officials seek or agree to demarcate areas of influence, where the government cedes control of territory in exchange for stability and monetary or political gain.¹⁸ In traveling through the insurgent-heavy state of Jharkhand, research also uncovered that Maoists have an off-the-books relationship with at least one political party.¹⁹ Such links suggest a wide degree of insurgent involvement in the political process throughout militant-affected areas.

This involvement is obvious even to India's own domestic intelligence agency, known as the Intelligence Bureau, which eavesdropped on a conversation between Indian politicians and Maoists as they organized a fake battle in order to claim that counterinsurgency operations were achieving results.²⁰

Pakistani militants are also involved in the political process in much the same way as Maoists are in India, with widespread collaboration across the country. Militant groups and powerful politicians form partnerships to ensure that the former deliver votes and influence while the latter protect them from prosecution by local law enforcement agencies—essentially providing immunity for violent activities.

Pakistani journalists and private-sector leaders indicate that such arrangements are under way between politicians in southern Punjab and the sectarian groups.²¹ In Karachi,

14. Watts, Shapiro, and Brown, *Al Qaida's (Mis)Adventures*, 24.

15. Authors' interview with former Indian counterterrorism officials, May 8, 2012.

16. Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, "Development Initiatives Page: Projects and Developmental Schemes: Scheme for reimbursement of Expenditure (SRE) Scheme to Deal with Naxalite Problem," http://www.mha.nic.in/uniquepage.asp?Id_Pk=293. Reimbursable items include grants to families of victims, logistics for COIN forces, publicity material, helicopters, weapons, insurance, and other assistance to state police, etc.

17. Authors' interview with security-focused journalist, New Delhi, May 14, 2012.

18. Authors' interview with human rights activist, May 11, 2012; authors' interview with former U.S. intelligence analyst, April 12, 2012. See also Lalwani, "India's Approach," 9.

19. Authors' interview with former Indian counterterrorism official, New Delhi, May 8, 2012; authors' interview with security-focused journalist, May 14, 2012.

20. Authors' interview with security-focused journalist, May 14, 2012.

21. Authors' telephone interview with an Islamabad-based independent journalist, March 4, 2013.

another journalist indicated that militants and criminals can operate and commit extrajudicial killings with impunity, noting that “the police arrest people but can’t hold them for very long due to political party power. Every political party exerts influence to have members released from custody.”²²

It is possible, however, that the Pakistani government may decide to constrict the space within which militant groups operate if they present a greater threat to the country. Recent phenomena such as the Defense of Pakistan Council (DPC), established in 2011 in response to ISAF’s killing of 24 Pakistani soldiers, reflect the potential danger of a highly networked and well-resourced “pan-jihadi movement.”

Bruce Riedel, a leading American analyst of South Asia’s violent extremist groups, views the Hakimullah Mehsud–led DPC as an “extraordinary development” and observes that the organization “smelled blood in the water” with respect to the ISAF drawdown in Afghanistan. Riedel suggests that DPC members perceive “the Jihad is on the verge of its greatest victory ever,” following which they may be emboldened to “takeover and hijack the state of Pakistan.”²³

The DPC threat has yet to materialize, according to others with knowledge of the group, though they share the longer-term threat assessment. One source, a private-sector leader in Islamabad with investments throughout the country, predicted that the DPC would have “real teeth” following ISAF’s withdrawal.²⁴

CONCLUSION

India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan are riddled with problems stemming from weak state capacity and corrupt and fearful politicians seeking to benefit from or accommodate militant groups. Such sanctuaries are self-reinforcing; concessions from government officials entrench weak capacity, erode government legitimacy, and build the credibility of militant groups. This furthers engagement of militant groups due to their expanding influence in these three countries.²⁵

As such, there is little doubt that political and physical sanctuaries in Afghanistan and Pakistan will grow as ISAF exits the region. The space vacated by ISAF is not likely to be completely filled by the government in Kabul, and ANSF will likely be unable to secure the nation fully. With potential de facto Taliban control spreading over large areas of Afghanistan, Pakistan may also be threatened by groups moving more freely and inclined to target the two governments that cooperated, albeit imperfectly, with ISAF.

Complicating these potential scenarios may very well be a return to widespread fighting across Afghanistan in a resumption of old rivalries as groups once allied under common and readily available targets may now compete for control of cadres, territory, criminal opportunity, and the strategic direction of militancy in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

22. Author interview with local journalist, Karachi, January 11, 2013.

23. Bruce Riedel, “Is There a Widening Sunni-Shia Schism?” event, Brookings Institution, Washington, February 22, 2013, <http://www.brookings.edu/events/2013/02/22-sunni-shia>.

24. Author interview with private-sector leader, Washington, March 10, 2013.

25. Author interview with Pakistani journalist, Karachi, January 11, 2013.

Trend II: Enhanced Attacks at the Local Level

The presence of sanctuary—not solely in rugged border areas, but also in urban spaces—affords individuals and groups opportunities to attack and intimidate their opponents. The reduction in Western targets in the region, political stasis, bare-knuckle local politics, and long-standing ethnic and religious hatreds also expand these sanctuaries.

Trends in ideology, structure, and sustainment are shifting militants' focus away from global threats to local ones. Militant groups' target selection now reflects a much greater focus on local issues. Moving away from foreign targets such as ISAF, local governmental institutions, military forces, and religious minorities now bear the brunt of militant focus. As ISAF draws down by the close of 2014—with only a small contingent remaining for training and security duties—it appears likely that militant groups will only increase localized attacks on domestic government “enemies” and possibly one another.

As discussed in section 2 above on ideology, for the past decade ISAF's presence has united Afghan and some Pakistani groups against a common enemy, largely driving militants' target choices. These operations were largely intended to drive Western forces from the region. The vast majority of these were engagements against ISAF forces in the field, with periodic and more visible attacks against ISAF targets in Kabul.

Yet with the declining presence of ISAF in the region, militant groups may begin to compete with one another to expand territorial control and dominate local political structures. Afghan insurgents, including both the Taliban and the Haqqani Network, launched brazen, coordinated strikes against Afghan government institutions, repeatedly attacking in areas or institutions believed to be most secure.²⁶

Recent operations against the Afghan National Directorate of Security (NDS), the Afghan Border Police, the Afghan Traffic Police, and a host of others all testify to this trend. Many of these operations appear to have required a high degree of planning and coordination, involving multiple waves of attackers striking a number of targets simultaneously. In some instances a suicide car bomb has been used to destroy a gate or security checkpoint, allowing a second wave of armed attackers to enter a government complex.

Secondary car bombs on timers have also been prepositioned where security forces were likely to congregate during a counterassault.²⁷ Insurgents have also taken to using buildings under construction that abut such compounds as vantage points from which to fire upon security forces. These buildings are reportedly preferred not only because they offer an unobstructed firing positions and are not yet secured but also because they lack the internal doors and furniture that might hinder the attackers' movements and communication.²⁸

26. Dan Murphy, “A Recent History of ‘Sophisticated’ Insurgent Attacks in Kabul,” *Christian Science Monitor*, September 13, 2011, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Backchannels/2011/0913/A-recent-history-of-sophisticated-insurgent-attacks-in-Kabul>.

27. Amir Shah and Patrick Quinn, “Taliban Suicide Bombers Target Afghan Traffic Police,” *Christian Science Monitor*, January 21, 2013, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Latest-News-Wires/2013/0121/Taliban-suicide-bombers-target-Afghan-traffic-police>.

28. Authors' interview of Afghan security officials, Kabul, November 5, 2012.

Such attacks are often carried out simultaneously with other strikes across the country. A February 2013 assault on an NDS compound in Kabul was accompanied by a corresponding strike on an NDS facility in Jalalabad and two bombings of a police checkpoint and a police headquarters building in Logar Province.²⁹

In addition to their sophistication, the frequency of these attacks appears to be increasing; January 2013 saw two such operations launched in Kabul in the span of just six days.³⁰ The targets, sophistication, and tempo of these attacks are all attempts to convey the rising strength of militant forces relative to the declining power of the Afghan government.

Perhaps the most notable and troubling of the trends toward localized targeting are the high-casualty attacks on Pakistan's Shia communities. While roughly 400 Shia were killed in all of 2012, more than 200 Shia were killed in the first 10 weeks of 2013 alone.³¹ The anti-Shia group Lashkar-e-Jhangvi unabashedly claimed responsibility for these attacks and promised many more to come.

LeJ and other sectarian outfits are more active for a variety of reasons. Sunni militants are in part attacking Shia as part of the wider Sunni/Shia conflict taking place across the Middle East in places like Syria and the Persian Gulf. Sunni sectarian groups are also trying to further cement political and economic positions inside Pakistan as the mid-2013 national election approaches. Furthermore, a recently released statement by LeJ "declared Shia Muslims the major obstacle in the way of enforcement of Sharia in Pakistan."³²

Moreover, apart from the centuries-long violent disagreements between Islam's two largest sects (which cannot, in any way, be minimized as a factor in today's conflicts), Shia may be regarded as a "fifth column" by many hard-line Pakistani Sunnis who saw the 1979 Iranian Revolution as a dangerous stimulant for the 20 percent of Pakistan that adheres to Shia Islam.³³

Where once LeJ and other sectarian organization attacks were limited to small-scale shootings, the bomb used in an LeJ attack on a Shia market in Quetta on February 16, 2013, was estimated to weigh 2,200 pounds, so large that LeJ used a tractor to tow it into place.³⁴ Similar LeJ bombings were quickly followed by secondary explosions designed to kill emergency responders.³⁵

29. Heidi Vogt and Rahim Faiez, "Suicide Bombers Target Afghan Security Forces," *USA Today*, February 24, 2013, <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2013/02/24/afghanistan-bomb-taliban-kabul/1942445/>.

30. Shah and Quinn, "Taliban Suicide Bombers."

31. "Pakistan Bomb: Karachi Standstill after Shias Attacked," *BBC News (Asia)*, March 4, 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-21651956>.

32. Muhammad Amir Rana, "Epitome of Hate," *Dawn*, January 13, 2013, <http://dawn.com/2013/01/13/epitome-of-hate>.

33. These perspectives are sourced from multiple conversations throughout the January 2013 field visit to Pakistan. In particular, such sentiments and perspectives were presented in conversations with two journalists in Islamabad. One meeting was with a Western reporter, on location, on January 15, 2013, and one with an independent Pakistani journalist, via telephone, on March 4, 2013.

34. Stern, "The Taliban's New, More Terrifying Cousin."

35. *Ibid.*

Such brazen operations indicate that LeJ has high levels of confidence and technical skills, and the benefit of sanctuary to move about as it does. This freedom of movement and lack of punishment again point to government incapacity and complicity. Given LeJ's relationships with TTP and al Qaeda, its elevated profile is exceptionally alarming as militant group syndication continues.³⁶

Across Afghanistan and Pakistan, motivations and opportunities for these operations will only increase with impending changes to South Asian security. The ISAF withdrawal from Afghanistan, greater access to sanctuary, and local government collusion together will convince militant groups that they can take on greater objectives.

36. Reidel, "Is There a Widening Sunni-Shia Schism?"

6 | Conclusions and Recommendations

As indicated throughout this report, militancy in South Asia presents multifaceted challenges that are likely to continue threatening stability. Several ongoing and emerging trends raise great concern, and all provide militant organizations with substantial advantages: abundant sanctuaries; vicious local attacks; nebulous, criminally connected, and networked groups; and official corruption, incapacity, and complicity in militant groups' activities. These conditions call for local reform and action—and additional international attention.

Pakistan and Afghanistan are home to the bulk of militant threats. But other parts of South Asia are equally worrying. India is making progress against the Maoists, yet it suffers from uneven and weak governance, which is exacerbated by local political complicity. With relatively lower threats of violent extremism, countries like Nepal nonetheless struggle with problems that offer fertile ground for militant ideologies. Socioeconomic underdevelopment, political tension, and illicit cross-border activity enable movements to pursue their disruptive goals.

There are many important developments to watch for as South Asia and the global community respond to violent extremism and its potential for spreading or guiding movements elsewhere. One is discovering if preexisting conflicts and grievances (e.g., Sunni/Shia or Muslim/Hindu violence) are expanding and threatening the region and places beyond. Another is determining what lessons Sunni extremists learned from a decade of fighting, and to what degree they are inspired by the legacy of Osama bin Laden to target foreign enemies.

While many of the attacks in South Asia may be local, the repercussions are internationally relevant. There is danger in thinking that the departure of ISAF from Afghanistan might translate into fewer attacks on Western targets in the region, or in Europe and North America. Similar to the defeat and withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan 1989, militant groups perceive a similar outcome for ISAF, and the United States in particular.

This sense of jihadist “victory” may have an immensely stimulative effect both on locally oriented militants—who could feel empowered in their fight against regional governments—and on global actors wanting to build on the momentum. The fluidity of these forces and their global appeal warn against underestimation or the folly of drawing mental or physical borders around their intentions and capabilities.

The following five recommendations address many of the challenges presented by militant groups in South Asia. It is our hope that they offer both realistic and creative approaches to the problem.

1. Continue to devote intelligence and other resources to monitoring militancy in the region, with a focus on strategic priorities. As the United States and its allies prepare to withdraw from Afghanistan, there will be a natural inclination to reduce the intelligence resources and analytic focus currently devoted to militancy in the region. Shrinking security budgets will only further compel such reductions. However, the importance of South Asian stability is only likely to grow in the coming years. As such, the United States and its allies must find ways to maintain intelligence collection and surge capabilities in South and Central Asia focused on militant organizations, even as resources decline. Given that they cannot afford to prioritize everything, an initial step for the United States and its partners would be to develop a defined list of where the greatest strategic risks are likely to originate, and to devote resources primarily against those threats. Priorities might include:

- *Militant groups with international aims or tendencies:* While the trends in this report may suggest that international militancy, as practiced by al Qaeda, may be on the decline, resources should be deployed to monitor militant rhetoric for the reemergence of international goals.
- *Militant groups or dynamics that appear to threaten the stability of or relations between India and Pakistan, the region's two nuclear-armed powers:* As international forces withdraw from Afghanistan and militant groups increasingly reorient toward local targets, there is the danger that militant groups may choose to focus their energies on one or both of these nations. As such, militant groups should be monitored for rhetorical and other shifts indicating such a reorientation.
- *Activities or dynamics such as drug trafficking, state patronage, new technologies, and the establishment of safe havens that may serve to rapidly increase militant groups' capabilities.*

While this is not to say that militant groups or dynamics that fall outside these priorities are not worrying and do not deserve some level of attention and resourcing, with limited funds and capabilities, it will be difficult for a single nation to monitor all the militant groups in the region. As such, the United States and its partners may also wish to consider creating an intelligence “division of labor” among themselves in order to better understand the morphing threats in the South Asia.

2. Rebalance countermilitant activity away from kinetic approaches and toward countermessaging and counterfinance efforts. The repeated decapitation of militant leadership over the past decade has had a profound effect on a variety of organizations. As this report notes, a number of groups have devolved their structures, making them harder to target kinetically. At the same time, groups are expanding their activities into criminality as well as politics and social services. These activities may serve to provide militants with new resources and support. As such, in the coming years the

United States and its allies will need to work with regional partners to further develop and implement local efforts to limit the benefits that militant groups are able to derive from these activities.

In order to deny militant organizations additional sources of income, the United States and its partners should explore the following options:

- Leverage the U.S. Treasury Department and international financial tools—including targeted sanctions—in concert with regional financial institutions and actors to isolate the most egregious illicit financial activity fueling militant activity—including the operation of illicit entities and companies.
- Develop a dedicated public sector–private sector dialogue with key banks and non-bank financial institutions and sectors in the region to understand and address the risks of militant criminal financial behavior. This should be focused on the financial integrity of the regional financial system.
- Encourage increased oversight of the unregulated charities and other organizations that may be funneling remittances from diaspora communities and other sources into the coffers of militant groups.
- Use criminal and civil forfeiture and anti-money-laundering rules and regulations more aggressively and cooperatively to seize criminal proceeds tied to militant activity.

Additionally, the United States and its allies should work with South Asian nations to ensure that they do not cede ideological space to militant groups. Such countermessaging efforts might include:

- Developing a “narrative” of ISAF withdrawal that does not allow militant groups and forces to claim victory in pushing out American and coalition forces in 2014. The narrative must ensure that the withdrawal is not viewed as a withdrawal in defeat but as a peaceful and purposeful transition to control by the Afghan people.
- Encouraging South Asian nations to develop strategies to promote active and healthy ideological discourse in order to provide alternative viewpoints to those propagated by militants. In many countries, militant groups have been allowed to gain ideological ground simply because they are the only ones with an active voice.
- Developing an explicit strategy to empower and enlist nongovernmental organizations and advocates in South Asia to address the effects and victims of militant criminality—especially illegal smuggling.
- Encouraging the anticorruption community, human rights groups, and global organizations focused on the integrity of the extractive industries to address the illegal and violent activities of militant groups.
- Enlisting the media to investigate and expose the criminality, corruption, and violence tied to militancy, as a means to expose their activities and undercut their propaganda.

- By focusing on counterfinance and countermessaging activities, the international community and its South Asian partners have an opportunity to deny militants the funds and support upon which they rely, limiting the threat they are able to pose to the region.

3. Foster relationships among organizations to mitigate threats posed by militant groups and leverage positive trends in South Asia. Given that international counterterrorism and counternetwork activities will be likely be restrained and more difficult to conduct, and assuming growing fiscal constraints in the coming years, it is sensible to develop and maintain robust, cooperative relationships among all organizations seeking to monitor, evaluate, influence, and counter militant organizations. Such efforts could benefit from increased cooperation, including between nations and between “interagency” organizations within a particular nation, to share information, prioritize activities, eliminate unnecessary duplication, and pool resources (as appropriate) for greater effect. Such efforts to foster countermilitant relationships might include:

- Developing more aggressive regional security and diplomatic alignments, especially with India, in order to understand the trajectory and threats of militant networks and to combine forces to address any potential regional instability with a global impact.
- Cultivate information-sharing agreements among states—for example, an information clearinghouse, patterned on a similar construct within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and its Partnership for Peace program, whereby participant states discuss threat perceptions and national capabilities to counter such threats.
- Develop a cooperative action plan to prioritize assistance efforts to the South Asia region, including but not limited to train and equip programs for national and local law enforcement, economic assistance programs, and humanitarian relief and reconstruction efforts—for example, U.S. government agencies (including the Defense, Justice, and State departments and the U.S. Agency for International Development) could sponsor a multilateral forum to focus specifically on nations’ assistance to South Asia. As part of these assistance efforts, the United States and its partners should leverage the presence of nongovernmental, regional, and international organizations to identify at-risk populations and to prioritize the delivery of basic services such as education and health care to them.
- Designing a more aggressive global law enforcement model directed at the criminality and corruption leveraged by militant networks. Such a strategy could include task forces and joint investigations tied to the illicit smuggling and financial activity that fuels the most dangerous militant groups.
- Building capacity, with regional leaders, for local and regional law enforcement, prosecutors, and judges to confront growing militant criminality.
- Foster bilateral counterterrorism and security relationships among South Asian countries.

- Beginning discussions with regional powers, like China and India, about the future stability and economic development of the region—including the idea of a new Silk Road.

4. Explore areas for further research and continued study. While the study uncovered several common threads—in ideology, structure, sustainment, and operations—throughout South Asia, several key areas will require further research to determine their relevance and possible value added for the issue of militancy within the region. For example, closer cooperation between subject matter experts and academics in examining internal conditions and militant movements could allow for useful leveraging of contacts, situational awareness, and countermilitancy efforts.

This closer cooperation could be achieved through increased or improved exchange and training programs (e.g., functional, nonmilitary equivalents of the U.S. command and staff colleges and war colleges), expanded academic opportunities similar to Fulbright Scholarships that would focus on militancy issues, or the creation of journalism fellowships (e.g., Nieman Fellowships at Harvard University) that concentrate on South Asia.

In addition, militant groups' shifts in funding, ideology, and centers of power (i.e., from hierarchical organizations to a more networked system that focuses on local concerns) are not unique to South Asia. Such shifts are as relevant for core al Qaeda's involvement with Ansar al Dine as they are for the Arab Spring. This report has highlighted the need for further research to identify common trends beyond a specific region.

5. Seek to better understand the diasporas. This final recommendation has two aspects:

- Understand how diaspora communities are affected by, impeded, or facilitated by the activities of militant networks. Enlist key diaspora business and political leaders to help quell violence and seek to understand the reach and power of militant networks embedded in ethnic groups.
- Restrict illicit financial activity between diaspora communities supporting militant groups and their activities.

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