

South Asia's Political Landscape: Precipitating Terrorism

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Abstract : India's Muslims represent 15 percent of the nation's population, the world's third largest group in any nation after Indonesia and Pakistan. Extremist groups like the Islamic State, Al Qaeda, the Taliban and the Haqqani network increasingly view India as a target. Several trends explain the rise: Terrorism threats in South Asia are linked and mobile - if one source is batted down, jihadists relocate to find another Islamic cause. As NATO withdraws from Afghanistan, some jihadists will eye India. Pakistan regards India as a top enemy and some officials even encourage terrorists to target areas like Kashmir or Mumbai. Meanwhile, a stream of Wahhabi preachers have visited India, offering hard-line messages; extremist groups like Al Qaeda and the Islamic State compete for influence, and militants even pay jihadists. Muslims as a minority population in India could offer fertile ground for the extremist recruiters. This paper argues that there is an urgent need for the Indian government to profile militants and examine social media sites to attack Wahhabi indoctrination while supporting education and entrepreneurship for all of India's citizens.

Keywords : Al Qaeda, terrorism, Islamic state, India, haqqani network, Pakistan, Taliban

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