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## Ten Years After 9/11: Beginning of the End?

Dr. Arabinda Acharya

*A decade after the 9/11 attacks the terrorist threat has evolved and the jihadist movement has undergone some significant changes. There is reason to believe that these changes could spell the beginning of the end of the jihadist movement.*



The "Tribute in Light" was a memorial built in New York City to commemorate the 9/11 attacks. Photo Credit: [Kim Carpenter, Flickr](#)

Days before he was killed, Yahya Ibrahim, the Editor-in Chief of *Inspire*, the online English language magazine published by Al Qaeda in Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), wrote:

*We dedicate this special supplement to the great events of the Expeditions of Washington DC and New York, as Shaykh Usama would call it, or simply 9/11. As America mourns and we celebrate this glorious event, we look into what 9/11 means ten years on. We have all been touched one way or another by the*

*attacks. They are a marking point in history. There was a world before 9/11 and another one, drastically different, post 9/11. ... Shaykh Usama might be dead but his deeds are not. 9/11 has left a permanent scar on the American psyche and will live long after in the hearts of every American. (INSPIRE, Fall 1432, Issue – 7)*

The events unfolding since last year however would project a different story. It is true that the world has changed drastically post 9/11. The terrorism perpetrated by the jihadist movement has often been seen as an existential threat. The jihadists have also succeeded in changing not only our way of life, but also the way we perceive security and our relations with others. They continue to cause fear and anxiety which often clouds rational judgment in articulating our response to the threat.

But it is not a change that Osama Bin Laden conceived or the jihadist movement has been fighting for. There is no reason to believe that the jihadist movement would be a long or generational conflict or that the jihadists would be able to overturn the Westphalian state system. On the other hand, there is ample reason to argue that what we are witnessing today could be the beginning of the end of the jihadist movement.

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### Ten years after: gains and losses

Arguably, it is difficult to assess if the killing of Bin Laden, Anwar Al-Awlaki and other senior figures of the movement, the end of military engagement in Iraq, and the pullout of troops from Afghanistan could be considered as significant milestones towards victory in the fight against terrorism. This becomes more complicated when we assess if the world has become a safer place than what it was before 9/11. A May 2011 report of the American Security Project found that the *number of terrorist attacks by radical Islamist groups remain at an all-time high, and the level of violence outside of Iraq and Afghanistan continues to surge*. Terrorist attacks, especially those grouped under perpetrator characteristic – *Islamic Extremist* - by the Worldwide Incidents Tracking System (WITS) of the US National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), have increased exponentially from 498 in 2004 to 6547 in 2010. Considering the number, the spread and the lethality of the attacks and the metamorphosis of the adversaries (from centralized entities to homegrown or leaderless jihadists or both) after 9/11, it is quite difficult to say outright if we are succeeding in the fight against terrorism.

Additionally, even with the tactical successes and plans to disengage from conflicts that galvanized the anger against Washington's policies in the past, the perception of the US in the Muslim world especially in key Arab nations has not changed for the better. Despite the "Obama effect," Muslim attitudes about the US are as poor or as negative as ever. Even the pro-democracy movements spreading throughout the Middle East have not contributed to an improvement in America's image in the region. On the contrary, there is a perception that Washington played a largely passive and reactive role.

### How and when will it end?

There is no sure way to describe how this conflict would end or to be more specific, when and under what conditions it would be possible to declare that the war on terror has ended. The overwhelming view supports the argument that an asymmetric warfare is largely undeterministic and that there could neither be clear winners or losers nor a fixed timeline to mark the conclusion of the warfare.

From the perspective of the jihadists, the war would end with the defeat of the US in Iraq and Afghanistan characterized by its military disengagement from both countries, the same way the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989. By that time also, the US would be exhausted, both militarily and economically, to support or prop up friendly regimes in the Middle East and elsewhere. This theme has been consistently peddled by the groups and senior leaders of the movement. For the jihadists, declaring small tactical successes as victories are important as it catalyzes recruitment; demoralizes the adversary and sustains the momentum of the fight.

On the other hand, it is being asserted that we are succeeding and the time has come to declare that the war on terror is over. This, as many scholars and analysts note, could be done by changing the narrative and making sure what are the end goals of the engagement. It is often argued that the use of the word "war" against terrorism was faulty from the beginning as it automatically implies some definitive goals to be achieved. It also predisposed us to respond in a strictly warlike way.

Authors like Philip Gordon believe that the war on terror will end with the collapse of the violent ideology that caused it – when – like communism, the jihadists ideology comes to be seen by its potential adherents as a failure, when they turn against it and adopt other goals and other means. It will end when the jihadists find that their tactics have failed. Arguably, this would not mean that terrorism has completely been eradicated but the risk of terrorism is reduced to such an extent that it does not create existential anxiety anymore and terrorist attacks do not provoke overreaction.

Others like Marc Sageman and Peter Bergen believe that Islamist radicalism contains the seeds of its own destruction. This is evident from the scale of backlash from Muslims themselves against the cult of jihadists' violence. The escalating degree of violence and insufficiently discriminating attacks including attacks against fellow Muslims have led to rising alienation of the jihadists within the Muslim world itself and would prove be their *Achilles' heel*. There has also been a significant increase in opposition against suicide attacks

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across the Muslim world - from 43 percent in 2002 to 90 percent in 2009. Ultimately, Muslims themselves will turn against the extremists in their midst.

### Impact of the Arab Spring

Ever since Bin Laden declared jihad, the jihadist movement have employed violent means including suicide bombings to get what they call the apostate Muslim regimes replaced, and for that to happen they need to get the US out of the Middle East. But as the Middle East uprisings demonstrate, such objectives could be achieved without bombings or killings. The emerging consensus is that the Arab Spring could be a severe setback for the jihadist movement as it makes both their ideology and the tactics irrelevant. It would also affect new recruitment to the jihadist movement by removing a key grievance and undermining the message that only violence can bring change. Peaceful protests producing political change suggests an alternative model for the vast majority of the Muslims who do not approve of the violence and are not taken in by the empty promises of utopia.

This of course should not lead the West, especially the US that the Arab Spring is the outcome of the policy of democratization that the Bush administration championed. There is as yet no indication that countries in the Middle East are going to get democracy the way it is commonly understood. There is also a concern about the danger of Islamists taking over, a situation reminiscent of Hamas coming to power in the Gaza.

However, fundamentalist Islam has failed wherever it has been tried, for example, Afghanistan under the Taliban rule before 9/11 and Sudan under the National Islamic Front. In fact, radical Islam as a framework and political ideology has produced economic failure, human rights violence, gender dissonance and public discontent. The vast majority of the Muslims also believe that jihadist actions do more harm than good, creating public disorder and provoking government crackdown on innocents. A May 2011 Pew Global Attitudes Survey highlighted the extent to which extremism is rejected in Muslim nations, and how Al Qaeda is rated negatively by the majority in those countries.

No doubt there is a tremendous enthusiasm for democracy among the protestors in the Middle East.

The May 2011 Pew survey found that people clearly value specific features of a democratic system such as freedom of speech, open and competitive election and freedom of religion. At the same time, there is also a strong desire for economic growth and political stability, with many prioritizing a strong economy over a good democracy.

### Beginning of the end?

Ultimately, the jihadist enterprise would fall flat on its own face due to contradictions in its ideology, lack of a coherent strategy and severe tactical errors that have resulted in the killing of innocents irrespective of religious affiliation. From the perspective of the international community, it is not about winning, but to ensure that we prevail over the adversary. Our initial overreaction, a wrong characterization of the adversary and the obsession to demonstrate rapid-fire successes produced many undesirable and unwelcome consequences.

The conflict that we face today, especially in which a virulent ideology is implicated, would necessarily be long, though not indefinite. To produce an acceptable outcome, we need to put in place not only a robust military and intelligence apparatus, but also adroit leadership backed by the resolve and resilience of the society.

This is how our fight against the jihadist threat is being conducted, albeit with a few deviations and even though its military aspects were more visible at the outset. A number of governments have begun to appreciate and implement non-kinetic strategies, including counter-ideology, counter-radicalization and community engagement to deal with the threat in a more comprehensive manner. (Please lookout for CTTA Special Issue on Community Engagement). The impact of such efforts however was incremental and likely so. But, it would be reasonable to say that such efforts have clearly begun to yield results and we are increasingly getting back in control. Our values, such as universal respect for life and liberty, which set the jihadist movement apart from the rest of the international community, would be hard targets to destroy.



*Miss Maria Ressa, Author-in-Residence at the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, gives her insights on the terrorist threat ten years after 9/11. Miss Ressa is a renowned journalist and author of *Seeds of Terror: An Eyewitness Account of Al Qaeda's Newest Center of Operations in Southeast Asia*.*

**Question 1 (Q1): How has the terrorist threat evolved 10 years after the 9/11 attacks?**

**MR:** After 9/11 triggered a fierce reaction from governments and law enforcement agencies around the world, both Al Qaeda (AQ) and the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) were affected the same way: their centralized command structures collapsed and their operational capabilities were degraded. Still, individuals and cells from the old networks remain and continue to spread the ideology, growing the network in a more haphazard pattern. Smaller, more ad-hoc and less professional cells carry out attacks without central coordination. While the network is weaker, it is harder for law enforcement to predict when and where the next attacks will occur. Often, the smaller, disparate attacks happen more frequently. There is a constant danger that these isolated cells may spontaneously regenerate some form of a network to carry out operations—much like what happened with the JI in Indonesia.

**Q2: Are we safer now than we were 10 years ago?**

**MR:** Ten years ago, the 9/11 attacks marked Al Qaeda's peak organizationally. It exposed what was going on beneath the surface and forced governments around the world to change their outdated Cold War paradigms. Today, the threat has evolved, but I wouldn't say we are safer now. There are other factors to consider. The world has become more fractured and disjointed. The Internet and new media has broken a common narrative. Along with the long-running unaddressed grievances and open conflicts, feelings of injustice remain vulnerabilities.

**Q3: Do we still have the grounds to be concerned about large-scale acts of terrorism?**

**MR:** I compare this time period to 1995—after US and Philippine authorities broke up the Bojinka plot. If successful, more people would have died than in 9/11 in eleven mid-air explosions of airplanes headed for the United States. It was hailed as the largest counterterrorism success during that time period. However, two men escaped the dragnet at that time: Hambali, who went on to build Jemaah Islamiyah's network and mastermind its deadliest attacks; and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the architect of 9/11 and Al Qaeda's most imaginative and destructive attacks. We cannot be complacent.

**Q4: What is the threat landscape in Southeast Asia 10 years after the 9/11 attacks?**

**MR:** The social network hijacked by Al Qaeda has had three evolutions and regenerations: (1) Darul Islam (DI) movement from 1948-1993 (2) Global Jihad: Jemaah Islamiyah and Al Qaeda from 1993 to 2005 (3) Jemaah Islamiyah social movement from 2005 to present. The Darul Islam has nurtured two generations of jihadists. As long as the network remains, so does the vulnerability. Another problem now is that the bomb-making technology and techniques have been introduced into Southeast Asia. Now, homegrown groups use these for their own purposes, burrowing deeper into local contexts and conflicts. In the Philippines for example, we saw a decrease in terrorist acts in 2010 according to the US State Department. What it neglected to point out is that in 2011, the incidents of kidnappings increased by 22% according to data from the Philippine National Police. We're seeing a nexus between terrorism, crime, and politics.

**Q5: What is the impact of the Arab Spring?**

**MR:** Some analysts say the overthrow of three governments this year show an end to Al Qaeda. I posit that these are different strands of development and if we look at the way Al Qaeda and its associate groups dealt with new democracies in the past, an alternative interpretation presents itself. The times of greatest traction—when operatives made most inroads and operated efficiently below the radar—are at the outset of new democracies. Al Qaeda entered the Philippines soon after the overthrow of dictator Ferdinand Marcos in 1986 while Jemaah Islamiyah returned to Indonesia after the end of 32 years of Suharto.

**Q6: What are the key lessons authorities have learnt from 9/11?**

**MR:** This is a battle for the soul of Islam and a war being fought inside the Muslim world. Al Qaeda and its associate groups have used the US' own mistakes against it to win more recruits. For example, the invasion of Iraq and Abu Ghraib.

**Q7: How will this conflict end and what would the victory be like?**

**MR:** This is a long-term protracted conflict and there may not be an event that signals victory.

**Q8: Where is the next source of threat coming from?**

**MR:** Complacency and the inability to deal with the ideological lure of Al Qaeda's message in marginalized Muslim communities.

## The Promise of Sri Lanka: Tourism After the Defeat of Terrorism

**Chanaka Jun Takazawa**

*There is a need in post-conflict Sri Lanka for the government and the public and private sectors to come together and spread awareness of peace dividends and communal harmony. Sustainable tourism and community-based tourism projects could be an important crux for Sri Lanka's post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation process.*

More than two years have passed since the defeat of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka. No terrorist attacks have taken place in the country since 2009, and with the rise in international and local investments, Sri Lanka is well on its way towards reconstruction and reconciliation. Sri Lanka's tourism industry was significantly affected during the conflict, but after the defeat of the LTTE in May 2009, records show that tourism has grown over 39 percent. The calmer and safer environment in post-conflict Sri Lanka resulted in an influx of tourists into the island. Sri Lanka's rich natural resources, cultural heritage, wild reserves, and diverse landscapes make it an ideal place for sustainable tourism and community-based tourism initiatives

### **Significance of Sustainable Tourism and Community-Based Tourism in Post-Conflict Sri Lanka**

The bloody conflict between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) led the country into a state of militarism. Because of the war, the Sri Lankan government was forced to invest a large percentage of its GDP (Gross Domestic Product) on military expenditures. This led to the decrease in funding for other essential sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, education, health care, and tourism.

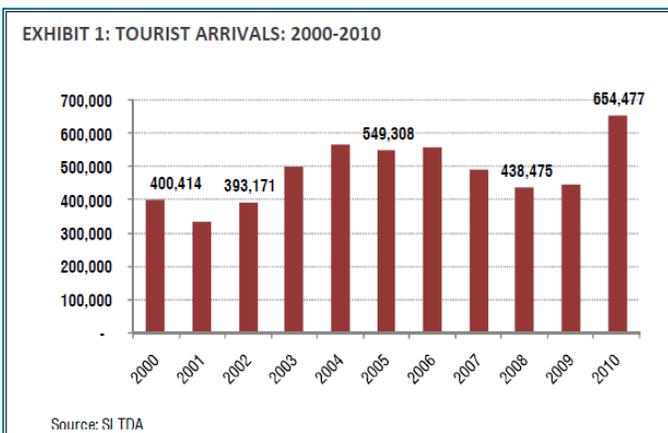
In retrospect, countries that have invested more on military budgets are more likely to detract from the na-

tion's long-term economic growth performance. First, *high military spending may reduce total stocks of resources that are available for alternative domestic uses such as investment in productive capital, education, and market-oriented technological innovation.* Second, high military spending reduces the efficiency of resource allocations, thus lowering total factor productivity that reduces human resource development, poor infrastructure development, and the unfortunate intellectual brain-drain from these countries. A nation that is in a constant state of conflict loses its local and international investments and translates to a loss of income for the economy. The nation also has to endure the loss of human capital development due to deaths, injuries, and displaced people due to the conflicts. In addition, the negative costs of the conflict, in terms of the mental agony suffered by the people are impossible to quantify. Hence, it is essential for government leaders, elites, industry bureaucrats, and common individuals to understand the importance of peace dividends in post-conflict circumstances, and that peace is pivotal for a nation's economic growth, survival, and well-being, particularly in Sri Lanka.

The Sri Lankan government must ensure that the peace dividends are distributed fairly among the population, rather than to a few elites and monopolistic companies. Unless the poverty of opportunities are not reduced or eradicated, tensions could arise from marginalized groups. The government should

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Data from the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) showing the increase in the number of tourist arrivals. The number is expected to go higher in 2011. Source: [HVS](#)

also utilize what is currently at hand, preferably an independent, natural resource. Thus, the prominent independent peace dividend attribute for Sri Lanka is its tourism industry. The country has rich natural resources suitable for tourism and if these resources are managed efficiently and virtuously, the outputs could be distributed fairly among the masses. It is important to note that if these resources are not properly utilized in a sustainable and ethical manner, it could produce negative effects on the local communities and the country altogether. Therefore, sustainable tourism and community-based tourism could be an important crux for Sri Lanka's post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation process.

Sustainable tourism focuses on the main tourist industry at a macro-level. It strives to minimize environmental impact and protect key areas, respect the local people and their cultures, and share the economic benefits with local businesses and communities. Community-based tourism, on the other hand, focuses more on micro-level tourism. It provides travellers with opportunities to experience and learn the local/rural community way of life and their culture. Community-based tourism programs could create cross-cultural experiences, locally and internationally, that could assist in the reconciliation and healing process of post-conflict Sri Lanka. In addition such initiatives would also bring financial benefits to poverty stricken rural communities. Both sustainable

tourism and community-based tourism projects are important. Community-based tourism is concentrated on development strategies that would improve livelihood and bring ethnic communities together. Sustainable tourism is about development strategies at the national level that would sustain the industry as a whole. These could form part of a peace dividends advocacy which is important as it provides more accommodative conditions to resolve potential conflicts. It is in the best interest of the Sri Lankan government and the people to promote the tourism industry as part of peace dividends.

### The Case of Negombo

The city of Negombo in Sri Lanka is one of the potential places where sustainable tourism and community-based tourism programs could be implemented. Negombo is located along a lagoon in the west coast of Sri Lanka and it is renowned for its natural resources, wetlands, history and multi-cultural communities. The city has great potential to become a symbol for the promotion of peaceful reconciliation and multi-ethnic communal harmony in post-conflict Sri Lanka.

The word Negombo was coined by the Portuguese and derived from the original Sinhalese word, "Migamuva" which translates to "the city of honey." Since the arrival of the Portuguese, Dutch, and the British, Negombo has been a gateway for trade and multiculturalism in Sri Lanka. Negombo is only seven kilometres away from the Bandaranaike International Airport and it could be utilized as hub for both incoming and outgoing tourists, whether local or foreign. It would be a great opportunity for Negombo to be the site of a community-based tourism project. The city could become the first bridge between the international community and the locals in the recovery and reconciliation process of post-conflict Sri Lanka.

There are several industries and attractions that could be used to promote Negombo as a tourism destination but some of these could also be available elsewhere in the country. The key point is to assess the city's assets and find out what's unique that would differentiate it from the rest of the country. Negombo's main

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tourist attractions are its clean beaches along the West Coast, the mangroves, fisheries, cinnamon gardens, coconuts estates, brass craftsmen, and its colonial multicultural heritage. Since majority of the population are mostly conventional fishermen, it would be the fresh fish experience and the multicultural seafood preparations that could be the core of a community-based tourism program. This unique seafood experience could be used to attract local and international tourists to the Negombo lagoon. Rick Stein, a famous travelling chef, once said that food has a firm affirmation in bringing people together and having a good time with different people, even amidst harsh times of conflict. Except for the occasional vegans and strict vegetarians, seafood has no ethnic or religious boundaries and it can encourage people from different backgrounds to come to Negombo.

A monthly or biweekly seafood bazaar could be a suitable vehicle to bring local and foreign tourists to Negombo. This seafood bazaar would bear certain similarities with the Japanese Tsukiji fish market, where people could choose from a variety of seafood and have it cooked there as well. But the main intention of this seafood bazaar is to invite tourists to Negombo's fishing community where they can interact with the fishermen and their families who are from different cultures, purchase their catch and experience authentic homemade seafood meals.

A seafood bazaar like this would require the commitment of the Negombo community for it to be successful. The Provincial Councils (PCs), religious leaders, fisheries unions, tourist industries, and the local community should work together to promote this event. If the whole community would work together to organize the seafood bazaar event, the local fishermen would have the opportunity to sell their catch and locals could prepare seafood meals on the spot. The PCs are required to create permits and regulations, maintain security and infrastructures such as roads, transportation, sanitation, and other ways to ensure the efficient management of the city. The religious sector could be involved in two ways. First, religious leaders could be the conduit between the local community and the PCs, the unions, and the tourist industry representatives to en-

sure that neither side is unfairly exploited. Second, the religious groups could host the seafood bazaar in their open grounds, either on a weekly or monthly basis. Having this event hosted by locals would create a community ambiance. The fisheries unions could provide the necessary boats for catching the fish, deep sea fishing and tours. They could also take charge of organizing leisure boat rides and boat ride spas along the Hamilton Canal and Maha Oya. The tourist industry sector could provide the necessary marketing promotions, accommodations, and additional facilities for the incoming tourists visiting the Negombo seafood bazaar.

The proposed seafood bazaar, as a community-based tourism initiative, encourages the direct interaction of tourists with the locals and could serve as a model that could create similar networks in other potential community-based tourism sites in Sri Lanka. The seafood bazaar is a way to allow local and international tourists to understand and appreciate the unique multicultural heritage of Negombo. Tourism initiatives such as this, which offers cross-cultural encounters, would eventually help in healing wounds and assist in the reconciliation process in post-conflict Sri Lanka.

### Conclusion

Unless poverty and other social issues are not addressed and handled diligently in Sri Lanka, it would be difficult to sustain a socially just system, and conflicts may arise again. A new conflict would only mean more money spent on military and less funds for civilian benefits. A return to conflict would mean increased levels of budgetary deficits and higher interest rates, which in turn would result in reduced business investments. That is why promoting peace dividend in post-conflict Sri Lanka is imperative because the country cannot afford another minority group insurgency. Maintaining peace would encourage foreign and local investment of capital into the country that would promote economic growth. Yet this trade-off would not immediately rectify Sri Lanka's damaged post-conflict economy as it may take about five years for a nation's economy to start its recovery from a conflict.

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Accordingly, what is needed in post-conflict Sri Lanka is for the government and the public and private sectors to come together and spread awareness of peace dividends and communal harmony instead of communal ethnic tensions. When there is peace, there is stability and it is followed by economic stability and local and foreign investments that will be pumped into the community that would provide more opportunities for the people.

Peace dividends through sustainable tourism and community-based tourism initiatives could help reduce poverty and create opportunities in post-conflict Sri Lanka. The benefits for peace are far greater than the misfortunes of conflict.

The post-conflict situation has provided a rare opportunity for Sri Lanka to change and improve its conventional approach to tourism. The Sri Lankan government should implement stricter ethical policies that would ensure that new methods of tourism would become pillars of peace dividends that would sustain peace and order. It is vital that Sri Lanka maintain its tourism resources for its economic growth and the well-being of its people. It is also necessary to have a new image for the country to go along with the new tourism concepts. The country's new image should show Sri Lanka as safer, affordable, eco-friendly and an advocate for peace.

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### GLOBAL PATHFINDER II

The ICPVTR Terrorism Database – Global Pathfinder - is a one-stop repository for information on the current and emerging terrorist threat. The database focuses on terrorism and political violence in the Asia-Pacific region – comprising of Southeast Asia, North Asia, South Asia, Central Asia and Oceania.

Global Pathfinder is an integrated database containing comprehensive profiles of terrorist groups, key terrorist personalities, terrorist and counter-terrorist incidents as well as terrorist training camps. It also contains specific details and analyses of significant terrorist attacks in the form of terrorist attack profiles.

In addition to providing the latest information on terrorist attacks and pronouncements, Global Pathfinder also includes over a hundred terrorist training manuals, counter terrorism legislations and conventions, analytical papers on terrorist ideologies, commentaries on terrorist trends and patterns, transcripts of landmark cases, interviews with terrorists as well as photographs from different conflict zones across the world. Further, Global Pathfinder also has a huge collection of jihadi websites, the contents of which are routinely translated and analyzed by our analysts. This analysis helps develop an understanding of the developments in the ideological spectrum and trajectory of the terrorist threat, in both in tactical as well as strategic space.

For further inquiries please email Ms. Elena Ho Wei Ling at [iselwho@ntu.edu.sg](mailto:iselwho@ntu.edu.sg)

## Counterterrorism in India: The Need for Substantive Reforms

**Akanksha Mehta**

*The 26/11 Mumbai attacks identified glaring gaps in India's counter-terrorism apparatus. Modifications and improvements were proposed and plans to implement them were drafted and executed. However, recent attacks have highlighted several deficiencies that continue to plague India's security setup, calling for more substantive reforms.*

On 26 November 2008, ten militants from the organization Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) attacked ten targets in the city of Mumbai, the financial hub of India. In the nearly 60-hour siege, 186 people, including 22 foreigners were killed and 400 others were wounded. During and in the aftermath of the attacks, lapses in intelligence, security, and response to the attacks and glaring inadequacies in India's approach to countering terrorism were highlighted.

Addressing the Parliament in December 2008, the Indian Home Minister said; "We cannot go back to business as usual. We have to take hard decisions and prepare the country and people to face the challenge of terrorism." He announced the setting up of a federal investigation agency and stated that potential targets would be hardened, and security forces provided with advanced equipment, including bulletproof vests and arms and ammunition of better quality. He also emphasized that India's coastal surveillance would be strengthened and counter-insurgency and anti-terrorism research centers would be set up across the country. The National Security Guard (NSG), which took several hours to arrive in Mumbai during the November 2008 attacks due to logistical difficulties, was asked to have units in all major cities of India. Furthermore, the Minister assured that counter-terrorism and anti-money laundering laws would be strengthened and the media would be

provided with guidelines on how to report terrorist attacks without oversensationalization.

Several of these measures were indeed implemented and a number of terror plots have been foiled since. In a recent statement, the Home Minister revealed that 50 terror modules (cells) and plans for attacks have been neutralized since November 2008. Despite this however, there were four major terrorist attacks in cities across the country since 26/11. In February 2010, a bomb blast at a popular café known as German Bakery in Pune, an educational and business hub where foreigners congregate in large numbers, killed 16 people and injured 70 others. Later in the year, on December 6, 2010, a blast in the Hindu holy city of Varanasi claimed one life and wounded 20 others. In July 2011, Mumbai was attacked again when serial bombings rocked three crowded areas, 26 people were killed and 30 others were injured in the attacks. Most recently, on 7 September 2011, a powerful bomb outside Gate Number 5 of the Delhi High Court claimed 12 lives and injured 76 people. These attacks sparked outrage and severe criticism from the public and the political opposition. The fact that perpetrators of these attacks have yet to be apprehended, even after months of investigation, has further compounded the government's ability to counter the terrorist threat.

## Counterterrorism in India: The Need for Substantive Reforms

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September 2011 photos taken of the crater caused by the bomb planted in front of the Delhi High Court reception area. Photo Credit: Arabinda Acharya

### Counterterrorism Efforts

Currently, a number of agencies in India are devoted to counterterrorism. At the central level, the Intelligence Bureau (IB), National Technical Research Organization (NTRO), and the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) gather intelligence. The National Investigation Agency (NIA- formed in January 2009) and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) conduct investigation of terrorist attacks and the National Security Guard (NSG) carry out counterterrorist operations. Despite

commonality of interests, coordination, cooperation and information sharing among the agencies remain a problem.

Additionally, as India has a federal polity, law and order issues fall under the control of the respective state/provincial governments. Each state has its own police and security force, which in turn has its own intelligence apparatus. The central intelligence agencies are required to work with state departments and vice versa. Similarly, while the NIA is empowered to investigate any or all terrorism related cases; during investigations it is often required to liaise with the police or anti-terrorism units of the respective state governments. The lack of information sharing framework, ineffective coordination and political discordance, continue to hamper all levels of counterterrorism efforts - intelligence, investigation, and operations.

Shortly after the bombing outside Delhi High Court (September 2011), the Indian Home Minister stated that one agency could not handle intelligence, policing, and counterterrorism. For this, multiple agencies were needed and the art of leadership was to bring all organizations together. While this is easy to advocate as a policy, it remains harder to implement on the ground. In 2009, the Home Minister announced the formation of a National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC) *to prevent, contain, and respond to terrorist attacks and insurgencies by inflicting pain upon the perpetrators*. The NCTC is projected to coordinate and synergize the activities of the aforementioned agencies, bringing a unified structure and cohesion in operations. The agency was scheduled to be set up in 2010 but it was pushed to mid-2011, and it is yet to be established.

Moreover, in June 2010, the National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID), a project aimed at facilitating information-sharing among law enforcement agencies, was approved by the Union Cabinet. NATGRID is to streamline intelligence and resource gathering, making counter-terror structures more effective. However, despite several deadlines, the project has yet to commence. While NCTC and NATGRID are in the works,

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the delay has put a question mark on the effectiveness of counterterrorism efforts in the country.

The individual agencies are also plagued by a number of shortcomings. For example, the IB lacks adequate manpower and equipment for electronic, signal, and communication research. NTRO also has scant resources. State intelligence departments are understaffed and resource-starved. Police and security forces also suffer from a lack of manpower and lack high quality arms, ammunition, and essentials such as bullet proof vests. There is an estimated 500,000 vacancies in state police forces and the public has few incentives to join the force. Additionally, the police are preoccupied with issues of law and order, crime, and VIP protection, and are not in a position to devote required resources and manpower to anti-terror activities. There is also a deficiency in the training of security forces for counter-terrorist operations especially in the context of urban terrorism.

Securing potential high-value targets with appropriate systems (such as CCTVs at the least) is also lacking. For example, in May 2011, there was a bomb blast at the Delhi High Court. While the blast was minor and did not claim lives, it exposed the chinks in security, one of which was the lack of CCTVs at the site. This particular deficiency was highlighted again a few months later, when a bombing took place at the same complex in September 2011 and claimed several lives.

### Assessment

For terrorism to be countered effectively, it is also necessary to have an appropriate legal regime. In the past, the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act or TADA (1985-1995) and the Prevention of Terrorist Activities Act or POTA (2002-2004) were the cornerstones of India's anti-terrorism legal regime. These acts provided a legal framework to strengthen administrative, operational and judicial means to fight terrorism. However, due to allegations of human rights abuses and misuse of the laws, TADA and POTA were repealed in 1995 and 2004 respectively. While some anti-terrorism provisions of the previous legislations are

now part of the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (1967), the overall legal regime lacks teeth and is repeatedly found to be inadequate in bringing perpetrators to justice. India requires strict anti-terror laws (such as those in the United States, United Kingdom, and other nations) and for these to be implemented and not abused, political consensus is necessary. Additionally, the country also needs to streamline its judicial and prosecution process in order to speed up the trials of the perpetrators and ensure the swift execution of sentences awarded.

India also needs to invest significantly in research on terrorism, insurgency, and countermeasures. For the success of intelligence gathering and kinetic operations, it is vital that the government invests in developing a comprehensive understanding of groups and their operations, logistical and financial routes, as well as the evolution (or lack thereof) of their tactics, targets, and procedures. This could help detect the macro and micro changes in the groups' ideology, leaderships, operational strategies and capabilities and enable concerned agencies to respond to the same with appropriate strategies.

It is unreasonable to expect that there would never be an attack especially in a country like India that has multiple issues and underlying grievances leading to extremism, political violence, and terrorism. India also has the burden of dealing with an unstable and volatile neighborhood. However, the government must do all it can to prevent attacks and restore the faith and confidence of the public in the event of an attack takes place. For this to happen, it must demonstrate significant political will, workout a concrete roadmap for response strategies and invest in human resources, technology, and institutions with high standards of efficiency and professionalism.

## INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND TERRORISM RESEARCH



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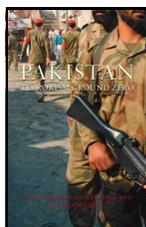
The International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR) is a specialist centre within the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.

ICPVTR conducts research, training, and outreach programs aimed at reducing the threat of politically motivated violence and at mitigating its effects on the international system. The Centre seeks to integrate academic theory with practical knowledge, which is essential for a complete and comprehensive understanding of threats from politically-motivated groups.

The Centre is staffed by academic specialists, religious scholars, as well as personnel from the law enforcement, military and intelligence agencies, among others. The Centre is culturally and linguistically diverse, comprising of functional and regional analysts as well as Muslim religious scholars from Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe and North America.

## Events and Publications

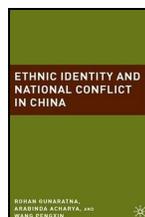
Watch this space for upcoming events at ICPVTR



- **Pakistan: Terrorism Ground Zero** (Reaktion Books, 2011) by Dr. Rohan Gunaratna and Mr. Khuram Iqbal



- **International Aviation and Terrorism: Evolving Threats, Evolving Security** (Routledge 2009) by Dr. John Harrison



- **Ethnic Identity and National Conflict in China** (Palgrave Macmillan 22 June 2010) by Dr. Rohan Gunaratna, Dr. Arabinda Acharya and Mr. Wang Pengxin



- **Targeting Terrorist Financing: International Cooperation and New Regimes** (Routledge 2009) by Dr. Arabinda Acharya