TERRORISM HAS CLAIMED MORE lives in India than anywhere else in the world. More than one hundred thousand persons have fallen victim to terrorism in various parts of the country. It continues to cause large-scale death and destruction in states like Jammu and Kashmir, Tripura, Manipur, Nagaland, and Assam. Terrorism in its contemporary phase claimed its first victim in Punjab in 1978, although communal and ethnic violence has been a part of the Indian scene since independence in 1947. One of the notable features of terrorism in India is that the country’s neighbor, Pakistan, has been assisting every terrorist group in India.

In a large pluralist country like India, the problems of internal security management are enormous. Relatively minor incidents can snowball into major conflagrations. India is a multireligious, multiethnic, and multicultural society with a history of communal and ethnic violence among various groups. It is not difficult to stir up trouble by pitting one group against the other. The rise of contentious politics between different groups based on confessional,
ethnic, racial, linguistic, and other divisive criteria is the root cause of many secessionist movements now flourishing in India.

Heterogeneous assemblages of contending ethno-political groups are, no doubt, at the base of the ethnic conflict problem, but the uneven process of development and the pace of change in India have also contributed to these conflicts. Intergroup shifts in relative power and prosperity have often provoked violent reactions by groups who see themselves as losing out to the others or by groups who see an opportunity to improve their lot at the expense of their rivals. But many of these conflicts have been sustained by logistical assistance and sanctuaries provided by India’s neighbors, particularly Pakistan. Once an open conflict begins between a minority group and the state, foreign assistance that enhances the group’s fighting capacity becomes a crucial element. Logistics assistance includes military training, transport, supply of arms and explosives, advisers, and on the ground support of combat units and cross-border raids. Availability of sanctuaries in the neighboring areas provides an important strategic advantage for the armed rebels. The dispersion of people across international boundaries has also profoundly influenced the shape of political conflict in the border states.

Pakistan’s involvement in sponsoring and supporting terrorism in India is both overt and covert. Pakistan has become the biggest center for spreading international terrorism. The most notorious terrorist organizations, such as the Harakat ul-Mujahideen, Al Badr, and Lashkar-e-Toiba, are openly operating from Pakistan with direct support from the Pakistani government. Harakat ul-Mujahideen is an Islamic fundamentalist organization, a duplicate of the notorious Harakat ul-Ansar. It is affiliated with Pakistan’s Jamaat-i-Islami and is tightly controlled by Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). It has been very active in Kashmir. Al Badr is an ISI-sponsored Kashmiri terrorist group based in Muzaffarabad in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. Lashkar-e-Toiba is another “well-armed militia and a large ISI-sponsored force actively fighting in Indian Kashmir.” Sponsoring terrorism in India has become an essential component of Pakistan’s internal and external policies.

The diffusion of small arms in this region, following the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan in the 1980s in response to the Soviet occupation of that country, ensured a regular supply of arms to the ter-
rorist groups. As the Washington-based Human Rights Watch said in its report of September 1994, *India: Arms and Abuses in Indian Punjab and Kashmir*, the massive proliferation of small arms and light weapons in South Asia is directly linked to the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan. The United States pumped in a huge supply of small arms to the Afghan mujahedeens (those who wage jihad—Islam’s holy warriors) through Pakistan’s ISI agency. Since then, these arms have found their way into the hands of the many terrorist groups operating in the region. The smuggling of arms into India has been facilitated by the thriving arms bazaars at Dara Adamkhel, Landikotal, and Miran Shah on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

First treating terrorism as a minor law and order problem, and then reacting in panic when the situation showed signs of deterioration, both the central and state governments in India have responded to terrorism in an inconsistent manner. At times, their inconsistent response, driven more by the compulsions of electoral politics, has been counterproductive. Terrorist movements actually gained public support whenever government overreacted or underreacted. It was a mistake to treat terrorism in the initial stages as a mere law and order problem and leave it to the law enforcement agencies to handle it on their own. This mistake was committed in Punjab and then repeated in Jammu and Kashmir. If terrorism had been tackled more comprehensively before it took root, maybe the situation in both Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir would not have taken such an ugly turn. Both the central and the state governments underestimated the problem far too long and then overreacted, which was also a mistake.

Under the Indian Constitution, powers are divided between the central and state governments. India has a federal system of government. Law and order is a state subject. Therefore, law enforcement agencies are under the control of the state governments. While the responsibility for controlling terrorism primarily rests with state governments, the central government also provides assistance to the states in tackling terrorism. The armed forces are under the control of the central government. The central government has constituted a number of paramilitary forces, like the Border Security Force (BSF), the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF). The paramilitary forces were constituted with a specific aim to discourage, as far as possible, the deployment
of the army for dealing with internal and border security. Their training and equipment are on the military pattern, but not entirely. In spite of their military training, they are more like the armed police, but better trained and equipped. They are under the control of the Ministry of Home Affairs and not the Ministry of Defense as in the case of the army. The BSF, ITBP, and CRPF are officered by police officers and not army officers. The central government has also under its control central intelligence agencies, internal and external. The central government has, therefore, a crucial role to play in tackling terrorism. It has also a vital role in dealing with political, economic, and social causes that are at the root of the terrorist problem.

Different factors are responsible for the rise of terrorism in different states. It is a mix of economic, political, ideological, religious, and ethnic factors. The many terrorist movements operating in the country have not followed a uniform pattern. Therefore, statewise analysis of the movements will be helpful in understanding the growth of this menace and the death and destruction it has caused. But other factors, such as left-wing extremism and drugs, need to be considered, too. For a more focused analysis, events that transpired before India’s independence in 1947 have been excluded from this study.

PUNJAB

Terrorism in Punjab has its roots in state politics. The Akali Dal, one of the main political parties in the state, has been fighting for political power by espousing the cause of the Sikh religion. According to the Akali Dal, there is no separation between the Sikh religion and Sikh politics. The Sikhs have carried a sense of grievance ever since the partition of British India into two countries—India and Pakistan—in 1947. India’s partition was based primarily on the number of Hindus and Muslims living in different parts of the country. Other religious groups, like the Sikhs, whose numbers were much smaller, did not figure in the scheme of the partition. The consequences of the partition have been unfair to the Sikhs. Approximately 2.5 million Sikhs were forced to migrate from West Punjab in Pakistan to East Punjab, Delhi, and Uttar Pradesh in India. Sikhs lost their fer-
tile land, the privileges they had enjoyed under British rule, and political clout. Despite making some noise about a separate Sikh state at the time of independence, the Sikhs never seriously made the demand until much later.

Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, a Sikh religious leader, humiliated when his followers were killed in a clash with the Nirankaris, a deviant sect, in 1978, joined hands with the Akali Dal leadership, itself humiliated by its defeat in the 1980 parliamentary elections, to launch a terrorist movement in the state. Having lost power in what they considered an arbitrary dismissal of the state government because they still commanded a majority in the legislature, the Akali Dal leaders lost hope of regaining power by democratic means. Reminding the Sikhs of their militant tradition, Bhindranwale justified the violent twist in his movement and openly warned of the elimination of anyone who opposed his demands. The movement soon transformed itself into a terrorist group fighting for a separate Sikh state.

The initial response by the state and central governments was muddled. The well-known rivalry between Punjab chief minister Darbara Singh and union home minister Giani Zail Singh created further complications. Bhindranwale publicly exhorted his followers to commit violent acts, but the governments in both New Delhi and Punjab were hesitant to take action against him for fear of adverse political fallout. He successfully challenged the Indian state and exposed its weaknesses.

A series of assassinations of prominent Nirankari and Hindu leaders followed. Bhindranwale made a clever tactical move and shifted his headquarters to the Golden Temple complex at Amritsar, the most sacred Sikh temple. He commanded the terrorist movement from there. Thirteen persons were killed in terrorist acts in 1982 (for data on terrorism in Punjab, see table 1). The number rose to seventy-five in 1983; most alarming was the fact that the dead included twenty policemen. Nothing gave terrorism a bigger boost and demoralized the Punjab police more than the mishandling of the murder of its deputy inspector general (DIG) of police, A. S. Atwal, within the precincts of the Golden Temple. The body of the DIG could not even be removed from the temple for a long time because the state government was hesitant to send the police inside for fear of offending Sikh religious sentiments. The police took no action to investigate the murder and arrest the culprits.
Pakistan got actively involved in supporting terrorism in the state in 1983 when it began supplying AK–47 rifles to the terrorist groups there. The introduction of assault rifles resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of casualties, giving the terrorists a definite edge over the Punjab police. The Punjab police officers were their favorite targets. In October 1983, the terrorists hijacked a bus in Amritsar and selectively shot dead the Hindu passengers. These selective killings created a furor all over the country. The killing of the bus passengers was not a daring act, nor could it have been easily prevented. This reality, however, did not prevent the central government from putting the blame on the state. The central government panicked under strong public criticism and dismissed the popularly elected Darbara Singh government. The central government then brought the state government under the direct rule of the central government by invoking the emergency provision of the Indian Constitution and imposed president’s rule in Punjab. Under president’s rule, all executive authority is exercised by the state governor under the direct supervision of the central government. This was a terrible blunder. With the dismissal of the

<table>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Ministry of Home Affairs, government of India; government of Punjab.*
state government, the buffer between the central government and the terrorist groups was removed. Bhindranwale now directly confronted the central government. Unfortunately, even at this stage the central government treated terrorism as merely a law and order problem.

Yet another failure of the central government was its inability to appreciate the need for strengthening the Punjab police, which was at that time in a state of confusion and demoralization. Instead of taking measures to strengthen the Punjab police, the central government reacted by dispatching almost one hundred companies (a company comprises around ninety men) of paramilitary forces after the promulgation of president’s rule. The central government’s inability to appreciate the crucial role of the Punjab police in the fight against terrorism was no less a mistake than the dismissal of the Darbara Singh government.

A sharp increase in the number of terrorist acts and the number of persons killed was noticeable after the imposition of president’s rule. The central paramilitary forces lacked local knowledge and had little information about the terrorists, their hideouts, and their plans. They were never trained to fight terrorism. For the newly inducted forces, terrorism was like any other law and order problem, such as organized crime, and these forces initially tried to tackle it merely through a greater show of force. This misplaced faith in the military forces further marginalized and demoralized the Punjab police. Feeling humiliated, a section of the demoralized police empathized with the terrorists instead of fighting them.

Pakistan’s support of the terrorism in Punjab made it easier for the terrorist groups to smuggle sophisticated weapons across the border. As the ISI of Pakistan got more directly involved with the terrorist movement, it began to provide sanctuary and training to the terrorist groups operating in Punjab.

In 1983–84, when the terrorists began fortifying the Golden Temple in full public view, both the central and state governments chose to turn a blind eye for fear of precipitating a more difficult situation. If action for the demolition of the fortifications had been taken in time, the situation could have been contained without too much bloodshed. The situation was allowed to drift until it became too serious to ignore. The drift and indecision of the governments set the stage for attempting a military solution to the problem of the Golden
Temple. The task of flushing out the terrorists was handed over to the army, which was ignorant of the nature and complexity of the problem with which they were dealing. The 1984 Blue Star operation by the army in the Golden Temple resulted in the deaths of more than four thousand innocent persons and the destruction of the Akal Takht inside the Golden Temple, one of the most sacred places of the Sikhs. The entire Sikh community reacted very strongly against the assault on the Golden Temple complex. For them, this was an assault on the Sikh religion. Large numbers of Sikhs became alienated from India. What Bhindranwale had not so far demanded openly, a separate Sikh state, now became the main demand of the Sikhs. They demanded Khalistan, the recognition of a separate Sikh state outside the Indian union. The moderate Sikh leadership became irrelevant. The short-sighted, ill-planned, and poorly executed Operation Blue Star laid a solid foundation for terrorism in Punjab. The Sikhs swore vengeance, and a large number of their youths began joining the terrorist ranks.

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi fell victim to the bullets of a Sikh assassin on October 31, 1984. Her own Sikh security guard killed her. As if the assassination of Mrs. Gandhi was not tragic enough, it was followed by anti-Sikh riots in Delhi, Kanpur, and other parts of the country. A large number of Sikhs were brutally killed, most of them burned alive, and their property, which was worth hundreds of millions of rupees, was destroyed. In the capital city of Delhi alone, more than three thousand Sikhs were burned alive in the most gruesome manner, with the Delhi police playing a most shameful passive role.

The terrorist movement reached new heights after the 1984 riots. Many young Sikhs joined the terrorist ranks to settle scores with the perpetrators of the 1984 riots. After a brief lull in 1985, the number of those killed rose to 520 in 1986. The number includes 42 policemen killed.

After the tragic events in 1984, the central government made belated attempts to reach a political accord with the Akali Dal. On July 24, 1985, an accord was signed between Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and the Akali Dal president Harchand Singh Longowal. Within a month of the accord, however, Longowal was shot dead inside the precincts of a Sikh temple in his own village. The state assembly elections followed in September 1985, and the Longowal faction of the
Akali Dal was swept into power. The central government repeated its earlier mistake and dismissed the Akali Dal government in 1987 when it came under public criticism for failing to control the situation. President’s rule was once again imposed in Punjab in May 1987.

The security forces sent to Punjab were neither organized nor trained to effectively counter terrorist attacks. The terrorists were moving around in groups of one or two, rather than as a large unit, to avoid detection, and they were attacking both soft and hard targets. The Punjab terrorists succeeded in spreading their network and engaged in an increasing number of daring bank robberies and shootouts. They began committing terrorist acts as far away as Delhi, Bombay, Ahmedabad, and Calcutta. Exploiting the weak government response, the terrorists once again made the Golden Temple their operational headquarters. Undeterred by their ouster from the temple in 1984, the terrorists again began fortifying it in full public view. This time, the central government gave the task of flushing the terrorists from the Golden Temple to the National Security Guard (NSG), a professional composite force of commandos. Unlike the case of Operation Blue Star in 1984, this time the task was completed by the NSG without undue loss of life. Not a single civilian was killed in the well-executed operation, named Operation Black Thunder. This was perhaps one of the most successful antiterrorism operations anywhere in the world. The Economist in London said this in so many words in its issue of May 1988. The most important difference between Operation Blue Star and Operation Black Thunder was that, while the former was conceived in haste, underestimating terrorist strength, the latter was meticulously planned.

The situation improved for some time after the successful completion of Operation Black Thunder. However, it soon deteriorated because of the central government’s failure to take effective follow-up action. Taking advantage of the central government’s policy of drift, the militants once again struck back in a big way. The next few years witnessed a significant increase in terrorist acts. The number of terrorist incidents rose to 2,116 in 1990. A total of 2,467 persons, including 493 policemen, were killed in these incidents. Terrorists especially targeted police and judicial officers, leading to an almost total collapse of the criminal justice system. There was also an increase in the use of explosives in the state in 1990.

The next couple of years saw the worst phase of terrorism in
Punjab. With increasing pressure from the Punjab police, the terrorists retaliated by targeting the family members of the Punjab police officers, including women and children. The Punjab police displayed much grit and courage in not buckling under pressure from the terrorists.

The decision to revive the political process and hold state assembly elections in 1992 proved decisive in the battle against terrorism. Beant Singh, the newly elected chief minister, gave his unstinted support to the Punjab police in fighting terrorism. He turned the tide of public opinion against the terrorists. In 1991, the number of persons killed in terrorist-related violence rose to 2,586. The situation improved in 1992 when the number of those killed was 1,461. The situation showed dramatic improvement in the next few years, although the level of terrorist violence continued to be high. The end of terrorism in the state came in 1995.

JAMMU AND KASHMIR

Jammu and Kashmir is strategically an important state because of its geographical location. It has been a subject of dispute between India and Pakistan since partition in 1947. Pakistan claims it because the majority of the population in the state is Muslim. India, on the other hand, does not accept the Pakistani claim. Under the Indian Independence Act 1947, it was for the maharajah, the princely ruler of the state, to decide whether to accede to India or Pakistan or become independent. He decided to accede to India, but Pakistan refuses to accept the legal accession. It has been doing everything possible, including waging war, to annex the state. After 1947, India and Pakistan fought three more wars in 1965, 1971, and 1999, but the dispute remains unresolved.

Hostility between India and Pakistan was not only caused by the Kashmir dispute but has much deeper historical and ideological roots. The Indian partition was the bloodiest in human history. India is a secular state where all religious groups have equal rights, while Pakistan is a theocratic state where Islam is the state religion and all minorities are second-class citizens. India has never accepted the two-nation theory that Hindus and Muslims cannot live peacefully together.
Having failed in its effort to persuade Maharajah Hari Singh, the princely ruler of Jammu and Kashmir, to accede to Pakistan, that country’s fifteen-day-old government tried to forcibly annex the state by sending in raiders—“tribal Pathans”—armed and transported by the Pakistani government and backed by its regular troops in civilian clothes on October 22, 1947. Ever since, Pakistani rulers have been trying to annex the state by all sorts of overt and covert military means. Interestingly, it repeated the 1947 raid tactics in the 1999 Kargil conflict in which the intrusion across the Line of Control (LoC) was spearheaded by the so-called mujahedeens.

It would be a mistake to treat Kashmir as a mere territorial dispute. For India, Jammu and Kashmir represents the essential character of the secular Indian state. It cannot afford to give it up because that would mean giving in to communal forces. India cannot afford to do that. It does not accept the Pakistani claim on the basis of the religious divide between Hindus and Muslims. An admission of this divide would mean opening afresh the wounds of the partition in 1947 when millions of innocent men and women were slaughtered in the communal riots that followed the partition. It needs to be highlighted that secular India today has more Muslims than does the Islamic state of Pakistan. The logic of partition on religious grounds is no longer valid in any case.

Terrorism in its present form appeared in the state around 1988. Unfortunately, the initial state government response was indifferent and inadequate. Instead of dealing with the terrorists firmly under the law, the Farooq Abdullah government, which had come to power in the state after an accord with the Congress Party in 1986, blew hot and cold and generally followed a policy of drift. In the process, it lost both effectiveness and legitimacy. The state police, which earlier had tried to deal with the problem with courage and determination at great personal risk, was not given adequate political support. The mishandling of the hostage case of Rubaiya Sayeed (the daughter of the then union home minister) in December 1989 confirmed the common perception that neither the state nor the central government had the necessary political will and determination to stand up to the terrorist movement. The state government under pressure from the central government conceded to all the terrorist demands and released six hard-core terrorists to secure the release of the hostage.
In October 1989, thirty-nine persons were injured in forty-nine explosions (for data on terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir see table 2).10 Firearms were used in fifteen incidents. The situation in the state deteriorated to such an extent that no judicial officer was willing to pass an order against a terrorist. The elected state government and the criminal justice system virtually collapsed under the pressure of the militants.

A turning point could have come in 1991, when the situation showed some improvement, if the state government had not given in rather tamely to the terrorist demands by repeating its earlier mistake. It released twelve terrorists to secure the release of a hostage, an Indian Oil Company executive, K. Doraiswamy, who had been kidnapped.

In the first two weeks of January 1992, 202 incidents of terrorism took place in the state, which included 173 armed attacks, 17 cases of arson, and 4 bomb explosions. In these incidents, seventy-six persons, including seven members of the security forces, were killed.11 The spurt in militant activity in the valley extended to the Jammu region in August 1992. In 1993, there was an upsurge of terrorism in the Doda region also.

The infiltration of foreign terrorists into the state began in 1992. Early that year the presence of a few Afghan terrorists was noticed in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK). Since then, the number of foreign infiltrators has kept increasing. Terrorism in the state today is

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<td>2,938</td>
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</table>

*Source: Ministry of Home Affairs, government of India; government of Jammu and Kashmir.*
being sustained mostly by the terrorists from outside. Most are from Afghanistan and Pakistan. The local component has been shrinking for some years. Hizbul Mujahideen, a Kashmir-based pro-Pakistan group, and Al Badr, Harakat ul-Jihad-Islami, and Harakat ul-Mujahideen were the main groups involved in bringing in foreign mercenaries in the early years. At the end of 1993, the number of terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir was estimated at about twelve hundred. Today the number has risen to ten thousand, and many more terrorist outfits based in Afghanistan and Pakistan have joined in to train and send terrorists into the state.

The situation in the state further deteriorated in 1994. During that year, more than twenty-five hundred persons were killed in terrorist-related violence, which included 370 cases of kidnapping, 2,000 cases of bomb attacks, and more than 500 incidents of arson. In as many as 85 incidents, rockets were used. The year 1995 opened with multiple blasts at Maulana Azad Stadium in Jammu during the Republic Day Parade, which almost killed the governor, Gen. K. V. Krishna Rao. It also saw an increase in the use of remote-controlled devices to detonate explosives. The burning down of the shrine of the much-revered Sufi (a liberal sect) saint, Nooruddin Noorani (known as Chirar-e-Sherif) near Srinagar in December 1995 was a victory of sorts for the terrorists. Another sensational incident, the kidnapping of five foreign tourists by a terrorist group calling itself Al Faran, also took place in 1995.

In 1996, more than three thousand persons were killed in 4,224 incidents of terrorism. The electoral process was revived in 1996. Parliamentary elections in the state were held in 1996, followed by the state assembly elections later in the year. National Conference, a regional political party under the leadership of Farooq Abdullah, won a thumping victory in the assembly polls. Farooq Abdullah returned as the state chief minister. The state participated in the parliamentary elections again in 1998 and 1999.

The number of incidents dropped in 1997, 1998, and 1999, although the number of persons killed continues to be high. The use of high explosives (such as RDX, or Cyclomethylenetrinitramine) was the main reason for the high casualty rate. The situation, which had been showing some signs of improvement, deteriorated after the Kargil war was started by Pakistan’s intrusion in 1999.

The situation continues to be difficult. The people in the state
are sick and tired of violence. They are disillusioned with Pakistan, and accession to Pakistan is no longer a popular demand. Successful holding of the parliamentary and then state assembly elections has completely transformed the political scene. The militants are under pressure from the security forces, but the level of violence is still quite high. The terrorist movement is today dominated by foreign terrorist groups like the Harakat ul-Ansar, Al Badr, and Laskar-e-Toiba. In the post-Kargil scenario, terrorist violence has increased due to infiltration of a large number of Pakistanis and Afghani mujahedeens into the state since June 1999. They are specifically targeting the security forces.

Religion, bigotry, and fanaticism are not the only factors responsible for the rise of terrorism in the state. According to a study undertaken by Brigadier Arjun Ray, a senior Indian army officer, the average Kashmiri militant is driven by economic and political frustration rather than religious fanaticism. The secessionist movement is being sustained not so much by ideology as by frustration and anger over poor governance.

The rise of terrorism can be attributed also to some ineffective policies of the state and national governments. Some notable mistakes were the dismissal of the Farooq Abdullah government in 1984, the mishandling of the Rubaiya Sayeed kidnapping case in 1989, the dissolution of the state assembly in 1990, and the release of twelve hard-core terrorists in 1991 in the Doraiswamy kidnapping case. Unfortunately, the tendency of each successive government has been to put the blame on the predecessor governments and then start playing musical chairs with the top bureaucrats. This practice has done a lot of damage to the state administration’s credibility and has reduced its effectiveness.

THE NORTHEAST

The Northeast is a strategically vulnerable region. It is hemmed in on three sides by China, Myanmar (formerly Burma), Bhutan, and Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan). It is linked to the rest of India by a narrow twenty-kilometer-wide strip near Siliguri, a northern town in West Bengal. Politically, the region is divided into seven states—Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Tripura, Meghalaya, Arunachal
Pradesh, and Mizoram. Terrorism continues to take its toll in Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, and Tripura, although the situation is relatively peaceful in Mizoram, Meghalaya, and Arunachal Pradesh. At one time, the situation in Mizoram was also very serious, but conditions improved following a political accord reached in 1986.

Terrorism has thrived in the region because of its geographical location, physical remoteness, economic backwardness, and the political alienation of a large portion of the population. The inhabitants of this region, dominated by different tribes, are an ethnically distinct people. Physiographical constraints, geographical isolation, difficult communications, long years of neglect, and a sense of pride in assertion of the identity of the people who live there have created an explosive mix. Taking advantage of this situation, hostile external forces have been encouraging and helping the forces of subversion in the region since independence in 1947. Their aim is to divide India on ethnic and religious lines. A number of terrorist groups find support and easy sanctuaries in the neighboring countries of Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar, and Bhutan. The terrain has also helped the spread of terrorism: it is mostly hilly. The hilly terrain, carpeted with thick forests and unprotected international boundaries, provides an ideal environment for the breeding of secessionist and terrorist forces in the region. It is eminently suited for committing terrorist acts. The steep terrain and jungle roads provide easy traps for attacks on the moving convoys of the security forces. The dispersion of ethnic groups across the international borders has further compounded the problem.

Paradoxically, the growth of democracy in this region has helped the terrorist forces. There is a known and well-established link between terrorism and electoral politics. Politicians have been exploiting the many grievances of the people in this far-flung region for electoral gains. Admittedly, partition of the country has hurt this region more than any other part of the country. The region has since become landlocked. Its main rail, road, and water links to the rest of the country were broken, as they passed through East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). High transport costs have made even essential commodities much more expensive compared to costs in the rest of the country.

All seven states in the Northeast are facing serious political and economic problems. That separatism and its inevitable offspring,
terrorism, can be highly contagious has been repeatedly demonstrated there. The proliferation of arms and the anger and frustration of unemployed youth have created an environment favorable to the spread of terrorism. An alarming increase in the number of drug addiction cases among the educated unemployed in the Northeast is one of the consequences of this vicious circle of increasing unemployment and spread of terrorism. Disillusioned with corrupt politicians and seeing no future for themselves, youths are joining the terrorist ranks. Political instability and a stagnant economy have allowed the situation to drift. Out of the seven states in the Northeast, terrorism is most rampant in Nagaland, Manipur, Assam, and Tripura.

Nagaland

With a population of about 1.5 million and an area covering 16,579 square kilometers, Nagaland is inhabited mostly by the tribal people known as Nagas. But an estimated 550,000 Nagas also live outside Nagaland in the neighboring states of Manipur, Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh and in the Somra Tract along the international border with Myanmar. There are sixteen major and twenty minor Naga tribes.

Insurgency in the Naga Hills surfaced almost immediately after Indian independence in 1947. In the initial years, the insurgency movement received moral and diplomatic support from the British, the erstwhile colonial rulers, because they were sympathetic to the Naga militants for their role during World War II. Material support came from Pakistan in the form of arms and ammunition. In the first few years, all the weaponry of the secessionist forces was supplied by Pakistan’s intelligence agency through East Pakistan. The secessionists, who were ideologically committed to the Left, also received material support from insurgent groups in Burma and later from the Communist government of China. By 1953, the movement had gathered momentum and since then the number of terrorist acts has kept increasing. The most active secessionist groups are the Naga National Council (NNC) and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN).

With his army background, Z. A. Phizo, the leader of the secessionist force, went about organizing terrorism in a military fashion.
He formed two separate wings: one armed and the other political. He announced the formation of a parallel government in 1956 and initiated the forcible collection of “taxes,” a form of extortion. Well versed in jungle warfare, his armed wing fully exploited the hilly terrain and the forest area to hit the security forces. The basic strategy was to lay ambushes, attack security outposts, and kill as many security personnel and dissenting Naga leaders as possible.

Unfamiliar with the local customs and language, the security forces found it extremely difficult to distinguish between a terrorist and an ordinary inhabitant. In search operations, the security forces sometimes harassed innocent villagers. This harassment resulted in further alienation of the local people. Because of this sense of grievance, the terrorists could set up operational bases in remote areas that were almost inaccessible to the security forces. The result was that while the terrorist groups received advance intelligence about the movements of the security forces the forces knew very little about the movements of the terrorists.

Phizo maintained close links with the Pakistani and Chinese intelligence agencies. With their support, he was able to establish bases outside the country—in the Chittagong Hill Tracts in East Pakistan and the Arakan Hill Tracts in Burma. The Pakistani intelligence agency was actively involved in supporting the terrorist movement right from the beginning. The Chinese jumped into the fray only in 1967 after the 1962 India-China War. The external factor played a crucial role in sustaining the terrorist movement in Nagaland. The Pakistani support, however, weakened after the 1971 Indo-Pakistan War, which ended in Pakistan’s defeat by the Indian forces and the separation of its eastern half into an independent Bangladesh. In recent years, Pakistan’s support has again increased, and its ISI is actively engaged in supporting terrorism in Nagaland.

Terrorism in the state has experienced many ups and downs. After Pakistan’s defeat in 1971, there was a lull for some years. Negotiations between the NSCN and the central government had been going on for some years, but they made more headway after 1971. The negotiations were successfully concluded with the signing of what is known as the Shillong Accord on November 11, 1975. According to this accord, the underground Nagas were to surrender their arms and begin to participate in the electoral process. However, a number of underground Nagas who had gone to China for
training and were under Communist influence, repudiated the accord and refused to surrender. They shifted their base to the North Burma Hills under the leadership of Isac Swu and Th. Muivah, the two leaders of the NSCN. The 1975 accord was also repudiated by Phizo.

In a parallel development, a group of moderate Naga leaders took part in the 1974 state assembly elections. But it was not long before political power corrupted the newly elected leaders, and an ugly process of defection and counterdefection ensued. In this free for all, there was an increase in violent crime and acts of terrorism. Preoccupied with tackling terrorism, the state government could pay little attention to the task of economic development in Nagaland.

The NSCN split into two factions in 1988: the Khaplang faction, or NSCN(K), and the Isac-Muivah faction, NSCN(IM). Both factions have managed to extend their areas of influence in the region. Lack of coordination among the security forces and the civilian state government and active support from Pakistan’s ISI have created a difficult situation. A cease-fire agreement was signed with the NSCN(IM) in 1997, but protracted negotiations have not resulted in a settlement. The situation in the state continues to be difficult. For data on terrorism in Nagaland, see table 3.

Manipur

Manipur has a population of 1,837,000 and an area of 22,327 square kilometers. It can be divided into two distinct parts: the valley and the hills. The predominant inhabitants of the state, known as Meiteis, dominate the valley. The hill districts are inhabited mainly by the Naga, Kuki, Paite, and Zomi tribes.

| TABLE 3. Terrorism in the States of Nagaland, Manipur, Assam, and Tripura |
|--------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Incidents | Killed | Incidents | Killed | Incidents | Killed | Incidents | Killed |
| Nagaland   | 261    | 191    | 380    | 135    | 202    | 46       | 294    | 30       |
| Manipur    | 417    | 241    | 691    | 628    | 345    | 251      | 284    | 169      |
| Assam      | 396    | 589    | 427    | 380    | 735    | 794      | 447    | 341      |
| Tripura    | 391    | 178    | 303    | 270    | 568    | 251      | 614    | 282      |

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs, government of India, and the governments of Nagaland, Manipur, Assam, and Tripura.
Manipur has a history of leftist extremism. Economic unrest among Meitei youths was an important factor for the rise of terrorism. The aim of extremist violence in the valley was initially to highlight social and economic discrimination against the Meiteis. It turned secessionist as the violence increased. The violence began in the 1960s but it took a more serious turn only in the late 1970s. Terrorist acts, such as assassinations, ambushes of security forces personnel, looting of banks and treasuries, and extortion of money from government departments, traders, and transporters, increased later in the 1970s.

Being a border state, Manipur is vulnerable to terrorism. The hilly terrain is helpful in laying ambushes against the security forces. Manipur has a thinly guarded international border with Myanmar that is 350 kilometers long. This situation makes monitoring infiltration and the smuggling of arms difficult. Terrorists move quite freely in and out of Manipur from Myanmar. The NSCN(K) and the NSCN(IM) have sanctuaries in Myanmar.

Peace returned to Manipur for a brief period after the creation of Bangladesh in 1971, but terrorism returned in a more virulent form within a couple of years. More than one terrorist group has been active in the state. The United National Liberation Front, the People’s Liberation Army, the People’s Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak, the Kangleipak Communist Party, and the Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup mostly operate in the valley. The NSCN(IM), the NSCN(K), the Kuki National Army, and the Kuki National Front operate mostly in the hill districts. Over the years, terrorism in Manipur has degenerated into organized crime, and most of the terrorist acts are not committed to pursue an ideological goal but to extort money.

Two factors have contributed most to the worsening of the situation: corruption and maladministration. Political and administrative structures have become corrupt and weak. This situation has adversely affected economic development. The state of the infrastructure is extremely poor. People do not have even such basic necessities as water and power; road transport is in poor shape. People suffer from a psychological and physical sense of deprivation and remoteness. Disillusionment with democracy has in fact pushed the people toward terrorism. Except for government jobs, which have reached a saturation point, there are few other sources of employment.
The demand for a Greater Nagaland by the NSCN(IM), which includes the Naga-dominated hill districts in Manipur, and the peace talks between the government of India and the NSCN(IM) since 1997 have created suspicion in the minds of the Meiteis in the valley that the hill districts may be separated from the state under pressure from the Nagas. This suspicion has created some misgivings and sympathy for the valley terrorists among the Meiteis. The people in Manipur are generally tired of the unending violence, but the level of terrorist violence in the state continues to be high because of conflict among the main ethnic groups. For data on terrorism in Manipur, see table 3.

Assam

The terrorist movement in Assam arose around one main issue: the influx of outsiders into the state. Agitation for the deportation of illegal immigrants took a more serious turn in 1980. Until 1979, the movement against the outsiders relied mainly on demonstrations and agitations. Having failed in their efforts to pressure the central government to expel illegal immigrants, the movement became violent and took to terrorism. The demand to secede from India came much later.

The United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), the main terrorist group, was formed in 1979 under the leadership of Paresh Baruah, a student leader from Assam. It has been causing disruption of communications, hitting economic targets, and committing selected kidnappings and killings to create terror. The ULFA has also developed links to Naga and Kachin—a Myanmar-based tribe—terrorist groups in the region. Recently it has developed links to the ISI of Pakistan. The Assam police have sufficient evidence to prove that the ISI has been actively involved in fomenting violence and terrorism in the state. In addition to creating and promoting terrorist outfits along ethnic and communal lines, the ISI has been supplying arms and explosives to these groups. The ISI's hand is visible in recent cases of the sabotage of oil pipelines, communications lines, railway lines, roads, bridges, and other vital installations. These are vulnerable targets. It is difficult to effectively patrol and protect these installations, which are spread over large areas.13

The situation did improve for a while after a political accord was
reached with the All Assam Students’ Union (AASU) in 1985. This brought peace for a few years. In the elections that followed the accord, the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), the new political party formed by the AASU, swept into power. Its leader, Prafulla Kumar Mohanta, became the youngest chief minister in the country. Unfortunately, internal squabbles in the AGP and accusations of corruption tarnished the image of the new state government, which had come to power with so much goodwill. One of the factions of AASU opposing Mohanta began openly supporting the ULFA.

Terrorist violence reached new heights in 1990, when there were reports that the ULFA had developed links to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), a terrorist group operating in Sri Lanka. Widespread extortion disrupted economic life in the state. The army was asked to take over antiterrorism operations in 1991. The army operations did have an impact for a few months, but the situation soon worsened as public support for the ULFA increased in reaction to the complaints of human rights violations against the army. Since then, the terrorist movement has had many ups and downs. Today, terrorism in the state has lost much of its idealism; it has degenerated into an extortion industry. The ULFA has built sanctuaries in the border areas in Bangladesh and Bhutan. For data on terrorism in Assam, see table 3.

Tripura

The spread of terrorism in Tripura also has its origin in fears among the indigenous population due to the entry of a large migrant population from the neighboring states. It all started with the migration of Hindu Bengali refugees from East Pakistan after the partition in 1947. The problem has since worsened with a further influx of Muslim migrants into the state from Bangladesh, not on grounds of religious persecution, as in the case of the Hindu refugees, but as an escape from economic hardship. This migration has further tilted the demographic balance in Tripura against the local tribes, causing serious misgivings among them as they have been reduced to minority status in their own land.

The Tripura Upjati Juva Samiti was formed in 1967 to protect the rights of the local tribes. It later formed an armed wing known as Tripura National Volunteers (TNV) to terrorize the immigrant
population into leaving Tripura. The ideology of TNV is built around ethnic identity and socialism. Its avowed goal is to drive nontribal peoples from Tripura. It began committing terrorist acts in 1980 and has built sanctuaries in Bangladesh. Cox’s Bazar in Bangladesh has become a major center for the supply of arms and explosives to the terrorist groups in the Northeast, particularly Tripura. These consignments of arms are smuggled in trawlers from Chittagong in Bangladesh and unloaded in Dholai in South Tripura.

After a comparative lull in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the situation has been deteriorating since 1996. The National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) is responsible for most of the terrorist acts perpetrated in the last few years. It has been targeting nontribal groups and government officials. The number of terrorist incidents increased from 391 in 1996 to 614 in 1999. The NLFT was responsible for 313 of those incidents in 1999, more than half the total. The other major protribal group operating in the state is the All Tripura Tribal Force (ATTF). Internecine clashes between the NLFT and ATTF for supremacy among the tribal groups are also responsible for a number of terrorist acts.

The ethnic divide between the Bengalis from Bangladesh and the indigenous tribal groups has led to the formation of a counterterrorist organization called the United Bengali Liberation Front, which targets tribal groups. The possibility of large-scale ethnic violence between the Bengali population and the tribal groups cannot be ruled out, and such a development will further complicate the situation. The recent elections to the Tripura Tribal Area Autonomous District Council have further polarized the population along ethnic lines. Electoral politics are a negative factor in the deteriorating situation in the state.

The state police have been accused of partisan behavior. Tripura’s experience shows that such deeply rooted ethnic conflict can flare up again unless it is dealt with effectively on a continuous basis. Politicization of the local police and its partisan behavior have made the police less effective in tackling terrorism. The state is increasingly dependent on the paramilitary forces for even the routine maintenance of law and order. The state government has now asked the central government to send in the army to deal with terrorism. For data on terrorism in Tripura, see table 3.
The leftist extremist movements in India had their beginnings as rural-based movements protesting feudal oppression and exploitation, but they have since spread their influence in the urban areas, also with the backing of some left-leaning urban intellectuals. Their base has remained largely among the peasants and tribal groups, spread spatially over large tracts of central, southcentral, and eastern India. Basically, leftist extremism is a have-not movement that still believes in ushering in a revolution through the barrel of a gun. Extreme poverty, social and economic exploitation, and a new political awareness among the marginalized and dispossessed are the root cause of this type of revolutionary terrorism.

The most active groups indulging in terrorist acts in India are the People’s War Group (PWG) in Andhra Pradesh and Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) in Bihar. The leftist extremist movement in India is fragmented into about forty groups, but it is very active in Bihar and Andhra Pradesh and to a lesser degree in Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Maharashtra, and eastern Uttar Pradesh. The PWG, the MCC, and Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist), or CPI(ML), are responsible for committing terrorist acts in various parts of the country. For data on leftist extremist terrorism, see table 4.

The paradox is that the worst-affected state—Bihar—has been ruled by a political party, the Rashtriya Janata Dal, representing the economically deprived and socially backward sectors of the society for many years. This fact only shows that political empowerment alone does not provide a solution to the type of terrorism prevalent

### TABLE 4. Left-Wing Terrorism

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<td>234</td>
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<td>205</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>1,691</td>
<td>541</td>
<td>1,501</td>
<td>584</td>
<td>1,351</td>
<td>489</td>
<td>1,246</td>
<td>598</td>
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*Source: Ministry of Home Affairs, government of India; state governments, as listed.*
in Bihar. Leftist extremism in India was born out of social and economic exploitation, and as long as this exploitation does not end the terrorism will also continue. The growth of private armies along caste lines in Bihar has added another dimension to this problem. At times, it is difficult to distinguish between caste violence and the terrorist acts committed by leftist extremist groups. The two are becoming intertwined in the vicious and vindictive environment in Bihar. This development has led to gruesome cases of massacres of innocent civilians at regular intervals.

The record of the central as well as of the state governments in dealing with the problem of terrorism has been uneven. The general tendency has been to treat it as a mere law and order problem, something for the police to handle. This approach has not succeeded. Paradoxically, as democracy has taken deeper root in India it has also created a new awareness among the poor and deprived. The problem is embodied in socioeconomic and political structures. It has to be addressed with great sensitivity. The afflicted areas are located in the most underdeveloped pockets of India. The central issue in all these areas is social oppression, desperate poverty, and abdication of an economic development role by the state. This type of terrorism cannot be effectively tackled without fostering economic and social development and ending the exploitation of the poor.

SPECIAL ANTITERRORISM LAWS

The criminal justice system was one of the first casualties in the affected states of Punjab, Jammu, and Kashmir, and the Northeast region. Victims, witnesses, investigating officers, prosecutors, judicial officers, and prison officials were terrorized to such an extent that no one was willing to complain, depose, or take any action against the terrorists. In such an environment, a special antiterrorism law, the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act (TADA), was enacted in 1986. Unfortunately, it was grossly misused, not as much in the afflicted areas as in states like Gujarat and Maharashtra, where terrorism did not pose a major problem. Faced with so much public criticism, the central government al-
ollowed the TADA to lapse in 1995. The central government has still to come up with alternative legislation with adequate legal safeguards against its misuse.

It is in this context that the legal framework in which the security forces have to operate assumes great importance. Normal functioning of the criminal justice system becomes difficult in affected areas. The police and judicial officers are generally afraid of taking action against the terrorists. The situation in which the security forces have to operate has become very difficult. The Indian experience shows that there is no point in legislating ideal laws that cannot be enforced. Unfortunately, the practice of turning a blind eye to blatant illegalities perpetrated by the security forces while demanding the abrogation of special laws like the TADA needs to be exposed. It is more prudent to have less than ideal laws that take into consideration the situation on the ground, the difficulties faced by the security forces, and the need to strengthen the criminal justice system than to insist on normal laws and procedures that the state has no intention of implementing due to “practical” considerations. Under no circumstances should the misuse of any law, special or normal, be tolerated. The special laws, however, need to be constantly reviewed and should not remain on the statute books a day longer than necessary. Those guilty of misusing the special laws should be given prompt and exemplary punishment, and suitable safeguards should be provided to ensure that they cannot be easily misused. A more comprehensive view of terrorism laws will have to be taken if the problem of terrorism and insurgencies in India is to be dealt with effectively.

Experts on terrorism have expressed concern over the abysmally low rate of conviction for terrorist crimes in India. The country’s criminal justice system needs to have the requisite deterrent effect to tackle the menace. The weakness of the Indian system was rightly identified by a well-known expert on terrorism, Paul Wilkinson, during a visit to India. He stated that “democracies cannot afford any dilution of the rule of law. There should be laws on terrorism and a professional approach is required to the criminal justice system.” He rightly observed that “India needs an effective and pro-active criminal justice system supplemented by an elaborate intelligence network.”
THE NARCOLINK

Another factor that plays an important role in sustaining terrorism in India is the narcolink. The link between drug smugglers from Pakistan and the Punjab terrorists is a well-known fact. Some of the most notorious Punjab terrorists began their careers as drug smugglers. In the Northeast also, profits from drug traffic have been used to finance terrorism. The NSCN has been accused of waging a violent campaign against the Kukis, a tribe in Manipur, primarily to gain control over the drug-smuggling trade route from Moreh in Manipur, which has been traditionally controlled by the Kukis. The ISI of Pakistan is known to recruit drug smugglers to sneak arms and explosives into India. The ISI’s links with organized crime are well known. It makes use of the organized crime network to commit terrorist acts in India. The Bombay blasts in 1993, which killed more than three hundred persons and injured many more, were the handiwork of “mafia dons” operating out of Karachi in Pakistan. Some top politicians and government officials in Pakistan are reported to have direct links to the drug trade. Similar networks are also operating in India. Huge amounts of funds generated by drug smuggling are being laundered through these networks. They are used to finance the smuggling of arms and explosives into India.

SUCCESSES AND FAILURES: LESSONS FROM THE INDIAN EXPERIENCE

In fighting terrorism, India’s experience has been mixed. While India has succeeded in controlling terrorism in Punjab and Mizoram, it has so far failed to do so in Jammu and Kashmir and the northeastern states of Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, and Tripura. Nor have the state governments been able to deal effectively with the terrorism of leftist extremist groups.

In Punjab, where terrorism raged for about eighteen years, the situation has been brought under control. Today Punjab is one of the more peaceful states in the country, with hardly any incidents of terrorism. It is another matter that the terrorism problem could perhaps have been controlled earlier if it had been handled more
The counterterrorism strategy pursued in Punjab has many lessons, some positive and some negative.

The Blue Star operation of 1984 was a disaster, as it alienated the entire Sikh community. It directly contributed to an increase in recruitment to terrorist ranks. Seething with anger and driven by an overpowering desire to wreak vengeance for the ill-conceived operation, young Sikh boys and girls joined the terrorist ranks in large numbers. Terrorism took a more brutal form in the state from that time onward. Instead of taking an integrated view of the problem and tackling the root causes of terrorism, the central and the state governments concentrated exclusively on the military aspect. Another big blunder made by the central government was the dismissal of the popularly elected government and the imposition of president’s rule in 1983 and 1987.

The credit for improvement in the situation goes to the revival of the political process. The situation made a dramatic turnaround after the return of the popularly elected state government under Beant Singh in 1991. The success in Punjab was the result of a combination of factors, the most important being the successful political initiative to restore democracy and the resurgence of the Punjab police. With the general public becoming disenchanted with the aims and methods of terrorism, it did not take long for the security forces to expose the seamy side of terrorism. The resurgent Punjab police were able to pick up important terrorist leaders one by one. This development was a serious blow to the terrorist movement in Punjab. Once the leadership was neutralized, the whole organizational structure of the various terrorist groups operating in the state collapsed. The number of arrests and killings of terrorists rose considerably in the following years until 1996, when the movement began to decline. The vital role played by the political leadership needs to be specially highlighted. The state government under Beant Singh was very clear and categorical in its opposition to terrorism. Though Singh was later assassinated, it was primarily his efforts that set the stage for the defeat of terrorism in the state.

Intelligence about the hiding places and plans of terrorists started pouring in, and people gained confidence in the bona fides of the newly elected state government. The police were able to neutralize terrorists because of the availability of this newfound intelligence. The image of invincibility of terrorists disappeared very
soon, and whatever support they had also waned. Terrorism today is a dirty word in Punjab. The political parties and leaders who found it convenient to support terrorism now swear by the democratic process and openly condemn it. Terrorism is the antithesis of democracy because it substitutes rule by the few for rule by the majority. Democratic institutions are the biggest hurdle in the way of terrorism. Nothing should be done to weaken them, although terrorism puts much strain on their effective functioning.

Lack of economic development and employment opportunities no doubt pushed youth toward terrorist groups. However, it is also true that economic development became a casualty once terrorism took root. The vicious circle could only be broken by a comprehensive counterterrorism strategy that combined the enforcement of the rule of law with imaginative political initiatives and concrete steps for economic development.

However, even in this victory the state government failed to deal adequately with one very important factor: the strengthening of the criminal justice system. In its anxiety to deal with terrorism effectively, it gave a free hand to the Punjab police to suppress it. There were serious allegations of police excesses. The judicial system became a casualty. Already under threat from terrorists, it crumbled further. The judicial officers took the easy way out by not issuing injunctions against the accused terrorists, and they ignored public complaints of police excesses. The consequences of this short-sighted policy have been grave. The state has paid a heavy price in terms of the violation of human rights and the rule of law. It has taken some time for the criminal justice system to be put back on track.

Another lesson that clearly comes through is that without the active participation of the local police it is very difficult for the army or the paramilitary forces to succeed against the terrorists. It is generally the local police who receive intelligence about terrorists. Local background is an essential component of an effective counterterrorism strategy. An outside force that has no local knowledge finds it extremely difficult to deal with the problem of terrorism. More human rights violations take place when the counterterrorism strategy is dominated by the army or the paramilitary forces. Terrorism no doubt thrives when the government is weak and floundering, but the paradox is that it also gains when the gov-
ernment overreacts and takes recourse to shortcut measures. Many young men joined the terrorist ranks not because they believed in terrorist ideology but because they wanted to take vengeance on the security forces for their alleged excesses. Brutal methods of some of the most notorious Punjab police officers actually strengthened, rather than weakened, the terrorist movement.

By making undue political and economic concessions to the Sikh extremists, the government did not succeed in defeating terrorism. Giving in to unjustified demands only encouraged more demands, and the process of making demands became endless. As long as the terrorists were in command of the situation, they were not interested in finding a political solution. It was only when they were under pressure and retreating that they expressed their willingness to discuss their demands. Otherwise, they found ways to abort the negotiations by making impossible demands.

It is a fact that a few sensational incidents brought the Indian government more into disrepute than did less sensational cases of terrorism. Terrorism thrived on publicity, and sensational killings gave them that advantage. The Punjab experience shows that instead of anticipating this sense of public outrage and dealing with it in a cool and calculated manner the central government succumbed too easily to public criticism. It derailed the political process twice in 1983 and 1987 by dismissing the popularly elected state governments because they could not prevent the killing of bus passengers who belonged to the minority community. In its anxiety to placate the public, it ignored the fact that the passengers were soft targets and the killings were not easily preventable.

As regards Mizoram, once the security forces gained an upper hand the terrorist groups became demoralized. The loss of sanctuaries in the Chittagong Hills Tract in Bangladesh was a serious setback. But the situation took a dramatic turn for the better only after a political accord with the Mizo National Front was reached in 1986. The front was swept into power in the assembly elections that followed the accord.

In the case of Jammu and Kashmir, while there are some similarities with the Punjab experience, there are also vital differences. In the case of both Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir, the ideological base of terrorism was built around religion: to create a divide between the Hindus and the Sikhs in Punjab and the Hindus and the
Muslims in Jammu and Kashmir. There is, however, a big difference. In the case of Punjab, while Pakistan did jump into the fray and assisted the terrorist groups in Punjab, it did so in a covert manner because Pakistan at no time had any territorial dispute with India over Punjab. On the other hand, in the case of Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan has been more directly involved. Since 1947, it has been trying to annex Jammu and Kashmir because it considers annexation to be the unfinished task of the partition. There is no doubt an internal dimension also, but the terrorist movement is being sustained entirely by external forces, most notably the support it receives from Pakistan. The movement in Jammu and Kashmir could not have been sustained without Pakistani support. This external dimension makes the task of finding an internal political solution to the problem difficult. The dispersal of some of the Kashmiri population across the Line of Control makes the task even more complicated. However, the situation would not have deteriorated to the extent it did if the state government had paid more attention to public grievances against the state administrative and political machinery.

In the case of the Northeast, the short-sighted approach to the problem that advocates a policy of “faster integration into the mainstream” is to some extent responsible for the alienation of the local people and the growth of terrorism. Lack of understanding about what hurts the people and lack of support for economic and security policies followed by the government have only succeeded in alienating the people. Lack of social and economic development has created a fertile environment for the spread of terrorism. More attention needs to be paid to creating job opportunities and improving the infrastructure, such as roads and electrical power.

By twisting historical facts and religious folklore, terrorist movements have been able to develop an ideology and rhetoric of their own. Ideology and rhetoric are heard with hope and reverence by their supporters. Fired by religious fervor and revolutionary ideology, the young recruits have no hesitation in ruthlessly attacking the decayed political and moral order of what they perceive to be hedonistic societies. But the fact also remains that terrorism in all the states grew out of the people’s anger against the ruling political elite. The orations in places of worship of Sikhs, the gurdwaras in Punjab, and the mosques in Jammu and Kashmir against the pre-
vailing moral decadence played the most crucial role in mobilizing the people behind the terrorists.

The Indian experience clearly shows that the terrorists’ main aim was to acquire political power and wealth. Extortion, therefore, has become an essential component of the terrorist strategy, especially in the Northeast. Ideology has taken a back seat. The ideologies of some groups have also undergone major changes. In the initial stages, most of the movements demanded only political and economic justice and autonomy in the existing political system. Movements like that of the Bodos, a tribal group in Assam, and the Sikhs in Punjab began making secessionist demands as the movements gained momentum. The People’s War Group in Andhra Pradesh and Bihar is concerned with economic and political justice for the deprived sectors of the society. This they seek to secure by replacing the existing political structure, which according to them is unfair and serves only vested interests. So far they have not demanded secession and independence from the Indian union.

It has been part of the terrorist strategy to provoke the government to respond to the acts not only of terrorists but of those who are sympathetic to terrorist causes. Repression, in fact, increases popular disaffection and generates popular support for terrorist demands. It justifies terrorist methods to settle scores with government and security forces. Some terrorist acts are deliberately committed to provoke a vicious cycle of violence and counter-violence. Caught in the cross fire, the victims generally blame the security forces, not the terrorists, for their miseries.

The Indian experience in different states underlines the need to reduce ethnic and social inequalities, narrow disparities in educational and employment opportunities, and create an effective machinery for the redress of public grievances. Steps to reduce economic deprivation can erode the base of public support on which extremist movements thrive. Improved opportunities for raising individuals’ economic status can take the sting out of extremist movements. Most people are more concerned with their daily lives than with supporting a terrorist movement. It is easier to find solutions to seemingly intractable political problems in an environment in which people are by and large satisfied with the functioning of the government than in an environment of popular dissatisfaction.
The fact that successive governments in Jammu and Kashmir were dominated by a few families sent a wrong message to the people. These governments were seen as corrupt and self-seeking and an imposition by the central government. The people in the state blamed the central government for their miseries and for imposing corrupt governments on them. The imposition of the government of Bakshi Gulam Mohammed, the removal of Bakshi, the appointment of G. M. Sadiq as the chief minister, the dismissal of Farooq Abdullah, and then his return after the much maligned pact between the Congress Party and the National Conference were all perceived by the people in the valley as part of the conspiracy to deprive them of their fundamental, political, and economic rights. This perception is deeply embedded in their consciousness, making them a vulnerable target for terrorism and anti-India forces. This impression needs to be changed. The democratic process should be allowed to function without antidemocratic pressure or hindrance. While the authorities need to send a clear signal to the terrorists that they have the capability and determination to prevent and punish terrorist acts, the use of force need not be indiscriminate and vindictive.

Long-term solutions can be found only by reducing the alienation of the people. This goal can be achieved by displaying greater sensitivity to the people’s separate identities and taking concrete steps toward fulfilling their political and economic aspirations. Encroachment on tribal land by immigrants has to be stopped and land that has been misappropriated restored to the indigenous tribal groups. The remoteness of the region can be reduced by reestablishing the old links—road, rail, and water—through Bangladesh to facilitate trade and traffic.

CONCLUSION

A more comprehensive security policy that addresses both national and international concerns has to be developed. Pakistan does not appear to be in a mood to reverse its policy of aiding and abetting terrorism in India in the near future. Without giving up the hope for improved relations with Pakistan, or for a concerted international action against terrorism, India will have to fight the
battle against terrorism and insurgency by relying on its own strength and resources.

India will be more than willing to cooperate with the international community to control terrorism. It has signed a number of bilateral agreements with countries like Egypt and is taking an active role in building a consensus against terrorism in the United Nations. It is against countries providing sanctuary to terrorist groups on religious or ideological grounds. India today does not give sanctuary to any external terrorist group, but it expects its neighbors to do the same.

Foreign-sponsored terrorism cannot make much headway if the internal environment in the country does not support it. A sense of insecurity among the minorities provides terrorism an opening in which to take root. It is important to win the confidence of minority groups. But more than anything else it is economic policies that will determine the future of these movements. A thriving economy, which gives hope to people, is more likely to defeat all types of extremist movements than any other strategy. Violent extremist movements grow more easily under conditions of poverty and misrule. Corruption and nepotism have provided the bedrock for the growth of terrorist movements in India. This has been true of all the affected areas in the country—Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, the Northeast, Bihar, and Andhra Pradesh.

The need for a well-coordinated security apparatus can hardly be overemphasized. The police, paramilitary forces, army, and intelligence agencies have to coordinate their efforts if they are to win the battle against subversive forces. For as long as possible, dealing with extremist violence should be entirely the responsibility of the police and paramilitary forces. The army should not normally be entrusted with the task of dealing with internal security problems. But it has to undertake this role when the police or the paramilitary forces are unable to cope with the situation on their own. There may not be any alternative to deploying the army in proxy war situations when the police are unable to cope with terrorism. A composite force, including the police, paramilitaries, and the army, organized along the lines of the NSG has proved to be most effective in dealing with terrorism, as it demands a different type of expertise than what is available at present with separate institutions operating independently.
THE TRAGIC SEPTEMBER 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States in New York and Washington and the two suicide attacks in India—one against the State Legislative Assembly in Srinagar on October 1, 2001, and the other on the Indian Parliament on December 13, 2001—have shocked the nation as never before. These dramatic events have brought the issue of national security and terrorism to the forefront of the national agenda. Even though India has been a victim of terrorism from Pakistan and Afghanistan for many years, no one had seriously believed that the terrorists could go to such extremes. India has been repeatedly warning the international community about the grave threat international terrorism poses to world peace, but its warnings were not taken seriously. It is now slowly sinking in that the fanatic terrorists can go to any extreme, including the use of weapons of mass destruction.

Even before these incidents, there was enough evidence available to suggest that Osama bin Laden and his Al Qaeda network were behind many of the terrorist incidents in Jammu and Kashmir. Terrorism feeds on pathological hatred, and combined with religious fanaticism it is a deadly mixture. The Pakistani and Islamic fundamentalist hatred of the Hindus and India has to be seen in the context of India’s partition in 1947. It is not a coincidence that the Taliban drew much of its inspiration from the Deoband School of Islam, which is located in India not far from Delhi. All evidence points to the fact that after being pushed out of Afghanistan Osama bin Laden, his network, and these self-proclaimed protectors of Islam may have moved into the tribal area of the North West Frontier Province and Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, where already a number of terrorist training camps sponsored by the ISI and the Al Qaeda network are functioning. The October 1 incident in Srinagar and the December 13 incident in Delhi point to the fact that the terrorist movement, at least in the short run, could be intensified by Pakistan. The remnants of defeated Taliban from Afghanistan are likely to move into Jammu and Kashmir. The fact that since September 11 there has been an escalation of terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir gives credence to this belief.

Indian policymakers have no option but to confront this menace squarely. These incidents have proved that appeasement only in-
creases the terrorists’ appetite for more blood. Suicide terrorists are brought up and sustained on uninterrupted hatred for a people belonging to another religion or ethnic group. In their zeal to impose their type of Islam and settle scores with the Hindu community, India is an obvious target. The ruling establishment in Pakistan, which is dominated by the army, survives on this hatred of what it calls “Hindu India.” Of course, its members conveniently forget the fact that in the world today India has the second-largest population of Muslims (after Indonesia).

The terrorist outfits that are active in India, especially in Jammu and Kashmir, like Jaish-e-Mohammad, Lashker-e-Toiba, and Hizbul Mujahideen have their roots in Pakistan and are closely linked to the Al Qaeda network. They have joint training camps and common sources of huge funds. Since the roots of crossborder terrorism against India lie in Pakistan and Afghanistan, Indian policymakers have naturally approached the international community to take note of it and act before it is too late. The defeat of the Taliban is not going to end terrorism. Various terrorist networks are likely to regroup and commit more daring and sensational acts. The use of weapons of mass destruction—biological, chemical, and nuclear—cannot be ruled out. Pakistan can provide them with the necessary expertise and equipment to produce these weapons. Pakistan is part of the problem and will become a part of the solution only if the West mounts strong pressure on the Pakistani establishment to give up this double game of making a distinction between acts of terrorism by the so-called freedom fighters and those by the terrorist groups.

With the changing nature and intensity of the threat, a reassessment of India’s response at various levels of organizational structure and preparation to respond to major terrorist incidents is under way. There is tremendous pressure by an enraged public to respond effectively against the cross-border terrorism that has been waged by Pakistan for the last twenty years. It wants India to raise the cost of terrorism to the sponsoring country. Available policy options range from diplomacy to covert action, physical security enhancement, and military force. India has enacted a new law against terrorism. The Prevention of Terrorism Act has already been enacted, although its passage in the two houses of Parliament involved a lot of controversy. All the major political parties are unanimous, however, that
there is a need to strengthen the legal mechanisms that deal with terrorism. An intensive campaign has been launched to plug the various channels of funding to the terrorist groups. The recovery of rupees 50 lakhs (equivalent to about one hundred thousand dollars) from a vehicle in Srinagar in Jammu and Kashmir in November 2001 and rupees 35 lakhs from Delhi in January 2002 are one result of the intensification of this drive. Efforts are also under way to build a political consensus in the country to deal with religious fundamentalism and extremism.

The Kashmiri conflict between India and Pakistan is not a territorial dispute but an important part of the Islamic Jihad being waged by Islamic fundamentalists operating from countries like Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Afghanistan during the Taliban occupation. Security experts have warned of an activation of Pakistani, Taliban, and Al Qaeda combined sleeper cells dormant in India. The root of the terrorist scourge in India is not the Lashker-e-Toiba or Jaish-e-Mohammad but their common father—the hardliner religious fanatics in the Pakistani military. Without reform of the Pakistani power structure, there will be no end to terrorism in this region.