

Foreword

The months since September 11, 2001, have inflicted transformations on patterns of terrorism and counter-terrorism that would have been inconceivable even days prior to the catastrophic attacks in USA. The sheer enormity of 9/11, and of what was demonstrated to be possible, suddenly cut through the ambivalence and deceit of the Western world's past engagement with terrorism in what it perceived as 'faraway places'. America's 'Global War Against Terror' has created new alliances – some, no doubt, merely opportunistic, but others that have already had demonstrable effect on the ground, and that indicate a permanent ideological and political commitment against the scourge of international terror.

These developments reflect a definite movement forward – but dangers persist, and these are immense. The continuous escalation in West Asia is a clear indication that the advocates and practitioners of terror have lost neither their determination nor their virulence. The same message echoes in many parts of the Indian sub-continent, as the attack on the Protestant Church in the diplomatic quarter of Islamabad, and abduction and brutal murder of Daniel Pearl, demonstrated in Pakistan. A widening rupture is also visible between rhetoric and reality, as General Musharraf's military regime blows hot and cold with the Islamist terrorist groupings, and a dubious process for the 'restoration of democracy' within that country.

The continued violence and infiltration in Jammu & Kashmir (J&K), the attacks on the State Legislature there, and on the

Indian Parliament at Delhi, the attack on the USIS Centre at Kolkata, the Godhra massacre in Gujarat, and a succession of acts of terror in other parts of the country, including its troubled Northeast, deliver the same unfortunate message in India. In Nepal, the initial rampage of the Maoists may have been contained by the Army's campaign, but the toll on life continues to mount dramatically on both sides. A rising tide of fundamentalist mobilisation and violence is also visible in Bangladesh.

The 'peace process' in Sri Lanka has, of course, raised unprecedented hopes, but excessive optimism may be premature in this theatre as well. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) have entered into negotiations with the government before, but these have, again and again, been proven to be strategies to gain time, to recover from losses in past campaigns, only to return to violence after the organisation's strength and cadres have been rebuilt.

An attitude of cautious optimism is, consequently, the most appropriate as we examine continuing patterns of violence in South Asia. The present Volume turns a critical focus on a wide range of conflicts, as well as initiatives for response and resolution in the post-9/11 era, even as it reassesses the past against the backdrop of emerging trends. Once more, there is a significant focus on insurgencies and the 'peace process' in various States in India's Northeast, as well as on current transformations in J&K. Sekine Yasumasa brings an important Japanese perspective on communal faultlines in India, an issue that has suddenly regained extraordinary significance since Godhra and the orchestrated communal carnage it triggered. And a recurrent problem that emerges, alike, in relation to terrorist, political and communal violence, is the media's often erratic orientation and reportage in moments of crisis, an issue that comes under Arun Shourie's uncompromising scrutiny.

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