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Introduction: Religion, Radicalism, and Security in South Asia

In the immediate aftermath of its publication, Harvard University Professor Samuel P. Huntington's 1993 *Foreign Affairs* article entitled "The Clash of Civilizations?" generated a firestorm of debate.¹ Critics called it an overstatement, simplistic, even mischievous. A decade later, his central thesis—that conflicts between religion-based civilizations would dominate world politics in the coming century—seemed to be holding its ground. Indeed, more than a few seasoned observers of world politics were expressing the view that Huntington's argument had been substantially vindicated by events—that, by almost any imaginable measure, religion had emerged in the first years of the twenty-first century not only as a central issue of international public discourse but also as a central ingredient in violent global conflict.²

1. Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (Summer 1993).

2. Hoover Institution's Stanley Kurtz began an essay reconsidering Huntington's thesis, published about ten months after the catastrophic events of September 11, 2001, with the comment: "This is Samuel P. Huntington's moment. The world of cultural and religious strife anticipated by Huntington in his much-discussed (and widely excoriated) book, *The Clash of Civilizations*, has unquestionably arrived." See "The Future of 'History,'" *Policy Review*, no. 113 (June/July 2002), online edition.

It is unlikely that Huntington himself could have foreseen either the rapidity or extent of religion's rise to prominence in world affairs. He had warned, of course, that Islam had especially bloody borders; but that the rough outlines of a global fault line war pitting the West against the Islamic world, or at least against its most refractory components, would be in place less than a decade hence was clearly beyond anyone's powers of prophecy.

Islamic militancy was already a burning issue in much of the world by the end of the twentieth century. In late 2001, it quite unexpectedly hurtled to the top of the world threat list, driven there by the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington and the subsequent launching of the global war on terrorism. The humiliating defeat of Baathist-ruled Iraq by American-led coalition forces in April 2003 seemed bound to keep it there. Notwithstanding strenuous efforts in this period by numerous national leaders and a host of intellectuals to draw a clear distinction between Islam as a major and humane world religion and Islam as a cloak for politically motivated terrorist violence, the temptation to dilute the distinction has faced increasingly less resistance. Indeed, there was some danger that a "clash of civilizations" of some sort was no longer mere abstraction.

Religion's rise in salience was especially visible in world public opinion, where stunning changes in perceived threat seemed to confirm Huntington's postulated refashioning of the world order. For instance, a massive Pew Global Attitudes opinion survey of more than thirty-eight thousand people in forty-four nations, conducted roughly a year after 9/11, turned up disturbing evidence of profound differences in how people from different regions of the globe viewed the United States and the U.S.-led global war on terrorism.³ Majorities rated the United States favorably in thirty-five of the forty-two countries in which the question was asked. The most negative opinions of both the United States and the global war on terrorism were recorded in predominantly Muslim countries of the Middle East and South Asia—Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, Pakistan, Egypt, and Bangladesh.⁴

3. *What the World Thinks in 2002: The Pew Global Attitudes Project* (Washington, D.C.: The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, December 2002).

4. Of Muslim countries in what the survey designated the Middle East/Conflict Area, only Uzbekistan, where an extremely high 85 percent of those polled gave the United States a favorable rating, departed from the norm. Majorities in all Muslim countries in the survey, again excluding Uzbekistan but including Indonesia and Senegal, opposed the war on terrorism.

Of these, Pakistan—in spite of its membership of the global coalition against terrorism and key role in the coalition’s war in Afghanistan—stood out for its people’s apparent disdain for America and lack of sympathy for the global war on terrorism. According to the survey, only 10 percent of Pakistanis (the second-lowest percentage among all nations surveyed) had a favorable opinion of the United States; only 2 percent (the lowest figure among all the nations surveyed) had a positive impression of the spread of American ideas and customs; only 9 percent (again, the lowest figure among all nations surveyed) preferred American ideas about democracy; and while 45 percent opposed the U.S.-led war on terrorism, only 20 percent favored it. Bangladesh respondents were only mildly more favorably inclined: 45 percent had a favorable view of the United States (against 47 percent unfavorable); 31 percent preferred American ideas about democracy (against 31 percent who did not); only 14 percent had a positive impression of the spread of American ideas and customs; and only 28 percent favored the U.S.-led war on terrorism.

An especially startling finding surfaced in a Pew follow-up survey question that queried respondents’ view of suicide bombing in defense of Islam. At least a quarter of Muslims in eleven of the fourteen countries surveyed believed that suicide bombings could be justified in order to defend Islam from its enemies. Support for suicide bombing had surprisingly sizeable majorities in Lebanon (73 percent) and Ivory Coast (56 percent); and relatively high minorities supported it in the two Muslim-majority South Asian countries in the survey—Bangladesh (44 percent) and Pakistan (33 percent).⁵

Not surprisingly, the generally negative opinions Muslims around the world seemed to harbor about the United States and the global war on terrorism were strongly reciprocated by residents of the United States. In a summer 2002 poll of 3,262 Americans sponsored jointly by The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations and the German Marshall Fund, terrorism topped the list of perceived threats to U.S. vital interests. Muslim countries had remarkably low ratings on the poll’s “favorability on thermometer scale”: Saudi Arabia (33 degrees), Pakistan (31 degrees), Iran (28 degrees), and Afghanistan (29 degrees) had all fallen in favor or remained stationary since 1998 in marked contrast with countries like Russia (55 degrees), Britain (76 degrees),

5. *What the World Thinks*, 5.

or Germany (61 degrees)—all of whom had risen in favor substantially. There were also clear signs of marked increases in wariness among Americans toward Islam: the proportion of Americans who considered Islamic fundamentalism a critical threat to vital American interests had jumped twenty-three points—from 38 percent to 61 percent—since 1998; four out of ten Americans declared the terrorist attacks of 9/11 to represent the “true teachings” of Islam—to a great degree (21 percent) or to some degree (18 percent); and there was strong support (76 percent) for tightened restrictions on immigrants to the United States from Arab or Muslim lands.⁶

Islam, whether combined rhetorically with militancy, fundamentalism, radicalism, or terrorism, without doubt currently occupies the spotlight in the West’s efforts to beat back the current challenge to its dominance of the global order. Admittedly, Islam may persist in this role—or even fill it in yet more catastrophically violent ways—well into the future.⁷ It should not be imagined, however, that Islam is the only religion on the planet able and willing to swell the ranks of religious radicalism or, for that matter, to inspire acts of terrorism. Militant Hindu and Sikh movements, not infrequently tinged with violence and terrorism, have lengthy histories in India. Religious radicalism is not a rarity amongst Christians, either. On the contrary, there are indications that the world’s rapidly expanding Christian population may be acquiring “fundamentalist” traits hitherto attributed mainly to Islam. Observing that “in the past half century the critical centers of the Christian world have moved decisively to Africa, to Latin America, and to Asia,” Pennsylvania State University historian Philip Jenkins argues that revolutionary change in world Christianity is in progress, that the motivation for change is conservative and fundamentalist at its core, and that “in its variety and vitality, in its global reach, in its association with the world’s fastest-growing societies, in its shifting centers of gravity, in the way its values and practices vary from place

6. *A World Transformed: Foreign Policy Attitudes of the U.S. Public after September 11* (Chicago: The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, 2002).

7. This is the unsettling message of a recent commentary by a leading American academic. According to him, “a dialectical and symbiotic connection, perhaps an escalating and vicious cycle, exists between the [growth of the American Empire and the growth of Islamic terrorism], and the world is about to witness a titanic and explosive struggle between them.” James Kurth, “Confronting the Unipolar Moment: The American Empire and Islamic Terrorism,” *Current History* (December 2002): 404.

to place—in these and other ways it is Christianity [not Islam] that will leave the deepest mark on the twenty-first century.”⁸

South Asian Regional Perspective

THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM launched in October 2001 has had a visibly profound impact on the states of South Asia—on Pakistan most directly and physically, of course, but in one way or another on the others as well. However, its impact on these states has been in certain key respects less traumatic—less politically and socially destabilizing, in other words—than in the case of countries in some other regions. This is in part because South Asia, so far at least, has not been a primary target in the war: It housed none of the so-called “rogue” states, none of the notorious “axis of evil.”

In larger part, however, the states of South Asia have taken the war on terrorism more or less in stride because religious radicalism and its terrorist offshoots were already staples of the political agendas of these states long before they reared their heads in New York and Washington. These phenomena have none of the novelty in South Asia, to put it simply, that they undoubtedly possess in South Bronx. Indeed, few if any of the world’s other geographic regions can boast of more deeply entrenched and widely felt patterns of religious radicalism than have been evident for decades in South Asia. This applies especially to the two largest and most populous countries in the region, India and Pakistan, but it also applies, albeit to a lesser extent, to Bangladesh. Though these states differ greatly amongst themselves when it comes to the roots, nature, and scale of religion-related radicalism, in all three states these phenomena are now major public issues. They crop up constantly both in their domestic politics and in their relations with one another.

INDIA

On India’s domestic front, religious radicalism has found its politically most powerful expression in the so-called *sangh parivar*—the family of militant Hindu groups (including, most notably, the Rashtriya

8. Philip Jenkins, “The Next Christianity,” *Atlantic Monthly* (October 2002): 54–55. Jenkins’ ideas are elaborated in his book, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

Swayamsevak Sangh, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the Shiv Sena, and the Bajrang Dal) that form the organizational backbone of contemporary Hindu nationalism. The Hindutva ideology of these groups, having the goal of a united Hindu Rashtra (Hindu Nation)—and asserting existence of a blanket “Hindu” national identity for all of India’s inhabitants, be they formally Hindu or not—occupies one side in a heated and momentous debate nowadays over India’s national destiny. How one feels this destiny is best served—in regard to such issues as the disposal of Kashmir, for instance, or the content of school history textbooks, or the treatment of India’s religious minorities, or the restoration of the Ram temple at Ayodhya, or even the protection of India’s innumerable “holy cows”⁹—inevitably turns in no small measure on one’s understanding of religion and of its relationship to Indian nationalism. Presently well positioned to advance its Hindutva-oriented understanding of these is the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the political embodiment of Hindu nationalism and current leader of the country’s ruling coalition government. For all of India’s political parties, however, no matter how liberal and secular they claim to be, the matter of religious identity is never very far from the top of the political agenda.

The radical religious strain in Indian domestic politics surfaced quite plainly in the legislative assembly elections held in Gujarat State in December 2002. In these fiercely fought and immensely crucial elections (the first of ten state elections scheduled in the run-up to the national elections in 2004), Narendra Modi, the controversial incumbent chief minister, led the BJP’s state unit to a smashing political victory—securing 126 seats (more than two-thirds of the total) against its Congress rival’s paltry 51. Almost all political analysts have conceded that the Muslim massacre of Hindu pilgrims that occurred at Godhra earlier in the year in the states’ south, together with the widespread anti-Muslim violence that followed it, bore heavily on the election results. As India’s liberal intellectual class tended to see it, the election’s outcome was yet another unwelcome sign that India’s secular statehood stood in considerable peril. Yogendra Yadav, one of

9. The University of Delhi historian who first sought to publish a book arguing that the cow did not achieve sacred standing in Hinduism until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries reportedly received death threats for his heresy. D. N. Jha, *The Myth of the Holy Cow* (New York: Verso, 2002).

India's most seasoned election analysts, observed in *Frontline*, for example, that "the BJP managed to recover its eroding social base with carefully crafted and subtly executed politics of hatred. It did succeed in keeping the damage within limits and offset these against gains made in new regions and among new social groups. Anti-Muslim violence played a crucial role in this process of recovery, damage control and acquisition."¹⁰

On India's foreign front, New Delhi has traded very heavily in recent years in accusations of religious extremism against its major regional rival, Pakistan. The allegation that Pakistan was a "state sponsor of terrorism"—in particular, of *Islamic* terrorism—in Muslim-majority Kashmir was already a mainstay of Indian appeals for international (especially American) support by the middle of the 1990s; and it grew steadily more prominent thereafter. In a letter to President Bill Clinton on 12 May 1998, for example, in which he explained the rationale underlying India's initial series of nuclear tests, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee complained of India's "deteriorating security environment" and, without actually naming Pakistan, of India's having been "for the last ten years ... the victim of unremitting terrorism and militancy sponsored by it in several parts of [the] country, specially Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir."¹¹ Vajpayee's External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh, echoing these sentiments and capitalizing on the growing international unpopularity of Islamabad's patronage of Taliban-ruled Afghanistan, declared in a public speech a year later in the wake of the Kargil crisis that Pakistan's action at Kargil was "an overspill of the 'Afghanistan disorder syndrome' ... a manifestation of this medieval malevolence spilling over from Afghanistan."¹²

Application of the terrorist label to Pakistan gained much greater credibility in late 2001, of course, when the West's hugely expanded apprehensions over the tactics of religious radicals suddenly seemed to overlap—and thus to validate—India's pre-existing fear that Kashmir had been "hijacked" by *jihad*-motivated and Pakistan-based

10. Yogendra Yadav, "The Patterns and Lessons," *Frontline* 19, no. 26 (21 December 2002 – 3 January 2003), online edition.

11. "India's Letter to Clinton on the Nuclear Testing," *New York Times*, 12 May 1998, online edition.

12. Jaswant Singh, "Kargil and Beyond" (speech given at the India International Centre, New Delhi, 20 July 1999), text reproduced by the Embassy of India web service.

foreign militants. Having survived for years on Western political agendas primarily as an instance of human rights deprivation, the Kashmir dispute now seemed in real danger of slipping into the category of just another front in the global war on terrorism.

PAKISTAN

Pakistan's national reputation has been subjected to a relentless battering in recent years—and not only from its Indian adversary. Routinely described in the Western media as a politically maimed and potentially “failed” or “failing” state, Pakistan was said by responsible observers even before 9/11 to be “drifting toward religious extremism.”¹³ Prominent American academics and professional analysts claimed that many Pakistani Army officers “share the religious zeal of the fundamentalists”¹⁴ and that the country's thousands of madrassas (traditional religious schools, seminaries or academies) were serving as massive institutional incubators of religious fanaticism as well as recruiting centers for the Islamic jihad.¹⁵ Prestigious American think tanks occasionally weighed in with highly damaging country profiles of their own. For instance, the comprehensive report (*Transition 2001*) presented to the Bush administration in its first weeks in office by a blue ribbon panel assembled by the Rand Corporation contained the stark warning that

Pakistan is in serious crisis and is pursuing policies counter to important U.S. interests. The United States should increase pressure on Islamabad to stop support for the Taliban, to cooperate in the fight against terrorism, to show restraint in Kashmir, and to focus on solving its own internal problems.... Pakistan continues to be beset by unhealthy political, economic, and strategic trends.... The most disturbing of these trends has been the growth of Islamic extremism. Extremist groups thrive because of Pakistan's continuing state failures and because they are intentionally supported by

13. Barry Bearak, “Death to Blasphemers: Islam's Grip on Pakistan,” *New York Times*, 12 May 2001, online edition.

14. Sumit Ganguly, “Pakistan's Never-Ending Story,” *Foreign Affairs* 79, no. 2 (March/April 2000): 6.

15. See, for instance, Rahul Bedi, “Kashmir Peace Talks Collapse,” *Jane's Intelligence Review* 12, no. 10 (1 October 2000), online edition for Asia.

the Pakistan military and secret services in the pursuit of the latter's goals in Kashmir and Afghanistan.¹⁶

Not the least damaging assessment, however, had come on 25 March 2000, not long before the release of the Rand report, directly and unequivocally from an American president. In his televised address to the people of Pakistan during a brief five-hour visit to the country at the end of an India-centered trip to the region, Bill Clinton came within a hair's breadth of branding Pakistan a sponsor of terrorism. Specifically, he admonished his listeners to recognize "that no grievance, no cause, no system of belief can ever justify deliberate killing of innocents. Those who bomb bus stations, target embassies and kill those who uphold the law are not heroes." He noted Pakistan's "tragic squandering of effort, energy and wealth on policies that make [it] poorer but not safer." On Kashmir, he urged restraint and respect for the Line of Control. He called attention to what he designated "a stark truth," specifically that "there is no military solution to Kashmir," then added the biting moral admonition that "it is wrong to support attacks against civilians across the Line of Control."¹⁷

The advent of the global war on terrorism brought only modest relief for Pakistan's beleaguered public image. Indeed, though Pakistan found itself suitably positioned once again in the frontline of the West's fight against a common enemy, Pakistan's reputation continued to take a beating. The radical Islamist *cum* terrorist brand clung to it like a tar baby—even more tightly, it seemed, when linked with allegations of nuclear recklessness. Witness, for example, the comments of Jim Hoagland, a two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, in an article appearing in the *Washington Post* on 24 October 2002, soon after charges were made that Pakistan had supplied to North Korea equipment for enriching uranium. Provocatively headlined "Nuclear Enabler: Pakistan Today Is the Most Dangerous Place on Earth," the article declared that

[President] Pervez Musharraf's Pakistan is a base from which nuclear technology, fundamentalist terrorism and life-

16. *Transition 2001* (Washington, D.C.: The Rand Corporation, January 2001), xiii, 45.

17. "Complete Text of President Clinton's Address to the People of Pakistan," *Dawn*, 25 March 2000, online edition.

destroying heroin are spread around the globe. American and French citizens and Christians of any nationality, including Pakistani, are indiscriminately slaughtered by fanatics as occasion arises. This nuclear-armed country is in part ungoverned, in part ungovernable.¹⁸

For those already convinced that the repugnant reputation was wholly deserved, the results of the October 2002 elections of Pakistan's national and provincial assemblies seemed to offer confirmation. The elections catapulted into the political limelight the Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal (MMA), a fiercely anti-U.S. bloc of six ultra-conservative Islamist parties. The alliance won an unprecedented 52 of 272 seats (19 percent) in the National Assembly election, lifting the religious parties into a potentially power-brokering role in the central government for the first time in Pakistan's history; and in the provincial elections, the MMA won outright control of the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and a major share in power in a coalition government in Baluchistan—like the NWFP geographically situated next to the strategically sensitive Afghanistan border. There were a number of reasons for the MMA's electoral triumph; and some of them had very little to do with Islam. Moreover, the fact that the MMA secured only 11 percent of the popular vote nationwide (and much less than that in the country's most populous provinces—the Punjab and Sindh) argued fairly persuasively against the idea that religious fanaticism was sweeping the nation. Nevertheless, the belief that Pakistan was not wholeheartedly committed to the West's side in the global war on terrorism could not easily be dismissed.

BANGLADESH

Bangladesh has long enjoyed a reputation as an especially moderate Islamic country. Considered by many to be culturally more Bengali than Muslim, it was a relative latecomer to the list of nations said by some to be dangerously infected with the virus of religious radicalism. A number of developments prompted its placement in this category. One of them was the surprising capture of sixteen seats in the National Assembly by the rightwing Jamaat-i-Islami (JI)

18. Jim Hoagland, "Nuclear Enabler: Pakistan Today Is the Most Dangerous Place on Earth," *Washington Post*, 24 October 2002, online edition.

religious party in the October 2001 general elections. In fact, this figure represented only 5 percent of the total number of seats. Moreover, the JI's success was mainly the fortuitous product of its inclusion in a four-party electoral alliance formed by Begum Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh National Party (BNP), which won a smashing victory over the Awami League and, besides, an outright parliamentary majority in its own right. Bangladesh' Islamists were not in a position, in other words, to claim an electoral coup even remotely on the scale of the one scored by Pakistan's Islamist parties exactly a year later.

A perhaps equally potent reason for ringing of the religious extremist alarm bell over Bangladesh were sensational reports of spreading Islamic militancy—including attacks on the country's Hindu minority (as much as 11 percent of the population)—that seemed to surface with increasing frequency in world media in the wake of the October 2001 elections. To the great chagrin of the BNP's leadership, widely circulated articles warning of the mushrooming growth of militant-run madrassas, of the existence of covert military training camps for recruits to the Islamic jihad, and of a thickening web of organizational links between militant Bangladeshi groups with al-Qaeda appeared under such arresting headlines as “Beware of Bangladesh—Bangladesh: Cocoon of Terror,”¹⁹ and “Bangladesh: Breeding Ground for Muslim Terror.”²⁰ An October 15, 2002 *Time* magazine report bearing the title “Deadly Cargo” observed that “signs abound that Bangladesh has become a safe haven for Islamic jihadis—including Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters fresh off the boat from Afghanistan.” This article told of a midnight rendezvous in December 2001 off the coast of Bangladesh, where more than a hundred heavily armed al-Qaeda fighters, fleeing American bombing in Afghanistan, were allegedly off-loaded and sped to hiding places presumably in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.²¹ Faced with such reports, the Bangladesh government fought back, insisting that it was the target of an internationally orchestrated slander campaign.²² It appeared most unlikely, however, that the issue of religious radicalism would soon be

19. Bertil Lintner, “Beware of Bangladesh—Bangladesh: Cocoon of Terror,” *Far Eastern Economic Review* (4 April 2002).

20. Lintner, “Bangladesh: Breeding Ground for Muslim Terror,” *Asia Times*, 21 September 2002, online edition.

21. Alex Perry, “Deadly Cargo,” *Time Asia*, 15 October 2002, online edition.

22. Haroon Habib, “Bangladesh Alleges Slander Campaign,” *The Hindu*, 18 October 2002, online edition.

removed from the domestic and foreign policy agendas of Bangladesh.

Workshop on Religion and Security in South Asia

RELIGIOUS RADICALISM was a significant policy problem in most of the South Asian countries even before the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. From the brief discussion above, one can readily see that it has grown into a yet more formidable problem since then. This problem clearly presents itself today as a challenge to *domestic* policymakers in most of the seven countries of South Asia; it presents itself also as a challenge at the levels of *regional* and *international* security policy. Without doubt, religious radicalism merits classification, in particular, among the most serious challenges currently confronting U.S. security policy pertaining to the South Asian region. This holds true even if the scale of religious radicalism's threat to the region (or any country in it) in the popular imagination is grossly overstated.

Recognition of the need for serious examination of the problem of religious radicalism in the South Asian region prompted the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies in Honolulu, Hawaii, to hold a workshop on "Religion and Security in South Asia" from 19–22 August 2002. The workshop focused on the three largest countries of the region—India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. It brought together senior policymakers, defense officials, journalists, intelligence analysts, nongovernmental organization (NGO) activists, and leading academics concerned with South Asia to discuss issues relating to the phenomenon of religious radicalism in the region. The specific objective was to advance policymakers' understanding of the relationship between religious radicalism and security in this region, and thus to improve their capacity to fashion security policies appropriate to the challenges of religious radicalism in the present period. Thirty-eight individuals from six nations (Bangladesh, Denmark, India, Pakistan, Thailand, United States) participated in the workshop.

The workshop was organized into nine panels focused on three broad themes: (1) the ideological, organizational, and institutional

roots of religious radicalism in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, (2) the relationship of religious radicalism to the threat of both domestic and interstate violence in South Asia, and (3) the policy implications, both domestic and international, of religious radicalism. Specific questions considered in the workshop included the following:

- What is the scale of religious radicalism's threat to the security of South Asia and adjoining regions?
- What differences exist in the nature and scale of religious radicalism in the three countries under study?
- In organization, ideology, and political impact, how does *Islamic* radicalism compare with *Hindu* radicalism?
- Exactly what does religion, understood as a body of beliefs and doctrine, have to do with religious radicalism? To what extent is religious identity merely a *vehicle* rather than an *inspiration* for religious radicalism?
- How important are madrassas as "incubators" or "factories" of Islamic militancy and terrorism?
- What are the causes and current dimensions of inter-communal and sectarian violence in these three countries?
- What is the relationship between ethnic separatism and religious radicalism—in particular as manifested in Kashmir and in India's Northeast?
- What impact has the global war on terrorism had on the growth and severity of religious radicalism in the three countries? In particular, what has been its impact on India-Pakistan relations?
- How have the international community and, especially, the United States government reacted to religious radicalism in South Asia? How have their policies differed in this regard from country to country in the region?
- What policy measures should the United States, other countries, and international organizations take in South Asia to best meet the challenge of religious radicalism?

The papers assembled in this volume address these issues and others. From the beginning, care was taken to ensure that all topics dealt with—all of them enormously controversial—would be addressed from a diversity of philosophical and national points of view. Thus, no “school perspective”—much less any “school solution”—will be found herein. The organizers of the workshop, and of the book, understood that a major challenge was to maintain throughout the project a commitment to impartial, unfettered, and rigorous scholarly inquiry. Naturally, this does not mean that a reader will find the argument in each chapter entirely appealing. Were that the case, the organizers would surely have failed in their task. It is the hope of the project’s organizers that the contents of this volume will stimulate closer attention—by policymakers as well as academic analysts—to the widespread, multifaceted, and profoundly important phenomenon of religious radicalism in South Asia.