



THE RISE OF ISKP IN SOUTH ASIA: A THREAT TO REGIONAL STABILITY

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The rise of ISKP (Islamic State – Khorasan Province) in South Asia, particularly India, is a cause for concern. The group's use of propaganda and recruitment tactics targeting vulnerable individuals leads to the radicalization of youth and the perpetration of violent acts. ISKP's acknowledgement of responsibility for the [Coimbatore and Mangalore blasts](#), even though they failed to cause the intended harm, may represent an attempt by the group to demonstrate its expanding presence and operational capabilities in India. This is consistent with the group's [propaganda](#) and recruitment efforts, portraying ISKP as a powerful and effective organization capable of carrying out attacks in multiple countries.

Indian security agencies should take this threat seriously and work proactively to prevent further attacks by ISKP and other extremist groups—and seek help from Delhi's partners in addressing these threats. This may include measures such as improving intelligence-gathering capabilities, strengthening border security, and enhancing cooperation with international partners in countering terrorism. Addressing the underlying grievances and socio-economic factors contributing to the radicalization of individuals also matters for preventing the spread of extremist ideologies.

ISKP in South Asia

Founded in 2014, the ISKP goal was to establish an Islamic caliphate in Afghanistan. The return of the Taliban to power in Afghanistan in 2021 created a complex security situation in the region, emboldening groups like ISKP to push their agenda and attract recruits. The Taliban and ISKP have [different ideologies and objectives](#), and their competing interests could lead to violent clashes in Afghanistan and neighboring countries.

ISKP's establishment of a "[Khorasan Province](#)" in Central and South Asia demonstrates its aspirations to expand its reach beyond Afghanistan and establish a broader caliphate.

One of the ways ISKP has succeeded in recruiting members is by taking advantage of minority plight and sectarianism across the region. By portraying itself as a defender of minority rights and a champion of the oppressed, ISKP has succeeded in attracting individuals who feel marginalized or disenfranchised by their governments.

Propaganda tactics carried out by the ISKP have also succeeded in garnering widespread sympathy for its cause: overthrowing governments in the region. The organization has capitalized on public dissatisfaction with corruption, inequality, and violence among Central and South Asian countries by portraying itself as a more extreme, uncompromising alternative to these other parties.

ISKP's use of online propaganda and targeted messaging has helped it recruit members and build support for its agenda. In particular, the objective of ISKP's propaganda campaign in India is to condemn the emergence of Hindu nationalism and defend dissatisfied Muslim minorities.

The ISKP has also issued a book in Malayalam, the indigenous language of southwest India, detailing how to engage in jihad. The organization has, furthermore, produced books with comparable content in Hindi and Urdu. These publications are intended to radicalize susceptible individuals and persuade them to join the group's cause.

The vast majority of Muslims in India reject the extremist ideology and violent tactics of ISKP, and the Indian government has taken steps to counter the group's propaganda and recruitment efforts. Nonetheless, efforts to counter such propaganda must continue.

Conclusion: A Comprehensive Response

ISKP has demonstrated its resiliency by adapting to the ever-changing situations in Central and South Asia and shifting its focus to an increasingly number of countries. Its rise requires a comprehensive and coordinated response by all stakeholders, including international partners such as the United States and East Asia, who can play an important role in countering the ISKP threat.

For starters, the United States has a strong interest in countering this threat given the groups links to the broader ISIS network and has the potential to destabilize the region. The United States can provide significant support in intelligence-sharing, capacity-building, and diplomatic engagement, as well as in countering terrorist financing and promoting countering extremist ideology.

Partners such as Japan and South Korea can also play a role, including through financial assistance and technical support. As part of broader efforts to promote regional stability and security, these countries can work with Indian authorities and other stakeholders to build a comprehensive and coordinated response.

Additionally, cooperation and coordination among South Asian countries and their international partners is essential. This could include joint military exercises, sharing of best practices, and joint operations against the group. A united front against ISKP would send a strong message that their violent extremist activities will not be tolerated.

South Asian countries should also work together to address the underlying issues contributing to the growth of extremist groups, such as poverty, inequality, and political instability. By addressing root causes, South Asian countries can create a more stable

and secure environment for their citizens and reduce the appeal of violent extremism. A multi-faceted approach that involves improved intelligence gathering, counter-radicalization efforts, and international support, as well as cooperation and coordination among South Asian countries, is crucial to effectively addressing ISKP's threat.

PacNet commentaries and responses represent the views of the respective authors. Alternative viewpoints are always welcomed and encouraged.