### Threat from tribal Pakistan

**FIRST**, Pakistan military dismantling the Al-Qaeda enclave in tribal Pakistan. After the US-led coalition intervention in Afghanistan, the ground zero of terrorism moved from Afghanistan to tribal Pakistan.

The global headquarters of Al-Qaeda embedded in tribal Pakistan not only poses an enduring threat to adjacent Afghanistan and mainland Pakistan but beyond. Operating out of the Federally Administered Tribal Area, Al-Qaeda is also building new and strengthening new alliances with Middle Eastern and Asian groups. The same operational, informational and training structures that existed in Afghanistan have been re-established in tribal Pakistan.

### Iraq the heart of terrorism

**SECOND**, Asian governments working with US and European counterparts detecting and disrupting operational, financial and ideological links between the Middle Eastern and Asian groups.

After the US invasion of Iraq, the centre of gravity of international terrorism has moved to Iraq. The developments in Iraq, especially after the US-led coalition pull out, will lead to greater insecurity of the Middle East and beyond.

The international spectrum of groups now present in Iraq will use Iraqi soil to plan, prepare and execute attacks in the Middle East and beyond.

Iraq serves both as a magnet and a lightning rod for a range of violent Muslim groups including those in Asia. With frequent print and television reporting of the loss of life in Iraq, the Asian Muslim shares the suffering, resentment and anger of the Middle Eastern Muslims.
Homegrown cells present sinister threat to the West

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THIRD, ability and willingness of Asian governments to discredit Al-Qaeda and counter its global ideology that is appealing to segments of Asian Muslims.

As a result of the gigantic investment in propaganda by Al-Qaeda, radicalism is moving from the periphery to the centre of the Muslim community.

Furthermore, the suffering, humiliation and anger of the Muslims by the US invasion of Iraq is being exploited by Al-Qaeda and its associated groups to recruit and generate support.

Both in the territorial and migrant Muslim communities, the scale of radicalisation is on the rise. Driven by virulent propaganda disseminated by Al-Qaeda and its associated groups, these self-radicalised cells within the migrant and diaspora as well as territorial communities pose a vibrant threat.

While well structured groups such as Al-Qaeda and its associated groups originating from the global south will pose an enduring threat, the homegrown cells present an equally sinister threat to the West.

Where well structured terrorist groups are not operating, the more significant threat stems from homegrown cells.

The Singapore case is instructive in how a nation should move forward not only to fight terrorism but the greater threat – extremism.

The Government of Singapore has developed a multi-pronged approach. To build a norm and an ethic against extremism and terrorism, Singapore leadership has made it a priority to support Muslim community initiatives by the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (Muis), Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG), and the Inter-agency Aftercare Committee to reach out to the wider Muslim community.

The model adopted by Singapore is being emulated by other countries.

What now?

ASIA boasts more than half of the world’s Muslim population.

In the spectrum of Muslim and non-Muslim groups - Al-Qaeda directed and inspired groups – pose the single biggest threat. Al-Qaeda’s ideology has taken root both among the Muslim migrants living in the West and in the Muslim World, including in Muslim Asia. The biggest challenge is to protect the Muslim community from violent ideologies disseminated by deviant groups.

Al-Qaeda and its associated groups operating in Asia have been dismantled or disrupted but not its ideology. In the West, in partnership with the Muslim world, has not been successful in waging a sustained and a robust campaign to counter their ideology and propaganda. As such, the traditional threat posed by transnational terrorist groups is being surpassed by the threat posed by homegrown terrorist groups. While the operational threat of terrorism is serious and immediate, the ideological threat has long term and strategic consequences.

Asian governments spent the last five years building the operational capabilities to fight the tactical structures of terrorist groups. While retaining and sharpening those capabilities, it is now necessary in the next five years to build a set of new capabilities to counter the deviant ideologies seeking to target our region.

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