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## Terrorism and Party Systems in the States of India

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## **Terrorism and Party Systems in the States of India**

JAMES A. PIAZZA

*The incidence of domestic terrorism varies dramatically across the states of India. This study demonstrates that important state-level differences in political party systems help to explain different levels of terrorist activity within the Indian states. Analysis of statistical data on terrorist attacks as well as other political, social, and macroeconomic indicators of the twenty-seven Indian states and the Delhi municipality from 1998 to 2006, determines that Indian states characterized by multiparty electoral competition, a diffusion of legislative seat distribution among parties, and minority party government are more likely to experience terrorist attacks than states with stable, two-party systems and majority party rule. These party system features increase the likelihood that terrorism will occur because they nurture the political conditions under which terrorism is likely to flourish and because they impair government ability to craft coherent and effective responses to terrorism.*

### TERRORISM AND PARTY SYSTEMS IN THE STATES OF INDIA

Comparatively speaking, India is a country acutely plagued by domestic terrorism. Looking at the cross-national data measuring the domestic terrorist attacks during the period 1998 to 2006 presented in Table 1, India ranks third globally—behind Iraq and Israel and the Palestinian Territories but ahead of

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**TABLE 1** Terrorist Activity in India, Comparative Perspective

Country	Rank*	Incidents (1998–2006)	Victims (1998–2006)	Number of Groups
Iraq	1	6,795	46,382	77
Israel & Territories	2	2,412	2,916	59
India	3	1,835	10,926	74
Colombia	4	1,391	3,559	15
Spain	5	1,027	574	14
Thailand	6	916	1,805	15
Turkey	7	883	1,681	27
Afghanistan	8	791	3,129	16
Pakistan	9	747	4,736	36
Russia	10	745	5,393	22
United Kingdom	11	704	555	35
France	12	613	92	55

Source: MIPT, Terrorism Knowledge Database, [www.tkb.org](http://www.tkb.org).

\*For incidents

Colombia, Turkey, and Afghanistan—with 1,835 total attacks. In terms of victims of domestic terrorism (those injured, harmed, or killed), India ranks second only to Iraq with 10,926 casualties, nearly double the rate of the third-ranked country, Russia. Although official sources allege that fifty-nine terrorist groups were active in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza from 1986 to 2006, by comparison, seventy-four were active in India. Only Iraq can boast more active terrorist groups at seventy-seven.

Moreover, India, a country with a highly stable federal democracy since 1947, has been plagued by exceptionally long and intractable terrorist campaigns, making it a country marked by both frequent and acute terrorist activity. These include an intense and deadly campaign launched in 1989 by Muslim separatists in Kashmir that has claimed over 29,000 lives and has displaced over 300,000 people; multiple terrorist insurgencies perpetrated by separatist ethnic minority groups in the mountainous regions of India's Northeast (in the so-called "Seven Sisters" states), some of which date back to the 1940s; Maoist-inspired terrorism since the 1960s that is rooted in severe intercaste strife in a band of territory stretching across India's South and East; a legacy of terrorism and political violence in Punjab that flared in the 1980s due to Sikh militancy and separatism; and sporadic but deadly attacks on Indian government, religious, and cultural sites by radical Islamist and Hindu groups starting in the early 1990s.<sup>1</sup>

Scholars have advanced a wide variety of explanations for India's terrorism problem. Historical studies link Indian terrorism to acute socio-political crises involving class, ethnic, communitarian, and caste divisions that are

<sup>1</sup> Dipak K. Gupta, "The Naxalites and the Maoist Movement in India: Birth, Demise and Reincarnation," *Democracy and Security* 3, no. 2 (2007): 157–88.

rooted in the legacy of British colonial rule.<sup>2</sup> Scholars have also argued that national identity conflicts and armed separatist movements have been fueled by the presence of large ethno-linguistic minority populations in the geographic peripheries of India, most of which have historical and cultural ties with communities in bordering countries and have not been adequately assimilated into the larger Indian society.<sup>3</sup> A host of studies also notes that since independence, Delhi, in general, has poorly and inconsistently managed the formation and integration of states into the Indian federal system, resulting in irredentism and intrastate identity conflict.<sup>4</sup> Other studies claim poverty and uneven economic development;<sup>5</sup> and internal and cross-border migration of economic refugees that has stoked ethnic and social tensions in poorer states that promote terrorism.<sup>6</sup> India also suffers from the problems of “ungoverned” or “stateless” areas within India—in particular the Maoist-dominated “compact revolutionary zone” stretching across the south central to southeast region of India up to the border of Bangladesh—that serve as recruitment and training grounds for armed groups.<sup>7</sup> Human rights abuses perpetrated by local law enforcement or the Indian national military have been argued to alienate communities from the state and provoke political extremism.<sup>8</sup> The financial support of, political direction of, and provision of safe havens to domestic terrorist groups by India’s neighbors, particularly Pakistan, China, Myanmar, and Bangladesh, are frequently cited as sources of terrorist activity.<sup>9</sup> And, terrorism in India has also been blamed on historical traditions that romanticize terrorist activity, harkening back to armed struggles against the British colonial administration.<sup>10</sup>

In this paper, I put forth and test another potential causal explanation for terrorism in India that centers upon the nature and structure of its democratic

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<sup>2</sup> Kanti P. Bajpai, *Roots of Terrorism* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2002); Vivek Chadha, *Low Intensity Conflicts in India: An Analysis* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2005); Gupta, “The Naxalites and the Maoist Movement in India”; Chandrika Singh, *Northeast India: Politics and Insurgency* (New Delhi: Manas Publications, 2004); Ashish Sonal, *Terrorism and Insurgency in India: A Study of the Human Element* (New Delhi: Lancer Publishers Ltd., 1994).

<sup>3</sup> Bajpai, *Roots of Terrorism*; Singh, *Northeast India*; Lawrence E. Cline, “The Insurgency Environment in Northeast India,” *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 17, no. 2 (2006): 126–47; Sonal, *Terrorism and Insurgency in India*; Ashutosh Varshney, *Civic Life and Ethnic Conflict: Hindus and Muslims in India* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

<sup>4</sup> Cline, “The Insurgency Environment in Northeast India”; Singh, *Northeast India*.

<sup>5</sup> Chadha, *Low Intensity Conflicts in India*; Sonal, *Terrorism and Insurgency in India*.

<sup>6</sup> Bajpai, *Roots of Terrorism*.

<sup>7</sup> Pratul Ahuja and Rajat Ganguly, “The Fire Within: Naxalite Insurgency Violence in India,” *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 18, no. 2 (2007): 249–74; Bajpai, *Roots of Terrorism*.

<sup>8</sup> Sandy Gordon, “Policing Terrorism in India,” *Crime, Law and Social Change* 50, nos. 1–2 (2008): 111–24; Singh, *Northeast India*; Sonal, *Terrorism and Insurgency in India*.

<sup>9</sup> Shaun Gregory, “The 1st and the War on Terrorism,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 30, no. 12 (2007): 1013–31; Gupta, “The Naxalites and the Maoist Movement in India”; Singh, *Northeast India*; Sonal, *Terrorism and Insurgency in India*.

<sup>10</sup> Atul Kohli, *Democracy and Discontent: India’s Growing Crisis of Governability* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

institutions. This approach is informed by a body of literature that locates the root causes of India's general political violence in the public environment fostered by the institutional weaknesses of central and state governments. These weaknesses have resulted in inadequate or incoherent policy choices, incompetent management and corruption, a lack of democratic accountability, and poorly functioning government institutions.<sup>11</sup> The paper specifically looks to the behavior of political parties and the nature of party systems at the state level as a key variable in explaining the variance of state-level terrorist activity within India. It finds that Indian states qualified by diffuse and complex party systems that are governed by fragile party coalitions are significantly more likely to experience terrorism than those with stable party systems with majority party government. These results furthermore suggest that political scientists seeking to identify environmental causes for terrorism should look to the design and function of political institutions from which they may find fertile ground in the study of subnational units in terrorism-prone countries.

### PARTY SYSTEMS AND TERRORISM

Why should the structure of party systems and the behavior of parties affect the probability that a democratic state will experience terrorism? A rich comparative politics literature demonstrates that parties and party systems are central to the promotion of general political stability because they integrate often disparate socio-political interests into mainstream political institutions, serve as an orderly conduit of public demands, help to order conflict in society, regulate opposition to government policies, and are agents of accountability for government.<sup>12</sup> Other work also demonstrates that parties and party systems are an important determinant of government performance, notably in the area of fiscal and economic development policy, which has

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<sup>11</sup> Sanjib Baruah, *Durable Disorder: Understanding the Politics of Northeast India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005); Sumit Ganguly, "Explaining the Kashmir Insurgency: Political Mobilization and Institutional Decay," *International Security* 21, no. 2 (1996): 76–107; Kohli, *Democracy and Discontent*; Lloyd Rudolph and Suzanne Hoeber Rudolph, *The Modernity of Tradition: Political Development in India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); Steven Wilkinson, "India, Consociation Theory and Ethnic Violence," *Asian Survey* 40, no. 5 (2000): 767–91; Steven I. Wilkinson, *Votes and Violence: Electoral Competition and Ethnic Riots in India* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

<sup>12</sup> Larry Diamond, Juan Linz and Seymour Martin Lipset, *Democracy in Developing Countries: Latin America* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1989); Robert H. Dix, "Democratization and the Institutionalization of Latin American Political Parties," *Comparative Political Studies* 24 (January 1992): 488–511; Edward Gibson, *Class and Conservative Parties: Argentina in Comparative Perspective* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968); Scott Mainwaring and Timothy R. Scully, *Building Democratic Institutions: Party Systems in Latin America* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995); Dietrich Rueschmeyer, Evelyne Huber Stephens, and John D. Stephens, *Capitalist Development and Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

indirect implications for political stability.<sup>13</sup> In this study, I synthesize these two arguments—that party systems are consequential to political stability and to government performance in democracies—and venture further to argue that parties and party systems help to create conditions under which local political actors may resort to terrorism and help to determine whether or not government is able to enact effective counterterrorism policy.<sup>14</sup>

In theory, there are three ways in which this relationship might work: terrorism could be precipitated by social cleavages reflected in party systems; terrorism could result from electoral politics resulting from party systems; and terrorism could be the product of governance crises that result from party system.

### Social Cleavages and Terrorism

First, societies with deep social cleavages—salient social divisions within societies that express themselves in political action—are more likely to suffer from governability crises and therefore could reasonably be expected to feature conditions that increase the probability of political violence.<sup>15</sup> Social cleavages imprint themselves upon political institutions creating fractious, multi-party systems which themselves telegraph, amplify, and politically formalize social strife.<sup>16</sup> In countries with deep social cleavages, parties act as

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<sup>13</sup> Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, James D. Morrow, Randolph M. Silverson, and Alastair Smith, "Political Institutions, Political Survival and Policy Success," in *Governing for Prosperity*, ed. Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and Hilton L. Root (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 59–84; Pradeep Chhibber and Irfan Nooruddin, "Do Party Systems Count? The Number of Parties and Government Performance in the Indian States," *Comparative Political Studies* 37, no.2 (2004): 152–87; Torsten Persson and Guido Tabellini, "The Size and Scope of Government: Comparative Politics with Rational Politicians," *European Economic Review* 43 (April 1999): 699–735.

<sup>14</sup> Here and throughout the paper I adopt a more inclusive consideration of "party system" than what is traditionally employed by Sartori, Cox, and others. The number of significant political parties that contest elections and are represented in legislatures is usually codified into two types: two-party systems versus multiparty systems. Because I want to consider independently the relationship between two-party and multiparty systems and terrorism and the electoral outcomes and resulting legislative consequences in the Indian states, I separate out the number of significant parties that contest elections, the concentration of the vote plurality obtained by the top party, the concentration of seats in the assemblies, and the occurrence of minority party government. See Gary Cox, "Centripetal and Centrifugal Incentives in Electoral Systems," *American Journal of Political Science* 34, no. 4 (1990): 903–35; Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

<sup>15</sup> Selig Harrison, *India: The Most Dangerous Decades* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960); Varshney, *Civic Life and Ethnic Conflict*. Though, as noted by Kohli in *Democracy and Discontent*, communitarian strife is only one contributor to India's governability challenges in addition to corruption and weak political institutions.

<sup>16</sup> Octavio N. Amorim and Gary Cox, "Electoral Institutions, Cleavage Structures, and the Number of Parties," *American Journal of Political Science* 41 (1997): 149–74; V.O. Key, *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949); Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan, "Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments," in *Party Systems and Voter Alignments*, ed. Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan (New York: Free Press, 1967), 1–64; Peter Ordeshook and Olga Shvetsova, "Ethnic

agents of polarization and radicalization rather than inclusion and moderation. In turn, trust in the political process erodes and movements that might have engaged in mainstream, legal modes of participation are more likely to turn to violence. I argue, however, that this conceptualization is likely misconceived. It is unable to resolve the overall causal relationship between social cleavages, parties, and terrorism. In their longitudinal empirical work on parties in the states of India from 1967 to 1997, Pradeep Chhibber and Irfan Nooruddin observe significant changes in the party systems of states, with some states evolving from two-party to multiparty systems or vice-versa, but note that social caste and communal divisions (Hindu verses Muslim verses Sikh)—which in India constitute key social cleavages—in the states remain quite constant.<sup>17</sup> But, because the time frame examined in this study is much shorter, only 1998 to 2006, it is therefore unlikely to fully evaluate the effects of changing party systems within individual Indian states in comparison to the much more static state-level social cleavage patterns. The study's statistical models, therefore, control for state-level ethno-linguistic and religious diversity in an attempt to consider the effects that social cleavages might have on terrorism in Indian states.

### Elections and Terrorism

A second theoretical explanation involves the strategic electoral behavior of parties vis-à-vis the provision of publicly financed goods, the development of party ideologies and design of partisan electoral platforms, and the adoption of inclusive or exclusive campaign strategies by parties. When in office, parties provide goods to constituents—usually in the form of economic development projects, government jobs, government contracts, social programs, and tax or direct subsidies—in order to “buy” support in future elections. Empirical research indicates that the way in which these goods are targeted—either widely across the whole of a constituency in order to foster general economic or social development or much more narrowly in order to maintain political support from core supporters within the constituency—

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Heterogeneity, District Magnitude and the Number of Parties,” *American Journal of Political Science* 38 (1994): 100–23.

<sup>17</sup> For Chhibber and Nooruddin's longitudinal study, see Chhibber and Nooruddin, “Do Party Systems Count?” On key social cleavages, see Pradeep Chhibber and John R. Petrocik, “The Puzzle of Indian Politics: Social Cleavages and the Indian Party System,” *British Journal of Political Science* 19, no. 2 (1989):191–210. It bears mentioning, though, that in their seminal work, “Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments,” Lipset and Rokkan limit their argument that social cleavages explain the development of political parties and voter blocs to Western European countries. They specifically identified four main cleavages: the center verses periphery cleavage, the secular verses religious or traditional cleavage, the capital verses labor cleavage, and the urban verses rural. Chhibber and Petrocik note the limited geographical application of the original articulation of social cleavage theory and modify it in their study of India, a non-Western society.

is in part determined by the party system in place.<sup>18</sup> In systems featuring two-party competition, the size of the minimum winning coalition that parties must build in order to be successful is large and will more likely reach across the main socio-political groups within the constituency. Parties in two-party systems therefore find it a dominant strategy to distribute goods widely in order to construct and shore up cross-socio-political group support and project a general image of competence and inclusiveness. Parties competing in multi-party systems, however, may find the size of their minimum winning coalitions to be smaller and may therefore find incentives to distribute goods narrowly. Under multipartism, rather than cultivating cross-group patronage and enacting public policy that suits more generally the public interest, parties focus on subsidizing narrow “electoral banks” of voters that are often composed of specific social or ethno-cultural groups.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, under multipart systems, the opportunity for rival political parties to outbid each other in competing for the support of particular groups of voters further narrows the distribution of goods and perhaps further fragments the electorate.<sup>20</sup>

In politics where goods are narrowly distributed, exclusion of significant socio-political groups is more acute as are group feelings of resentment and mistrust of, and estrangement from, the government. The incentives for politicians to foster reconciliation across socio-political groups via a wider distribution of social spending are absent. The magnitude of electoral outcomes is distended, creating electoral campaigns in which voters are mobilized out of fear of fiscal neglect or even retribution by politicians representing rival groups should their party not be successful at the polls. And while policies aimed at general economic improvement have dubious longitudinal prospects, the effects of partisan change in government on state fiscal expenditures and public sector employment can be more dramatic. Supporters of failed parties and candidates or unrepresented groups may feel excluded, may regard participation in legal political activity to be futile, and may seek to enact change through extralegal activity, including political violence.

When all parties contest elections, they construct platforms and develop ideological signifiers that are most likely to successfully put them and keep them in office. In multipart systems, partisan competition is more acute as is the need for parties to differentiate themselves from one another. Gary Cox argues that multipartism prompts parties contesting elections to deviate from the traditional attention parties give to the median voter, thus

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<sup>18</sup> Bueno de Mesquita, Morrow, Silverson, and Smith assign the term “public goods” to those that are widely targeted and “private” or “club” goods to those that are narrowly targeted. Bueno de Mesquita, et al., “Political Institutions.”

<sup>19</sup> Bueno de Mesquita, et al., “Political Institutions,” 64.

<sup>20</sup> Persson and Tabellini, “The Size and Scope of Government.”

prompting the creation of less inclusive and more immoderate platforms.<sup>21</sup> Alan Sartori notes that with “polarized pluralism,” a key feature of multipartism under which anti-system parties are able to prosper, there is a greater degree of polarization in the electorate; there is the presence of an “irresponsible opposition”; parties seek distinct and immoderate ideological signifiers; and competition between parties for smaller groups of voters’ loyalties dramatically polarizes the political market.<sup>22</sup> These conditions potentially increase the likelihood that a polity will experience terrorism. Extremist and anti-system political narratives are more easily brought into the mainstream of political discourse, possibly alienating moderate actors from the political process while encouraging already radicalized forces that may have a weak commitment to nonviolent political reconciliation of differences with rivals. The system also affords an amplified voice to extremists. The intensely ideological nature of politics under multipartism normalizes extremism and habituates the polity to immoderate speech and action, affording greater popular legitimacy to anti-system behavior on the part of actors.<sup>23</sup>

The electoral behavior of parties also has consequences for the inclusion and exclusion of relevant social groups in the electorate. In their empirical study, Chhibber and Nooruddin note that in those states where two major parties contest elections, the average minimum vote plurality at the district level needed to be victorious is 45 percent, and on average in two-party states, the average margin of victory is 20 percent.<sup>24</sup> This leaves a comfortable margin for the victorious party and a smaller percentage of the population that is disappointed by the results and potentially feels left out of the decision making until the next election. In contrast, in states where more than two parties are viable competitors in elections, the minimum vote plurality is only 32 percent on average, and the margins of victory are 10 percent or less on average. This creates a much larger percentage of voters who could feel excluded from government until the next election and increases the chances of bitter, close losses by unsuccessful parties. A greater incidence of exclusion may provide incentives for political actors to eschew legal participation and to adopt extralegal means of affecting political life.

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<sup>21</sup> Cox, “Centripetal and Centrifugal Incentives in Electoral Systems.”

<sup>22</sup> Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*. On “polarized pluralism,” Siaroff argues that this overlaps with Cox’s conception of centrifugal incentives in multiparty systems that lead parties to adopt more extreme party platforms. Alan Siaroff, “The Fate of Centrifugal Democracies: Lessons from Consociational Theory and System Performance,” *Comparative Politics* 32, no. 3 (2000): 317-32. Cox, “Centripetal and Centrifugal Incentives in Electoral Systems.”

<sup>23</sup> Joshua Muravchik links the mainstreaming of extremist political discourse to the increased frequency of terrorism in a country in non-democratic societies, particularly in the Arab world. Joshua Muravchik, “Freedom and the Arab World,” *The Weekly Standard* 31 (December 2001).

<sup>24</sup> Chhibber and Nooruddin, “Do Party Systems Count?” 162.

## Governance and Terrorism

The final way in which parties and party systems may affect the incidence of terrorism in democratic societies relates to the role of parties in forming and organizing government and enacting public policy. Scholars have noted in the past that party system fragmentation encumbers the formation of coherent legislative majorities thus affecting the stability of government.<sup>25</sup> At the same time, they have argued that multiparty systems in general are more likely to produce coalition or minority party government in legislatures and that this adversely affects the coherence and effectiveness of policy making.<sup>26</sup> The impact of fragmented party systems and minority party government on public policy outcomes has primarily been empirically tested on fiscal policy making, but there is little reason to suspect legislative incoherence that is party system produced would not also adversely affect security policy.<sup>27</sup> To buttress this contention, Sartori maintains that multiparty systems are more likely to suffer from legislative paralysis, disorder, and a reduced ability to cope with crises, all of which imbue multiparty systems with a higher probability of system breakdown.<sup>28</sup>

In theory, fragmented and multiparty systems are more likely to be plagued by terrorism because of the consequences they have for legislative organization and public policy making. Multiparty systems can be expected to be less able to craft coherent policy, especially in times of crisis. Because multiparty systems are more likely to produce coalition and minority party government, legislative cooperation is often fragile in multiparty systems, making it more difficult to enact controversial or bold policy, or to isolate or punish anti-system political actors, or to foster reconciliation efforts with alienated groups in order to draw them into nonviolent forms of political participation. The lack of trust and amplified voice for smaller and more ideological political actors also makes it more complex for leaders in the multiparty legislatures to grant emergency antiterrorism policy authority to law enforcement officials or to the executive branch. These built-in

<sup>25</sup> V. Herman and D. Sanders, "The Stability and Survival of Governments in Western Democracies," *Acta Politica* 12 (1977): 346–77; Mainwaring and Scully, *Building Democratic Institutions*; Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*; P. Warwick, "The Durability of Coalition Governments in Parliamentary Democracies," *Comparative Political Studies* 11 (1979): 464–98.

<sup>26</sup> Gary Cox and Matthew D. McCubbins, "The Institutional Determinants of Economic Policy Outcomes," in *Presidents, Parliaments and Policy*, ed. Stephen Haggard and Matthew D. McCubbins (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 21–63; Arend Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

<sup>27</sup> Key work on the effects of party systems on fiscal policy outcomes include Thomas R. Cusack, "Partisan Politics and Public Finance: Changes in Public Spending in the Industrialized Democracies, 1955–1989," *Public Choice* 91, nos. 3–4 (1997): 375–95; Sergio Fabbrini, "Presidents, Parliaments and Good Government," *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 3 (1995): 128–38; Bjørn Volkerink and Jakob de Haan, "Fragmented Government Effects on Fiscal Policy: New Evidence," *Public Choice* 109, nos. 3–4 (2001): 221–42.

<sup>28</sup> Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*.

handicaps provide a crucial opportunity for terrorist groups. They may find it easier to articulate criticisms of the government that enjoy popular support because government under multipartism appears to be inept, unfocused, and unresponsive to the needs of citizens. Governments under multipartism can also be more easily accused of corruption and catering to narrow socio-political groups at the expense of others. And government under multipartism is more likely to lack the public policy and law enforcement tools necessary for thwarting terrorism.

## TERRORISM, PARTY SYSTEMS, AND THE INDIAN STATES

The twenty-eight states of India and one self-governing metropolitan area, Delhi, afford a unique opportunity to test the theoretical relationship between party systems and terrorism; they are, therefore, adopted as the units of analysis for this study. This decision is defended on five points. First, Chhibber and Nooruddin argue that cross-national comparative studies of party systems are hindered by the fact that national governments are characterized by profound institutional design differences that mar efforts to isolate the effects party systems have on political outcomes. A way to remedy this problem, they argue, is to examine subnational units that share a common basic institutional framework.<sup>29</sup> They point to work by Robert Putnam to demonstrate the effectiveness of this approach.<sup>30</sup>

Second, I argue that the use of subnational units, verses cross-national analysis, is particularly useful for empirical studies of terrorism because the dependent variable in such studies is based on event count procedures that rely on open-source media. Cross-national statistical studies examining the incidence of terrorism rely on databases built using media reports of terrorist activity. Todd Sandler notes that countries with state-controlled media are more likely to significantly undercount—or in other ways politically manipulate—reports of terrorist attacks, thus damaging the reliability of the data.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, Charles Brockett assails the reliability of cross-national data on episodes of political violence that are built using media sources, arguing that more remote and impoverished countries suffer from a paucity of international media attention causing highly uneven and incomplete reporting.<sup>32</sup> Researchers can be reasonably assured, however, that open-source data on events occurring in subnational units within a democratic country

<sup>29</sup> Chhibber and Nooruddin, "Do Party Systems Count?"

<sup>30</sup> Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

<sup>31</sup> Todd Sandler, "On the Relationship Between Democracy and Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 12, no. 2 (1995): 97–122.

<sup>32</sup> Charles Brockett, "Measuring Political Violence and Land Inequality in Latin America," *American Political Science Review* 86, no. 1 (1992): 168–76.

that has a widely established tradition of media independence and vibrancy are not likely to suffer from the distortions and biases noted by Sandler and Brockett.

Third, the nature of Indian federalism places a considerable amount of policy-making authority on the states and the Delhi municipality, including in the realm of counterterrorism, and endows them with significant fiscal resources, leaving the local governments, the *panchayats* (village councils), with very little power or resources. For this reason, the states are a locus for political activity in India, produce a considerable public policy, and experience lively political competition.<sup>33</sup> The Indian constitution expressly stipulates that policing and preservation of law and order are state responsibilities, and the cumulative public expenditure on policing reflects this.<sup>34</sup> In the absence of a comprehensive federal terrorism law—save for the brief existence of the Prevention of Terrorist Activities Act from 2002 to 2004—surveillance, apprehension, and prosecution of most domestic terrorists in India are conducted either by the state-level criminal justice system or under special state laws enacted to deal with terrorism, as is the case in Karnataka and Maharashtra. Some states, such as Kerala, Punjab, and Andhra Pradesh, have set up their own counterterrorism security agencies.<sup>35</sup> In others, notably Andhra Pradesh, state officials have engaged in direct negotiations with terrorist groups without direction or interference from Delhi.<sup>36</sup> R.K. Ragavan notes that state and local police forces performed the lion's share of investigative work following the 2001 terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament in Delhi and 2002 terrorist attacks in Gujarat and Jammu. He furthermore criticizes state executive offices and state police for their failures during 2002 communal disturbances in Ayodha that spawned subsequent terrorist incidents.<sup>37</sup> Although federal security forces are frequently used to buttress state police forces in the states to quell insurgencies or serious social unrest—to the point that there are standing deployments of federal military and paramilitary troops in troubled states like Jammu and Kashmir—these actions involve coordination between state and federal governments and may not be taken

<sup>33</sup> Amaresh Bagchi, "India," *Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific: Fiscal Decentralization and the Mobilization and Use of National Resources for Development* (Bangkok: ESCAP, 1991), 97–128; A.P. Barnabas and O.P. Bohra, *Finances of the Panchayati Raj Institutions: Case Studies* (New Delhi: National Institute of Public Finances and Policy, 1995); Askok K. Lahiri, "Sub-National Public Finance in India," *Economic and Political Weekly* 35 (2000): 1539–49.

<sup>34</sup> Farrukh Hakeem, "The Emergence of Modern Indian Policing: From Manasabdary to Constabulary," in *Comparative Policing: The Struggle for Democratization*, ed. M.R. Haberfeld and Ibrahim Cerrah (New York: Sage, 2007), 169–82; Wilkinson, *Votes and Violence*.

<sup>35</sup> Eban Kaplan and Jayshree Bajoria, "Counterterrorism in India," *Council on Foreign Relations Backgrounder* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 27 November 2008); Carin Zissis, "Terror Groups in India," press release, Council on Foreign Relations, 1 December 2008.

<sup>36</sup> GlobalSecurity.org, "Andhra Pradesh, the Naxalite Movement," (2008), <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/naxalite.htm>.

<sup>37</sup> R.K. Ragavan, "The Indian Police: Problems and Prospects," *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 33, no. 4 (2003): 119–33.

without state government permission.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, a recent suggestion to create a comprehensive federal counterterrorism agency by the Prime Minister's office in response to the November 2008 Mumbai attacks was met with howls of protest from state governments in India. State politicians criticized this plan as an assault on the constitutional division of powers while opposition parties at the state level denounced it as a source of patronage and favoritism.<sup>39</sup>

Fourth, while sharing important basic institutional similarities, namely the plurality and single-member district system, the states of India are characterized by widely divergent types of political party systems and sharply differing rates of terrorism, permitting a useful application of comparative analysis. Table 2 helps to illustrate this diversity by ranking all the Indian states by the total number of terrorist incidents they experienced from 1998 to 2006 and detailing their party systems.

Jammu and Kashmir, a state that includes territory that has been an object of dispute between India and Pakistan since 1947 and over which the two nations have fought three armed conflicts, is the site of the lion's share of all terrorist attacks in India (61.5 percent) and for nearly half the total of casualties from 1998 to 2006. The next eight states account for nearly one-third of the total attacks across India, and each are characterized by significant political conflicts: ethnic conflict, separatism, and irredentism (Assam and Manipur); leftist extremism, inter-caste and landlord-tenant conflict (Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgahr, and Jharkand); and communal and caste conflict (Bihar, Maharashtra, and the Delhi municipality). A significant number of Indian states, however, exhibit very low levels of terrorism during this time period. Fourteen out of the twenty-nine states experienced less than ten terrorist attacks during the entire period examined, averaging one or less attack per year, while two states, Arunchal Pradesh and Sikkim, experienced no attacks at all.

Furthermore, as demonstrated in Table 2, the Indian states are characterized by widely different party systems. Half of the observed states have two-party systems—defined in this study by counting down from the top vote getter the number of parties that collectively capture 70 percent of the total vote in state assembly elections—while twelve have either a two-and-half-party system (four out of twenty-nine) or a multi-party system with three or more parties in serious competition for votes (eight out of twenty-nine). One of the states, Sikkim, is a one-party system dominated by the Indian National Congress Party.<sup>40</sup> Looking beyond the number of parties, the most

<sup>38</sup> Hakeem, "The Emergence of Modern Indian Policing"; N.S. Jamwal, "Counter Terrorism Strategy," *Strategic Analysis* 27, no. 1 (2003): 56–78.

<sup>39</sup> "India Resurrects Plans for Counter Terrorism Agency after Latest Bombings," *The Times*, 28 July 2008.

<sup>40</sup> In their quantitative survey of Indian state-level party systems from 1967 to 2001, Pradeep Chhibber and Geetha Murali produce a similar picture of cross-state diversity: 38 percent of states had two-party

**TABLE 2** Terrorism by Major States and Territories in India, 1998–2006

State or Area	Total Incidents	No. of Competitive Parties	% Vote Obtained by Top Party	% Seats Held by Top Party	Minority Party Govt.?
Jammu and Kashmir	1,074	5.0	31.1	46.9	Yes
Assam	161	5.2	35.7	52.1	Yes
Andhra Pradesh	138	2.0	42.1	63.1	No
Chhattisgahr	52	2.0	39.3	55.5	No
Jharkand	50	3.0	23.6	37.1	Yes
Tripura	46	2.0	46.1	63.3	No
Manipur	41	4.2	26.8	35.2	Yes
Bihar	34	5.2	21.2	39.6	Yes
Maharashtra	27	2.4	32.8	39.4	Yes
Delhi	22	2.0	46.8	71.1	No
Uttar Pradesh	14	3.0	29.8	37.9	Yes
West Bengal	13	2.1	37.6	51.5	No
Gujarat	12	2.0	47.6	67.3	No
Orissa	12	2.8	35.3	46.5	Yes
Nagaland	9	2.4	44.1	64.6	Yes
Punjab	8	2.0	36.6	57.9	No
Tamil Nadu	6	2.0	31.8	60.4	Yes
Himachal Pradesh	5	2.0	42.4	53.0	No
Meghalaya	4	2.4	32.8	39.4	Yes
Karnataka	3	2.4	38.2	50.2	Yes
Kerala	3	2.0	30.9	38.9	Yes
Mizoram	3	3.6	30.6	52.5	No
Rajasthan	2	2.0	42.4	69.2	No
Uttaranchal	2	3.0	26.9	51.4	No
Haryana	1	2.2	31.8	53.7	Yes
Madhya Pradesh	1	2.0	41.4	63.3	No
Arunchal Pradesh	0	2.0	49.1	75.9	No
Sikkim	0	1.7	57.4	82.3	No
<b>All India</b> (total and mean)	1,745	2.7	36.9	54.3	
Median	9	2.2	36.2	52.8	
Standard Deviation	198.73	1.0	8.4	12.6	

Source: MIPT, Terrorism Knowledge Database, www.tkb.org.

Note: States are ordered by total number of terrorist incidents.

widely used descriptor of party systems, to the dominance in electoral contests of the top vote-getting parties and the percentage of state assembly seats held by the majority or plurality party in the Indian states, a similarly diverse picture is evident. A wide gap exists between states characterized by the largest average plurality vote-obtaining parties and the largest average plurality of assembly seats held by a party (Sikkim for both at 57.4 and 82.3 percents, respectively) verses those states with the lowest average plurality

systems, 27 percent were three-party systems, 20 percent had two-and-a-half-party systems, and 10 percent had one-party systems. Pradeep Chhibber and Geetha Murali, "Duvergerian Dynamics in the Indian States: Federalism and the Number of Parties in State Assembly Elections," *Party Politics* 12, no. 1 (2006): 5–34.

vote-getting parties (Bihar at 21.2 percent) and lowest average plurality of assembly seats held by a party (Manipur at 35.2 percent). Finally, looking at the occurrence of minority-party government in state legislatures, this study found in its investigation of party systems that fourteen out of the twenty-nine states of India experienced at least one year of minority-party government.

In addition to its conduciveness to a comparative state by state analysis, Chhibber and Nooruddin's study reveals some evidence that is tangential to their main focus on economic policy in the Indian states but suggests that party systems are clearly related to conflict and the potential for instability. In their survey, they find that Indian politicians in states with a legacy of multipartism from 1967 to 1997 were more likely than their counterparts in two-party states to use their influence to create civil service jobs providing patronage for caste groups—to which they themselves belong and look to for support—and to purge from civil service jobs state employees from rival castes. Furthermore, surveyed publics of multiparty states were more likely than those in two-party states to believe that local politicians favored some castes over others and were more likely to describe local caste relations as conflictual.<sup>41</sup> Considering the intensity of caste-based terrorism in India since the 1970s, these bits of information are particularly significant.<sup>42</sup>

Finally, there is some qualitative evidence that state-level party systems are one factor among others contributing to the behavior of terrorist movements in India. The changing geographic location of attacks by Naxalite terrorist groups is a case in point. The Naxalite movement is a moniker for a constellation of Communist terrorist groups that originated in the 1960s in West Bengal, but shortly after found themselves undercut when the Communist Party, Marxist faction (CPI-M), came to power in the state assembly and lent its blessing to a sharp security crackdown in the early 1970s. Driven out of West Bengal, Naxalite groups regenerated in other states and came to maintain their longest-standing and most active presence in rural Andhra Pradesh, where from the early 1980s through the early 2000s the Maoist-inspired People's War Group expanded operations from the benighted countryside of south and central India to the Nepalese border.<sup>43</sup> The People's War Group found Andhra Pradesh to be a fertile environment for its activities. In addition to inserting itself into local conflicts between landlords and poor rural tenants and exploiting the state's wilderness areas to create its autonomous "compact revolutionary zone," the Naxalites found the state assembly to be in paralysis due to severe partisan rankling that had stalled policy making on several fronts. The relative political stasis afforded by back-to-back Congress Party-dominated governments in Andhra Pradesh had been disrupted in 1983 by the victory of the newly formed Telgu Desam Party (TDP),

<sup>41</sup> Chhibber and Nooruddin, "Do Party Systems Count?" 175, 179.

<sup>42</sup> On caste-based terrorism, see Gupta, "The Naxalites and the Maoist Movement in India."

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

ushering in bitter partisan rivalry and jarring changes in public policy, systems of patronage, and center-state relations. The period 1983–2004 was one of fragile political coalitions, frequently changing chief ministers, and short-lived governments in the state.<sup>44</sup> This political turbulence also had implications for social policy and counterterrorism efforts in the state. Initiatives to reduce social tensions that fueled People's War Group activities among Adivasis—impoverished and socially marginalized indigenous peoples in the rural parts of the state—included economic rights legislation that failed to be implemented due to partisan bickering. New policing efforts and multiple initiatives by state government agents to negotiate with militants fell victim to partisan politics and frequent change of administration. Consequently, rates of left-wing terrorism soared in Andhra Pradesh during the period of partisan turmoil, with particular periods of virulence in 1987–92 and 1994–2000.<sup>45</sup>

The resumption of Congress Party dominance in May 2004 reinjected political stability in the Andhra Pradesh assembly, and a combination of renewed peace talks and new security polices resulted in a dramatic reduction in terrorist violence in the state.<sup>46</sup> However, as terrorism decreased in Andhra Pradesh, rates of Naxalite attacks substantially increased in other Indian states. Scholars such as Dipak Gupta argue that today Naxalite terror remains a severe threat to internal security in India—perhaps rivaling that posed by radical Islamist terror groups—but over time has shifted to afflict new states.<sup>47</sup> During the period 2003–07, incidents of Naxalite terrorism declined by almost half in Andhra Pradesh while steadily growing in the newly created states of Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh. Both states have features commonly associated with Naxalite-plagued regions: they are highly rural, are severely impoverished, have significant caste conflict and Adivasi populations, and have territory within the compact revolutionary zone that is difficult to police. They also are characterized by notably turbulent state party politics, changing chief ministers and rapidly rotating state assembly control between parties twice in the case of Chhattisgarh and six times in the case of Jharkhand, which have had consequences for coherent policy making in the two states.<sup>48</sup>

After making these five points, it is necessary to also point out several counterarguments that posit a negative relationship between party systems

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<sup>44</sup> From 1983 to 2004, Andhra Pradesh had ten chief ministers, four of which lasted a year or less in office. Moreover, control of the state government changed hands between Congress and Telugu Desam four times during that period, and for the Nandendra Bhaskara Rao administration, that occurred once after only thirty-one days in office from 16 August–16 September 1983. See K. Srinivasulu and Prakash Sarangi, "Political Realignments in Post-NTR Andhra Pradesh," *Economic and Political Weekly* 34, nos. 34–35 (1999): 2449–58.

<sup>45</sup> "Annual Casualties of Left-Wing Extremist Violence 1968–2003," Andhra Pradesh Data Sheets, *South Asia Terrorism Portal*, <http://www.satp.org>.

<sup>46</sup> Ahuja and Ganguly, "The Fire Within."

<sup>47</sup> Gupta, "The Naxalites and the Maoist Movement in India."

<sup>48</sup> "States of India Since 1947," *World Statesman*, [http://www.worldstatesmen.org/India\\_states.html](http://www.worldstatesmen.org/India_states.html).

and more general political violence within India and other developing world countries. In his study explaining the occurrence of communal riots in India, Steven Wilkinson maintains that political violence is more likely in situations featuring two-party contestation where dominant political parties rely exclusively on majority group support and demonize minority group interests.<sup>49</sup> Older work by G. Bingham Powell demonstrates, through cross-national statistical analysis, that countries with multiparty systems defined along ethnic lines actually experience fewer deaths due to riots because they help to channel group discontentment into the nonviolent, legitimate political-electoral system.<sup>50</sup> Donald Horowitz argues that under specific conditions, multiparty systems featuring competition among ethnic-based parties may actually reduce political violence if no single party can dominate for a significant period of time and institutionalize ethnic group exclusion.<sup>51</sup> Finally, because multiparty systems afford voters a wider range of choices along the political spectrum, theoretically, extremist voters and potential terrorists might have greater incentives to participate nonviolently than they would in two-party systems.<sup>52</sup> At least in the first three opposing arguments, it is possible that contrary findings can be explained by the very different manifestations of political violence that are the primary subject of the studies. Most scholars who have studied terrorism see it as a unique phenomenon and therefore distinguishable from forms of political violence like riots, hate crimes, or lynching.<sup>53</sup> But given the intuitive possibility that mass communal violence itself may accompany or even fuel terrorism or that two manifestations of political violence such as riots and terrorist attacks may share the same precipitants, the statistical tests conducted in this paper are of obvious theoretical salience.

## Data and Analysis

To examine the relationship between parties and party systems—specifically multipartism, fragmented party systems, and minority party government—and terrorism, this study tests four hypotheses:

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<sup>49</sup> Wilkinson points to elections in the Indian state of Gujarat in 2002 to illustrate this counter-intuitive phenomenon in addition to those found in other countries—the Romanian national elections of 1990, electoral campaigns from 1989 to 2002 by Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic, elections in the American South during the Jim Crow era, Stormont elections in Northern Ireland in the early 19th century, and state elections in Malaysia in 1969. Wilkinson, *Votes and Violence*, 6, 138.

<sup>50</sup> G. Bingham Powell, “Party Systems and Political System Performance: Voting Participation, Government Stability and Mass Violence in Contemporary Democracies,” *The American Political Science Review* 75, no. 4 (1981): 861–79.

<sup>51</sup> To this point, he details the case of Benin in the 1960s. Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

<sup>52</sup> I wish to thank John Szmer for raising this theoretical possibility.

<sup>53</sup> Note that this is reflected in the operational definition of terrorism used to construct the database of terrorist incidents that was used in this study, as described in the analysis section.

H<sub>1</sub> = Indian states with a large number of effective parties that contest assembly elections are more likely to experience terrorism.

H<sub>2</sub> = Indian states where the top vote-getting parties in assembly elections win with small pluralities are more likely to experience terrorism.

H<sub>3</sub> = Indian states where the assembly is dominated by a party with a narrow plurality of seats are more likely to experience terrorism.

H<sub>4</sub> = Indian states with assemblies governed by minority parties are more likely to experience terrorism.

The hypotheses are designed as such to capture all possible ways in which party systems can be operationalized: number of political parties that are serious electoral contenders, size of electoral dominance by winning political parties, degree of party fragmentation within legislatures, and degree of complexity of governing coalitions of parties within legislatures.

To test these hypotheses, a series of negative binomial regression analyses is conducted on a database of domestic terrorism incidents sorted by the state where the incident occurred in India from 1998 to 2006. The source of data for the dependent variable, incidents of domestic terrorism, is the Terrorism Knowledge Base (TKB), compiled and published by the Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism.<sup>54</sup> In the TKB database, acts of terrorism are distinguished from other types of political violence, such as wars, civil wars, and riots, by an operational definition gleaned from United States Code 2656f(d) (2): “the term terrorism means premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience.”<sup>55</sup> This definition, therefore, omits incidents of violence in India caused by intercommunal riots or interstate conflict. Because of the nature of the dependent variable—it is unevenly distributed across observations; it cannot have negative values; and a value in one observation may not be independent of values in other observations—an ordinary least squares model is not appropriate. To check that reliability is not compromised by the presence of outliers in the dependent variable, Huber-White robust standard errors are calculated, and incidents are truncated into a dichotomous variable and run in a series of unpublished logit models, producing the same results as the published negative binomial models.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>54</sup> The Terrorism Knowledge Base data was published online in open-access format until fall 2008, when it was formally put in process to be merged with the Global Terrorism Database maintained by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism at the University of Maryland, [www.start.umd.edu](http://www.start.umd.edu). However, all TKB-derived data on terrorist incidents used in this study is available from the author upon request.

<sup>55</sup> *Annual Country Reports on Terrorism*, 22 USC Sec. 2656f (d)(2) (2008), <http://uscode.house.gov/uscode-cgi/fastweb.exe?getdoc+uscview+t21t25+2562+0++'22%20USC%20Sec.%202656f>.

<sup>56</sup> Available from the author upon request.

## VARIABLES AND OPERATIONALIZATION

The specific operationalization and sources of data for all variables used in the analysis are detailed in Table 3.

**TABLE 3** Variables: Operationalization and Sources

Variable	Operationalization
Incidents (Dependent Variable) <sup>a</sup>	Number of incidents of terrorism in a state in a given year
No. Competitive Parties Contesting Elections <sup>b</sup>	Number of political parties, counting down from top vote-getter, whose added percentages of votes obtained in state elections totals 70%
Vote Obtained by Top Party in Elections <sup>b</sup>	Percentage of the total votes obtained by the top vote-getting party in state elections
Dominance of Largest Party in Assembly <sup>b</sup>	Percentage of state legislative seats held by the largest party
Minority Party Government <sup>b</sup>	Dichotomous variable coded "1" when the largest governing party in state legislature holds a minority of seats
Voter Turnout <sup>b</sup>	Percentage of eligible voters who cast votes in state legislative elections
Population <sup>c</sup>	Natural log of state population
State Area <sup>c</sup>	Natural log of geographic area of state in square kilometers
State Age <sup>d</sup>	Age in years since state was integrated as a full-fledged state political unit into India
Literacy <sup>e</sup>	Percentage of state population that is literate
Life Expectancy <sup>e</sup>	Average life expectancy at birth in state in a given year
Diversity <sup>f</sup>	Additive index of the percentage of the state population comprising the largest linguistic and religious groups subtracted from 1
Jammu-Kashmir	Dichotomous variable coded "1" for annual observations for the Jammu-Kashmir state
Naxalite Belt	Dichotomous variable coded "1" for annual observations for Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgahr, Jharkhand, and West Bengal
Seven Sisters	Dichotomous variable coded "1" for annual observations for Arunchal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Tripura states
Foreign Border	Dichotomous variable coded "1" for states sharing a border with a foreign country

<sup>a</sup>MPT: Terrorism Knowledge Database, [www.tkb.org](http://www.tkb.org).

<sup>b</sup>Derived from Election Commission of India, "Statistical Reports of Assembly Elections" (various years), <http://eci.gov.in/StatisticalReports/ElectionStatistics.asp>.

<sup>c</sup>Derived from Census of India, "Population Projections for India and States" (New Delhi: Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, 1991 and 2001).

<sup>d</sup>V.P. Menon, *Integration of Indian States* (New Delhi: Sangam Books Ltd, 1999).

<sup>e</sup>Derived from Census of India "Population Projections for India and States" (New Delhi: Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, 1991 and 2001).

<sup>f</sup>Derived from B. Mallikarjun, "Indian Multilingualism, Language Policy and the Digital Divide," *Language in India* 4, no. 4 (April 2004); S. Iyer, *Demography and Religion in India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

The dependent variable is the number of domestic terrorist incidents that occurred per state, per year from 1998 to 2006, producing a total of 1,745 incidents sorted into 246 observations for twenty-eight Indian states using data obtained from the RAND<sup>®</sup>-MIPT Terrorism Incident database. Using state-years as the unit of analysis does not prove problematic in that 99 percent of all incidents in the data occur entirely within the boundaries of only one state. The remaining one percent of incidents that are trans-state, meaning they begin and end as events in more than one state, are excluded from the analysis. The limited number of years examined represents the total range of available data on domestic terrorism in India from a reliable and often-used source.<sup>57</sup>

There are four independent variables that measure qualities of state-level party systems in the analysis, and they are used to test the four hypotheses. The first hypothesis is tested using Number of Effective Parties Contesting Elections, which counts the number of parties, put into rank order from top to bottom vote getter, that collectively receive 70 percent of all votes in assembly elections in the Indian states. It is expected to be positively related to terrorism. Vote Obtained by Top Party in Elections tests the second hypothesis by measuring the percentage of the vote plurality obtained by the top vote-getting party in assembly elections at the state level. It is expected to be a negative predictor of terrorism. Dominance of Largest Party in Assembly measures the percentage of state assembly seats held by the largest party in the legislature and is used to test hypothesis three. It is expected to be a negative predictor of terrorism. And Minority Party Government is a dichotomous variable coded "1" for state-years in which the state assembly is governed by a minority-party coalition. It is expected to be a positive predictor of terrorism. These independent variables are run in separate models (models 2–5), the results of which are reported in Table 4.

All models include a host of controls. In each model, a lagged dependent variable is included to correct for autocorrelation errors endemic to time-series regression analyses. Because party systems are affected by turnout, the most recent state legislative election turnout rate is included. Also controlled for are two factors that Joe Eyerman finds to be significant predictors of terrors: the natural log of state population and geographic area to control for policing and opportunity costs; and "State Age," or the count of the number of years the state has been in legal existence, is also included to capture the effects of political regime "newness" on terrorist incidents.<sup>58</sup> The

<sup>57</sup> Laura Dugan, Gary LaFree, and Heather Fogg, "A First Look at Domestic and International Global Terrorism Events, 1970–1997," in *Intelligence and Security Informatics*, ed. S. Mehrotra (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 2006), 407–19; Bruce Hoffman and Donna K. Hoffman, "The Rand - St. Andrews Chronology of International Terrorism 1994," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 7, no. 4 (1995): 178–229.

<sup>58</sup> Joe Eyerman, "Terrorism and Democratic States: Soft Targets or Accessible Systems," *International Interactions* 24, no. 2 (1998): 151–70.

**TABLE 4** Party Systems and the Incidence of Domestic Terrorism by Indian State

	1	2	3	4	5
No. Competitive Parties		.326 (.146)*			
Contesting Elections					
Vote Obtained by Top Party in Elections			-.016 (.013)		
Dominance of Largest Party in Assembly				-.015 (.007)*	
Minority Party Government					
Voter Turnout	.009 (.020)	.012 (.019)	.009 (.019)	.010 (.019)	.536 (.246)*
Population	1.361 (.279)***	1.272 (.272)***	1.366 (.278)***	1.384 (.262)***	.010 (.020)
State Area	-.355 (.129)***	-.318 (.132)*	-.376 (.013)**	-.413 (.314)**	1.362 (.256)***
State Age	-.018 (.011)	-.023 (.010)*	-.018 (.011)	-.020 (.010)	-.386 (.132)**
Literacy	.018 (.015)	.011 (.015)	.020 (.015)	.020 (.015)	-.020 (.010)
Life Expectancy	.035 (.060)	.059 (.057)	.030 (.059)	.023 (.058)	.027 (.016)
Diversity	-.012 (.013)	-.019 (.014)	-.013 (.013)	-.015 (.014)	.017 (.058)
Jammu-Kashmir	7.838 (1.047)***	7.327 (1.080)***	7.795 (1.033)***	7.807 (.980)***	-.013 (.014)
Naxalite Belt	2.187 (.370)***	2.047 (.385)***	2.161 (.373)***	2.170 (.371)***	7.765 (.964)***
Seven Sisters	3.989 (.783)***	3.581 (.868)***	3.984 (.808)***	3.949 (.812)***	2.285 (.358)***
Foreign Border	.035 (.364)	-.190 (.373)	.002 (.365)	.029 (.356)	3.876 (.820)***
Lagged Incidents	.003 (.002)	.003 (.002)	.003 (.002)	.003 (.002)	.077 (.347)
Constant	-13.864 (6.039)*	-15.116 (5.607)**	-12.844 (6.020)*	-11.843 (5.969)*	.003 (.002)
Wald Chi-Square	216.56	253.37	226.46	232.01	-13.144 (5.539)*
n	246	246	246	246	231.45
					246

Note: Negative binomial regression analysis with robust standard errors is in parentheses.

\*p < .05 \*\*p < .01 \*\*\*p < .000

age of the state examined is critical to include given the historical propensity of Indian federal policy makers to recast state boundaries and to create new states as a means to resolve local socio-political disputes, including the threat of armed insurgency as was the case in the creation of the state of Mizoram in 1972. Two indicators of socio-economic development are also included—state literacy rate and state life expectancy rate—to consider the effects poverty and poor levels of economic development have on rates of terrorism from state to state; previous cross-national studies, however, have failed to find a significant link between development and terrorism.<sup>59</sup> In addition, the effects of social and cultural diversity are controlled for by a variable measuring the percentage size of the largest linguistic and religious groups in each state. This control variable is particularly important for the study given the theoretical possibility that social cleavages—particularly those involving Hindu and Muslim conflict—contribute to terrorism. Furthermore, because terrorist movements in India often use foreign territory as sanctuaries, as previously noted, a dichotomous variable is included to control for states bordering foreign countries.

Finally, as is true in most countries that experience sustained levels of terrorism, chronic and unresolved political disputes tend to generate a significant number of terrorist acts that are localized in terms of their impact and frequency. For India, there are three particularly acute terrorist campaigns, all of which have deep roots but are largely confined to specific geographic areas: the state of Jammu and Kashmir, which contains a host of Muslim separatist terrorist groups; the Seven Sister states in Northeast India, which are plagued by ethnic separatist and nationalist groups; and a set of states I term for convenience the “Naxalite Belt,” which are a collection of several states in Southern and Eastern India afflicted by the aforementioned Communist terrorist movements. These states are potential outliers that might affect the results of the analytical models, so three dichotomous variables, coded “1” for all states affected by each of these three campaigns, are inserted into all models as a control. The specific states classified as the Seven Sisters and Naxalite Belt states are noted in Table 3. Furthermore, robust standard errors are calculated to capture state-to-state clustering effects that might bias the results in the models.

## RESULTS OF MODELS

The statistical results are presented in Table 4, and they support three of the four hypotheses.

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<sup>59</sup> Alberto Abadie, “Poverty, Political Freedom and the Roots of Terrorism,” *American Economic Review* 96, no. 2 (2006): 50–56; James A. Piazza, “Rooted in Poverty? Terrorism, Poor Economic Development and Social Cleavages,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 18, no. 1 (2006): 159–77.

The first model is a baseline model in which some of the controls—the state population log, state geographic area log, and the three dummy variables, Kashmir-Jammu, Naxalite Belt, and Seven Sisters—are significant predictors of incidents of terrorism. As expected, the more populous Indian states have a higher probability of experiencing terrorism as do the acutely troubled Indian states of Jammu and Kashmir and the Seven Sisters of the Northeast and the Southern-Eastern states that are the traditional loci of the Naxalite movement. Contrary to expectations, geographically larger Indian states are less likely to have a high frequency of terrorist attacks. None of the other controls in model 1 are significant. The results of model 1 are largely reproduced across the other four models. State population and area per capita and the three outlier local terrorist campaign dummies are consistently significant, while all other control variables are not significant with exception of State Age, which is significant only in model 2.

Despite several significant controls, three out of the four variables measuring state-level party systems are significant. Model 2 demonstrates that Indian states characterized by larger numbers of effective parties in election contests have a higher probability of experiencing a terrorist attack. Model 3 fails to demonstrate that in Indian state-years where the top vote-getting party won by a majority or large plurality, there is a lower probability of terrorism. However, model 4 demonstrates that once parties take state assembly seats, states in which the electorally dominant party claims a small plurality of the seats have a higher probability of experiencing domestic terrorist attacks. This suggests that states with less fragmented party systems—particularly those in which the dominant party claims more than 50 percent of the total assembly seats—are afflicted by fewer incidents of terrorism. Finally, Indian state-years characterized by minority party government also have a higher probability of experiencing domestic terrorism.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> One anonymous reviewer of this manuscript pointed out the handful of recent theoretical studies linking terrorist group fragmentation—particularly divisions between moderates or political wings of movements and radicals or factions rejecting political negotiation—with the level of violence wrought by terrorist campaigns and suggested that a control measuring group fragmentation or competition be inserted into the models. See Ethan Bueno de Mesquita, “Conciliation, Counterterrorism and Patterns of Terrorist Violence,” *International Organization* 59, no. 1 (2005): 145–67; Andrew H. Kydd and Barbara F. Walter, “Sabotaging the Peace: The Politics of Religious Violence,” *International Organization* 56, no. 2 (2002): 263–96; Kevin Siqueria, “Political and Militant Wings within Dissident Movements and Organizations,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49, no. 2 (2005): 218–36. When a control measuring group fragmentation—operationalized-using data from the Terrorist Organization Profiles managed by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START)—was included in the models, one of the previously significant independent variables, Number of Competitive Parties Contesting Elections, loses its significance. Results for the other three independent variables remain the same. In all model iterations, the group fragmentation variable is a significant, positive predictor of terrorist attacks, in line with the literature’s expectations. In the changed model, loss of statistical significance is due to a shift in the point estimate toward zero rather than an increase in robust standard error. This may suggest that the statistical models of the study are qualified by unobserved heterogeneity. I leave that open to the reader’s interpretation but caution that controlling from group fragmentation in

**TABLE 5** Results When Number of Effective Parties is Truncated to a Dummy Variable

Number of Competitive Parties Contesting Elections - Dummy	.590 (.271)*
Voter Turnout	.015 (.020)
Population	1.360 (.257)***
State Area	-.381 (.134)**
State Age	-.020 (.010)*
Literacy	.019 (.015)
Life Expectancy	.048 (.054)
Diversity	-.010 (.014)
Jammu-Kashmir	7.715 (1.033)***
Naxalite Belt	2.231 (.365)***
Seven Sisters	3.682 (.839)***
Foreign Border	-.054 (.358)
Lagged Incidents	.003 (.002)
Constant	-15.032 (5.338)**
Wald Chi-Square	234.15
n	246

Note: Negative binomial regression analysis with robust standard errors is in parentheses.

\* $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .000$ .

These results were subjected to further statistical tests to address the issues of outlier effects and causation. To check for the influence of outlier states—such as Jammu and Kashmir and Assam, which are terrorism-prone states that also have an extremely large number of effective parties—a separate robustness model was also run with the number of effective parties truncated into a dichotomous variable coded “1” for state-years when more than two parties captured 70 percent of the vote, multiparty state-years, and it produced the same results. These results are summarized in Table 5.

Furthermore, each independent variable was lagged one period and rerun in the models to determine whether or not change in party system in state year one predicts, at a significant threshold, change in frequency of incidents in subsequent state-years. These models, unpublished but available from the author, produced identical results with regards to the independent variables. Lagged Number of Competitive Parties Contesting Elections, lagged Dominance of Largest Party in Assembly, and the lagged dummy for Minority Party Government remain significant predictors of incidents of terrorism in the expected direction.

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this particular study may be inappropriate. In the Indian case it is often difficult to distinguish true fragmentation of terrorist groups in the event count databases from instances of use of multiple aliases and attack attribution errors.

This is a particularly acute problem for groups operating in Jammu and Kashmir, Assam, and Mizoram. Also, controlling for group fragmentation is not yet a standard practice in terrorism research, and therefore cannot be inserted into the model without sufficient theoretical treatment of arguments for and against, injecting in the process a second set of hypotheses that would be better addressed in a separate study.

## CONCLUSION: LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

This study provides preliminary evidence that Indian party systems help to explain the occurrence of terrorism in the Indian states. It specifically demonstrates that Indian states with more fragmented party systems are more likely to exacerbate terrorist activity within them and are less likely to be able to enact coherent and effective counterterrorism measures. Because the study examines only subnational units within India, its results cannot necessarily be abstracted to other national cases and may or may not be reproduced in a cross-national analysis. This study, however, represents a first cut analysis of party system features as predictors of terrorism. It fits within an older body of literature that argues that the function of political institutions has important consequences for political order.<sup>61</sup> It is also informed by recent studies that link terrorism to failed and failing state capacities to manage political crises and preserve order.<sup>62</sup>

Although the study does provide preliminary evidence that fragmented party systems are related to terrorism in India, it raises a series of new questions that might be addressed in future research. First, it tests a rather limited set of hypotheses. It picks out four simplified indicators of multipartism and determines whether or not they are significant predictors of terrorism rather than more directly testing the theoretical mechanisms put forward in the paper—social cleavages, election and governing strategies, and counterterrorism policy responses—by which multipartism might lead to increased terrorist activity. Second, while it models the effects that long-term terrorist campaigns and habitually troubled regions in India, like Kashmir or Assam, have on the phenomenon of terrorism at the state level, the study does not consider the complexity of the relationship between long-standing terrorist activity and party systems. For example, it is possible that the uneven distribution of terrorism in India today is affected by an interaction between localized long-term terrorist violence and the adaptation of party systems to that violence. This is a serious limitation that is driven, in part, by the lack of series data gathered over a longer period of time. Third, the relationship between state and federal party politics in India—a topic on which there is a considerable literature—might have implications for the effects that party

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<sup>61</sup> Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*.

<sup>62</sup> James A. Piazza, "Incubators of Terror: Do Failed and Failing States Promote Transnational Terrorism?" *International Studies Quarterly* 52, no. 3 (2008): 469-88; Robert I. Rotberg, "Failed States, Collapsed, Weak States: Causes and Indicators." in *State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror*, ed. Robert I. Rotberg (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2003); Ray Takeyh and Nikolas Gvosdev, "Do Terrorist Networks Need a Home?" *The Washington Quarterly* 25, no. 3 (2002): 97-108.

systems have on the occurrence of terrorism at the state level. Finally, the results of this study might spur further investigation into the relationship between party systems and domestic terrorism in other cases or cross-nationally. This would help to establish the universality of the findings and provide a fuller understanding of how political institutions in democracies affect, and can be shaped to reduce, a country's vulnerability to terrorism.