

Committee: Lok Sabha

Overview

The Lok Sabha ("House of the People") is the lower house of the Indian parliament; the Indian electorate directly elects members. As established by the Constitution of India, Lok Sabha may have a maximum of 530 representatives for the states, 20 representing the Union Territories, and 2 appointed by the President of India, for a total of 552 members. Currently, however, Lok Sabha has 545 sitting members. Of the two houses, Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha ("Council of States"), the upper house of parliament, the former is the larger entity. The Prime Minister of India, currently Narendra Modi, acts as the head of Lok Sabha, known as the Leader of the House.

Established in 1952 by the newly drafted Indian Constitution (1949), the Lok Sabha is currently in its 16th session. Each session lasts 5 years, after which the entire session is dissolved and reelected. Mirrored after the British Parliamentary system, the Lok Sabha along with the Rajya Sabha act as the legislative branches of the government, although the Lok Sabha is generally thought to have more power because of its size and ability to issue motions of no confidence. The two main parties in the Lok Sabha are the Bharatiya Janata Party, led by PM Modi, and the Indian National Congress Party, led by Sonia Gandhi.

Topic 1: Terrorism in India

History:

Like most countries, India borrows its official definition of terrorism from a 1988 report by historians Adam Schmid and Albert Jongman: "Terrorism is an anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by clandestine individual groups or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal or political reasons, whereby—in contrast to assassination—the direct targets of violence are not the main targets. The immediate human targets of violence are generally chosen randomly or selectively from a target population, and serve as message generators."¹ Because terrorist acts can have a wide

variety of motives, goals, and methods, India classifies terrorism into four different categories: ethno-nationalist, religious, ideology-oriented, and narco-terrorism. Ethno-nationalist terrorism, while it has become rarer over the years, focuses usually on the notion of ethnocentrism, "elevating the status of one ethnic group over others," or policing for the creation of a separate state for a specific ethnic group. Increasingly common is religious terrorism, a form of terrorism in which "the practitioners of terrorism are motivated either in whole or in part by religious imperative, and consider violence as a sacred act or duty." Ideology-oriented terrorism is broken further down into right-wing and left-wing terrorism, and describes terrorism stemming from an ideological motive that either challenges or works to maintain the status quo. For example, communist rebel groups in several Asian countries, such as the Naxalites, can be classified as left-wing ideology-oriented terrorist organizations, and the Ku Klux Klan can be classified as a right-wing ideology-oriented organization. Finally, narco-terrorism refers to terrorist activity conducted or influenced by any illegal drug trades or trafficking groups in the area.²

The history of terrorism in modern-day India dates back to 1984, with the Meenambakkam International Airport bomb blasts in Madras, Tamil Nadu. On August 2, 1984, 30 people were killed at the airport by bombs set up by Sri Lankan militants. The incident was marked as a turning point, making it clear that the Indian public could be targets of terrorism, something that was unusual before.³ The Tamil Eelam Army, a Sri Lankan nationalist organization advocating for a separate Tamil homeland, was found guilty of the attack and convicted. The incident can be classified as ethno-nationalist terrorism. In the 1980s and 1990s, a wave of terrorism, known as Khalistani Terrorism, emerged in northern India, specifically in Punjab, as a response to an order by then-Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to forcibly remove the head of a revolutionary Sikh group from the Golden Temple. The Sikh population in the area had formed several forces to combat what they felt was discrimination against them by the Indian government, as well as advocate for a separate Sikh

state. Throughout the late 1900s, violence against Hindus on the part of Sikh radical groups continued, but in 1987 and 1991, two incidents occurred that helped to classify their actions as ethno-nationalist terrorism: mass train and bus murders. In July 1987, Sikh militants created a roadblock, seized two buses and massacred 34 specifically Hindu passengers in Haryana. Almost four years later, on June 15, 1991, Sikh militants again overtook two trains and killed around 80 Hindu passengers in the Ludhiana district of Punjab.⁴ The Khalistan Commando Force (KCF), a radical, armed Sikh militant organization, was found responsible for the attack. The KCF still exists today and is classified as a terrorist organization by the Government of India, but not by the United States State Department.

Beginning in the early 2000s, the number of terrorist incidents in India escalated rapidly. The targets and methods of these incidents varied greatly, with attacks occurring in south, west, north, and east India. However, by far the most-targeted city in India is the corporate and entertainment capital of the country: Mumbai. Since the first in 1993, there have been almost 10 separate attacks in the city. The 1993 series of 13 bombings in Mumbai killed more than 250 people and injured over 700. It was later found that the bombings were conducted mainly by Dawood Ibrahim and his crime cartel named D-Company.⁵ One of the deadliest attacks in Indian history even today, the events can be classified as a case of both religious and narco terrorism, because while the motives behind the attack were religious, the bombings were planned and executed by both Islamic militants and members of the drug mafia. In addition, the Pakistani intelligence agency, Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), was accused of providing training and supplies to Dawood Ibrahim and his accomplice Tiger Memon.⁶ Throughout late 2002 and 2003, a series of smaller bomb blasts rocked Mumbai, with targets including several forms of transportation, such as cars, buses, trains, and bicycles. While no group claimed responsibility for the attacks, police and intelligence services pinned emerging terrorist syndicate Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) as the perpetrator, especially for the last of the series in

August 2003. Earlier, in September 2002, the group had gained infamy for a graphic gunned attack on a Hindu temple in Gujarat, India that left 30 dead and 80 injured.⁷ Still active today, LeT is based in Pakistan and its main objective is to “drive out Indian security forces from Kashmir and establish an Islamic caliphate in the surrounding region.”⁸

Two of the most devastating terrorist attacks in India occurred in the late 2000s, both in Mumbai. In July 2006, a string of pressure cooker bombs went off in 7 commuter trains in the city, leaving almost 200 dead and over 600 injured. The bombings painted a gory image for the Indian public, with pictures and television footages showing “the wreckage of mangled trains, torn limbs and stunned, injured commuters, some with blood-streaked faces.”⁹ Thirteen men, allegedly associated with the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) were arrested, and Mumbai security forces took initiative to heighten security measures with the addition of closed-circuit television (CCTV) monitors and metal detectors to all railway platforms. Later, however, police arrested five members of the Indian Mujahideen (IM), a banned terrorist organization said to be affiliated with LeT, for the attacks. One man, Mohammad Sadiq, had confessed that he and his co-conspirators were responsible for the bombings, with possible suspected involvement again by the ISI.¹⁰ The identity and affiliation of those responsible for these attacks remains unclear even today.

Finally, one of the most widely-reported terrorist incidents in India occurred in November 2008, again in Mumbai. This large-scale and well-planned attack occurred in several commercially and socially key places in South Mumbai, and included the use of gunfire massacring as well as grenades and time bombs. Targets included the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, the Leopold Café, the Cama Hospital, a Jewish community center, and the five-star Taj Palace Mahal Palace and Hotel.¹¹ The three-day attacks left over 150 dead and injured more than 600, and in addition inflicted significant commercial and architectural damage. Many victims were held as hostages or tortured, and the Taj was under siege for over two days. Police were able to capture one of the shooters, a

young Pakistani recruit named Ajmal Amir Kasab, who confessed under questioning that LeT was behind the incidents. The attacks had been in the works for months in advance and were meticulously planned, with conspirators making several trips from to Mumbai to scourge the targets, take pictures, and create maps.¹² Kasab's 9 co-conspirators died in the events, and Kasab was later tried and executed. Both the 2006 and 2008 attacks in Mumbai can be classified as religious terrorism.

Several terrorist attacks occurred in between and after these, but the few mentioned above highlight the importance of choosing targets in India as well as the range in types of terrorist activity. Two additional major targets for terrorist activity include the capital city of New Delhi and Jammu and Kashmir in the north, a prime location for terrorist insurgency. Other victimized cities over the years include Ahmedabad, Varanasi, Hyderabad, and Pune. In general, the Indian government under the leadership of then-Prime Minister (PM) Manmohan Singh responded with heightened security measures and investigations.

Current Status and Analysis:

In 2012, the Lok Sabha passed a bill that sought to widen the definition of "terrorism" in India. The addition to the traditional definition expanded "terrorist act" to include "offences that threaten the country's economic security." The amendment for expansion of the definition also included "procurement of weapons, raising funds for terrorist activities and counterfeiting Indian currency" as terrorist acts.¹³

Large-scale terrorist attacks in India have slowed since around 2012, though there have been small sporadic incidents. Newly-elected Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made several comments regarding terrorism in India, especially concerning the involvement of Pakistan and the Inter-Services Intelligence. "The neighboring country [Pakistan] has lost the strength to fight a conventional war, but continues to engage in the proxy war of terrorism," said Modi in a recent

speech, referring to the alleged involvement and assistance of groups such as LeT by the Pakistani military and intelligence forces.¹⁴ Pakistan has denied all of these accusations, and diplomats from both countries were scheduled on August 25, 2014 to establish anti-terrorism tactics and discuss peace between them.¹⁵ However, India called off the meeting after Pakistan went ahead and spoke first regarding the terrorism issue with secessionist forces in Jammu and Kashmir. Modi said about the decision to cancel the talks that "any meaningful bilateral dialogue necessarily requires an environment that is free from terrorism and violence."¹⁶

Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had earlier visited India for Modi's oath ceremony, and in reference to Modi's comments, the Pakistani government responded, "Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's visit to India in May was in this spirit and generated a fresh momentum in the bilateral relationship. It would be in the larger interest of regional peace that instead of engaging in a blame game, the two countries should focus on resolving all issues through dialogue and work together to promote friendly and cooperative relations."¹⁷

Modi's visit to terrorism insurgency hotspot Jammu and Kashmir on August 12, 2014 was seen as a symbolically significant action because it was the first time an Indian Prime Minister had visited the region in almost 20 years.¹⁸ His visit made it clear that terrorism in India would be adequately dealt with during his term in office.

In early August 2014, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations made a promise for "greater cooperation between the member countries of the grouping and India in combating transnational and non-traditional security challenges," including terrorism, the illegal drug trade, human trafficking and cyber crime and piracy.¹⁹ The effort will be made to forge better relations between the countries of ASEAN and India.

While increased security measures and intelligence resources have certainly helped to combat terrorism in India, more must be done to ensure that India does not succumb to another attack from

organizations such as LeT or al Qaeda, which has in the past listed India as a possible target. Efforts must also be made to forge better relations with Pakistan and to prevent domestic terrorism and ethno-nationalist violence. Finally, India must work to ease tensions in the Jammu and Kashmir region and eliminate terrorist strongholds located there. The victory in India's decades-old battle with terrorism, as well as the security and safety of the Indian people, is now in your hands.

Questions to Consider:

1. What evidence points to any Pakistani government involvement in terrorism in India?
2. What are the diplomatic implications for India, Pakistan, and the international community at large if Pakistan is found to be supporting terrorist activity in India?
3. Are there any patterns in terrorist activity in India that could help to predict future attacks?
4. How can India use other countries' anti-terrorism work as examples to eliminate terrorism within its borders?
5. Why do terrorists so often target Mumbai instead of New Delhi, the capital?
6. Where and what background do LeT terrorists come from, and how can they be stopped?
7. Where does domestic terrorism most frequently occur, and why?
8. Based on Modi's political history and background, where do you think he will take prevention of terrorism in India?
9. Does political corruption play a role in the execution of any terrorism-prevention bills, and if so, how?
10. How will cooperation with ASEAN help to combat terrorism in India?

Sources for Further Research:

1. The Siege: 68 Hours Inside the Taj Hotel, by Cathy Scott-Clark and Adrian Levy – A non-fiction book for thoroughly understanding the 2008 Mumbai attacks; includes analysis, pictures, and research.

2. <http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/terror-in-mumbai> – Terror in Mumbai, a documentary; another source that explains well the 2008 Mumbai attacks, if you'd rather watch a movie!
3. <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/cgg/unpan045484.pdf> – Combating Terrorism: Protecting by Righteousness, a report by the Government of India detailing definitions of terrorism, its prevalence in India, how to deal with it, etc.
4. <http://loksabha.nic.in> – The official website for the Indian House of the People, Lok Sabha
5. <http://www.satp.org> – The website for the South Asian Terrorism Portal, it has really useful information about terrorism in India, including timelines, statistics, and documents

Topic 2: Economic Policy and Reform

History:

Since the departure of the British in 1947, India has followed an extremely polarizing economic path. India's economic history can be divided into 4 segments: 1947-1965, 1966-1980, 1981-1991, and post 1991. Each segment represents an era of economic policy vastly different from the other.²⁰ The first era marks the regime of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. Nehru believed in a strong, socialist government that would control all major industries, borrowing many ideals from the Soviet Union, most notably the idea of 5 year plans aimed at improving agricultural and industrial output. India enjoyed high levels of growth under Nehru's rule, partly because of the power of the Congress party in the government and Nehru's ability to inspire and lead the people.²¹ However, this economic approach required every level of society to share the same belief that the current policies were for the better of the country; this was lost when Nehru died.

The following two eras saw a decline in structure and stability of the government and economy. No leader after Nehru inspired the confidence in the people that is required for a Socialist Democracy to be effective. Indian newspapers declared, "The light has gone out of our lives, and there is darkness everywhere." Although the Congress Party continued to successfully pass centrally driven economic policies, the diversity of the country started to cause disruption. The sense of unity and nationalism that Nehru had brought was nowhere to be found, even as the government attempted to bring the people together.²² Prime Minister Indira Gandhi tried to forcefully unite the country together, by abolishing foreign investment in 1973 and expanding the powers of the central government. However, Indira Gandhi often corrupted officials in both legislative branches in order to achieve her goals, lowering confidence in the people even further. This policy of corruption has followed the country into the present day, and remains at the forefront of India's issues. Often

viewed as the most corrupt Prime Minister, Indira's regime marks the most centralized government in Indian history.²³

From 1965 to 1991, the Indian economy was stagnant, even anemic in terms of growth. The lack of emphasis on economic policy and focus on social unity greatly hurt the country's economic stability.²⁴ This fiscal uncertainty reached a tipping point at the start of the 1990's. At that time, India heavily relied on low cost foreign oil from the Soviets, and the collapse of the Soviet Union combined with the effects of the First Gulf War sent the country reeling. Forced to buy oil from the free markets, the foreign exchange reserve of India fell to \$240 million, barely enough money for two weeks supply of oil. Consequently, India was forced to change its closed-door economic policies.²⁵

This marks the beginning of India's current era of free market economics. After accepting funds from the International Monetary Fund in 1991, Finance Minister (and future Prime Minister) Manmohan Singh began preparing India for the international market by lowering tariffs and removing restrictions on India's foreign direct investment (FDI) policy, both extremely controversial moves at the time for a member of the INC, a socialist party.²⁶ Almost instantly, India began to experience vast economic growth. Foreign investors lined up to invest in India, and the IT sector grew at an unfathomable rate. This new economic growth was achieved through very limited liberalization, with the state still controlling most raw material industries and enforcing laws to keep the private sector small.²⁷ Economic growth continued relatively steadily until the recent economic crisis in 2008. Even then, the growth rate did not slow drastically until 2013, when it slowed to 4.4% of India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Comparatively, China's GDP growth in 2013 was close to 7.7%.

Current Issues:

As the data shows, India has grown at an astronomical rate since 1991. In 2007, India became 1 of 15 economies to reach a total GDP output of 1 trillion dollars.²⁸ India is one of the 5 countries in the BRICS group (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) that are considered some of the fastest growing economies.²⁹ Boasting one of the largest service industries in the world along with a specialty in the growing field of information technology, India seems poised to take the world by storm.

Although this suggests a promising outlook, India has experienced a variety of economic problems that require the attention of the Lok Sabha. 2013 was an abysmal year for the Indian economy, with GDP growth slowing to 4.4%.³⁰ This was due largely in part to undisciplined spending and extremely poor leadership. India's budget deficit in 2013 was a staggering 5.2% of the GDP. In response, the finance minister, Palaniappan Chidambaram ignorantly proposed increasing spending by 17%.³¹

Part of the reason India's GDP growth is sliding can be attributed to massive inefficiencies in all sectors of the economy, most notably agriculture and pollution. In 2009, The World Bank estimated that environmental degradation cost India close to \$80 billion, which is close to 5.7% of the GDP. This is mainly because air and water pollution destroys crops, forcing the government to increase subsidies for the agricultural sector.³²

India spends more than 10.7% of the GDP on agricultural subsidies. The government pays farmers subsidies in order to keep the price of food down. Close to 90% of all farmers received government subsidies for their crops.³³ These subsidies primarily serve to pay farmers back for damaged or rotten crops. About 10% of India's crops rot before they can even be distributed. The World Bank reports that as subsidies are rising, public investment in the sector is declining.³⁴ Copious amounts of money spent on agricultural subsidies are holding the economy back. The Lok

Sabha must find a way to decrease the amount of crops that are being destroyed in order to boost efficiency and lower subsidies.

In addition to high subsidies and rotting food, the agricultural sector also represents a huge inefficiency in the distribution of labor. Over 3/5 of the entire population is employed by the agriculture industry, yet agriculture only accounts for 17.4% of the GDP. 60 million of the workers in the agricultural sector are considered unnecessary.³⁵ However, these workers have nowhere else to go, as manufacturing is not an emphasized part of the economy. The need for these low-skilled laborers does not exist anywhere, as the service industry accounts for more than 50% of the GDP and requires high skilled workers.³⁶ Every year, 1 million low-skilled workers enter the Indian economy. However, the overabundance of this class in the agriculture sector creates an enormous inefficiency in the economy.³⁷ The Lok Sabha should find a place for these workers in order to boost the economies' efficiency.

Perhaps the most profound problem India faces today is widespread corruption. In 2013, India ranked 94 out of 176 countries on the Corruption Transparency Index. Additionally, Transparency International stated that most, if not all, of India's key institutions suffered from widespread corruption.³⁸ Polls from March of 2014 show that 96% of Indians think that the government is corrupt.³⁹ Not only does corruption ruin the people's perspective of the government, it costs the economy as well. A study by Ernst & Young calculated that an estimated \$5.92 Billion was lost to corruption between October 2011 and September 2012.⁴⁰ On a national scale, very little has been done to combat the corruption in India. The Lok Sabha must find creative solutions to this problem in order to ensure the citizens happiness and bolster the economy.

India's poor economic leadership and corruption were the main reasons the Congress Party lost so many seats to the BJP, and is the main reason PM Narendra Modi was elected. Modi worked wonders by Indian standards in his governance of the state of Gujarat. By liberalizing the private

sector, Modi was successfully able to attract investors and revive the industry sector of Gujarat, bringing unemployment to less than 1% in 2013. He brought running water and electricity to millions of homes for the first time.⁴¹ With his election, the Indian people are hoping that he can recreate these results across India.

Raised by new era economics, Modi's economic beliefs contrasts India's state controlled economy. Despite the liberalizations made by Manmohan Singh in 1991, the government continues to keep a tight fist on important sectors, including retail.⁴² Since arriving in office, Modi has begun the process of decentralizing the government and reducing its involvement in the economy. A recently passed bill raised the limit of FDI investment in defense and infrastructure to 49%.⁴³ Immediately, investors flocked to capitalize on the higher limits, with FDI investments increasing by a staggering 34% in June of 2014 alone.⁴⁴ By involving more foreign investors in the economy, Modi plans to release these sectors of the economy to the free market.

An increase in foreign investment completely defies Nehru's beliefs in a Socialist Democracy. Although it seems to be helping the economy flourish, many traditionalists have spoken out against these policies.⁴⁵ Since 1991, India has walked the careful line between a central government and gradual economic liberalization. A radical change into a completely liberal state would ruin the economy. If liberalization is inevitable, then the process must occur gradually.⁴⁶ However, opposition to this gradual liberalization does continue to exist, especially within the Congress Party. The Lok Sabha must strike a balance between liberal economic policy and a centralized government.

These next 5 years in the Lok Sabha are of utmost importance in deciding the future of the Indian economy. India is at a crossroads between becoming an international superpower and being marred by an inept government. As the law makers of the country, the Lok Sabha must deal with corruption and decide which economic policies best suit the needs of the people and support the country's growth for the future.

Questions to Consider:

1. Is there any way to recreate the sense of nationalism that Nehru championed? If yes, how can this be used to improve the economy? If no, why not?
2. Is pollution in India a big problem or should it be ignored in favor of economic interests? Can one improve the other?
3. How can the Lok Sabha reduce agricultural subsidies while still keeping the price of food affordable? Consider looking at other government subsidy programs around the world (i.e. USA, GB, etc.).
4. What are some ways the Lok Sabha can reduce the amount of food that rots every year? Be creative with solutions!
5. How can the labor efficiency of the agriculture sector be improved?
6. Is increasing low wage manufacturing jobs in India feasible? Why or why not?
7. How can government corruption be lowered in India? What can be done to convince the people that corruption really has been lowered?
8. What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of FDI's? Should the quotas for these investments be increased?
9. Should the Lok Sabha liberalize the economy further, or continue to control major sectors? What are the advantages and disadvantages of both?
10. Can a balance be found between a liberal economy and an effective socialist democracy? Why or why not?

Useful sources for Further Research

1. <http://www.economicshelp.org/india/problems-indian-economy/> - A simple site that provides a quick overview of the 10 major issues facing India's economy.
2. <http://harvardpolitics.com/world/fighting-corruption-in-india/> - An article detailing ways to

fight corruption.

3. http://hal.inria.fr/docs/00/84/68/25/PDF/Effects_of_Foreign_Direct_Investment_FDI_in_the_Indian_Economy.pdf - A fairly lengthy scholarly article on FDI's in India. This is a good skim and should really help with understanding FDI's.
4. <http://www.investopedia.com/> - If you need help with basic economic terms, this is the place to go.
5. <http://indianexpress.com/article/India/india-others/the-manmohan-singh-legacy-key-achievements-and-failures/> - An overlook of the past PM, and his achievements and failures.

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