Dr. Suba Chandran's article, exploring "Why no Indian Muslims in International Jihad?" raises some pertinent factors at play that result in this phenomenon. But the neglect of certain aspects leads to a conclusion that might be misleading.

First, the role of the al Qaeda, as an operational organization, is overstated. Al Qaeda might be a hierarchical, top-down organization, but it does not monitor its members or issue orders to jihadis worldwide. Al Qaeda today is a widespread social movement, now with a fuzzy network of members that thrives in significant areas of the Muslim world. For example, the recent bombings in Casablanca, Madrid, and Istanbul were not carried out by the al Qaeda operational organization, but by militant fundamentalists, executing these attacks on behalf of, or in the name of, al Qaeda. These militants belonged to, or were mobilized by, the al Qaeda as a movement and any connection with Osama bin Laden or the al Qaeda leadership is unlikely.

Second, the al Qaeda cannot be considered as the leader of international jihad. While it might be the movement's most infamous organization, especially post 9/11, the al Qaeda is one of many terrorist organizations operating within the diverse cultural, sectarian and ideological divides in the Muslim world. Terrorist organizations have loose affiliations and associations with other groups that are part of a vast global terrorist network, but all of them are not subsidiary organizations of al Qaeda. Further, it is not significant whether there is "an organization in India that has direct linkages with al Qaeda" since such linkages are not imperative for its ideology to take root.

Third, as the recent bombings in Mumbai and Srinagar demonstrate, India is not immune to jihadi attacks from within. Even if radical Indian Muslims are only providing "logistical support" to foreign terrorist organizations, they are sympathetic to their cause, promote their objectives and establish connections that directly implicate anyone involved to share the responsibility for their outrages. Hence, the concept of "No Indian Muslim in International Jihad" must be further debated. Muslims involved in jihad within India may not be engaging in international terrorism because they already have a viable domestic target. Why should a militant travel to Iraq or Chechnya to perpetrate religious violence when the same goal can be achieved at home?

Fourth, it can be concluded that India has succeeded in moderating radical Islam. Despite the large number of Muslims in India, they are not participating in international jihad. Islam's long and rich history in India, the impact of Sufi movements and the resulting syncretic culture that emerged has moderated the influence of global jihadi ideology on India's Muslims. Democracy and secularism cannot be overlooked as the most vital moderating influences. India's multiethnic, plural, secular democracy has afforded India's minorities, including its massive Muslim population, equal opportunities and a political voice that has allowed Islam in India to exist in a different context than Islam in most Muslim-majority states. Where Islam is embedded in authoritarian societies, it tends to become the vehicle of angry protest, because religion becomes the only outlet that people have to express their dissatisfaction with autocratic leaders, perceived American imperialist policies, the socio-economic systems in which they struggle, and, overwhelmingly, their burning sense of injustice.
Hypothetically, if there was no democracy in India, anarchy and radicalism would arise, with religious and ethnic groups clamouring for their share of power and autonomy. It is precisely because Muslims are included within India's secular democratic process that radicalism among Muslims has been kept in check.

Fifth, although democracy and secularism have not discouraged British Muslims from joining international jihad, these values are relevant to the Indian case. India, unlike Britain, has a long history of managing a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual population. This experience has consolidated a tradition of tolerance through exposure, intermarriage, conversion, communal living and coexistence. Indian Muslims identify themselves both as Muslims and as Indian nationals, without perceiving these as mutually exclusive identities. Partly due to social alienation, isolation and loneliness, many Muslims in Britain cannot say the same.

Ultimately, "regional cleavages within the Muslim community, limited exposure to international issues like Palestine, a prominent public space provided by Bollywood and Cricket, and the absence of an organized hate campaign at the national level" are all factors explaining the absence of Indian Muslims from the international jihad movement. However, overlooking the instrumental role played by secularism and democracy in moderating the growth of radical ideologies in India ignores the fundamental basis on which the other factors are able to build and leads to an incomplete conclusion to a question worth asking.