

Chapter Four

Contemporary Conflicts and Challenges to Peace in South Asia

Introduction

South Asia has been one of the least peaceful regions in the world. Four full-scale interstate wars and a number of other low-intensity armed conflicts, ethnic conflicts, secessionist movements, and terrorism have mounted stiff challenges to peace in the region. Instability in the region is further perpetuated by the troubled relations between India and Pakistan, internal conflicts in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and militancy and movement for secession in Kashmir. India-Pakistan rivalry and Kashmir conflict has the potential to destabilise the entire South Asian landscape. Such a widespread threat to peace hardly emerges from the Sri Lanka Civil War, ethnic conflict in Bangladesh, secessionist movements in India's Northeast, left-wing extremism in India, and internal conflicts in Afghanistan and Pakistan. That is the reason why peaceful relations between India and Pakistan, and peace in Kashmir are crucial for regional peace and stability.

This chapter briefly discusses the major internal and interstate conflicts in South Asia and makes an analysis of the potential sources of threats to peace, and how those threats can be mitigated through early preventive efforts. The focal point of the analysis is the status of all conflicts in the region in order to decipher the potential sources of threats to regional peace. For the purpose of brevity, the analysis does not intend going deeper into historical evolution of South Asian conflicts but dwells on a very concise introduction to present a brief idea of what possible threats could emerge in near future. The attention is on contemporary issues and potential sources of regional insecurity besides assessment of the possibility of violent conflicts if the

sources of threat are not mitigated or prevented. The chapter gives a brief introduction to intrastate and interstate conflicts. In the intrastate conflicts, a brief introduction to country-wise internal conflicts and their current status has been presented. In the interstate category, conflict between India and Pakistan is the only but major regional destabilising source.

In the chapter some important questions concerning the conflicts in South Asia have been addressed and answers were sought in order to explore the feasibility of a regional mechanism for conflict prevention. Some of those research questions are:

- What is the nature of contemporary conflict in the South Asian region? Are they ethnic, identity, or resource based conflicts?
- What are the major traditional and non-traditional sources of threat to regional peace and security?
- How could the individual state governments tackle the conflicts at the incipient stage before they turn violent?
- How could the state governments could a consensus in defining a regional framework of preventing conflicts from escalating into deadly violence?
- What are the common regional problems that are of concern for the member states?

Contemporary Conflicts in the Region

Two nuclear armed and historically inimical neighbours – India and Pakistan – could push the region into deep chasm of uncertainty whereby the region *per se* could cease to exist. Peace and security in the region hinges on peaceful bilateral relations between these two countries. Indo-Pak enmity is so pertinent to the South Asian region that it defines the regional character. In addition to the decades' long

antagonism between the two South Asian powers, several active and dormant conflicts of both interstate and intrastate nature dot the region.

Almost every country of South Asia is under some internal turmoil with the rivalry between India and Pakistan being the most dangerous, and which can have unimaginable consequences. Although South Asian countries have prospered in economic sphere with India taking a remarkable leap from being reckoned among the Third World countries to becoming a formidable player in the global economy, however, the growing regional economic development has not translated into enhanced regional stability and peace. In fact, the region has once again plunged into chaos in 2016 with the heightened bilateral tension between India and Pakistan over civil unrest in Kashmir and terror attacks on India's Pathankot Air Base and Uri Army Camp. The crisis over Kashmir coupled with terror attacks against Indian armed forces is threatening to escalate into a major armed conflict between the two nuclear-powered countries. Nevertheless break out of a war seems a distant possibility as both the countries have toned down their rhetoric after the surgical strike by India on the night of September 28, 2016 against terror launch-pads across the Line of Control (LoC), which could have led to a war-like situation. Since both the countries understand the ramifications of a war they have rightly sought to defuse cries for one. With nuclear weapons in their possession the dynamics of a war, if it occurs, may pan out in ways that will possibly necessitate crossing the nuclear threshold. This is the major source of threat to regional peace. If a nuclear war breaks out between India and Pakistan, it will inflict unimaginable destruction on the region.

This is not the first time in nearly seven decades since independence that the two countries have embroiled in a crisis. India and Pakistan have fought four wars in 1948, 1965 and 1971 along with a limited war in Kargil in 1999. Besides the wars

they have faced several crises on many occasions that threatened to escalate into an armed conflict. A causal dissection of the Indo-Pak hostility will take us to the pre-partition days. At the root of the interstate conflict lies the unfinished business of partition as claimed by Pakistan. The Pakistani side lays claim over Kashmir which chose to join India at the time of partition. Pakistan's contention is based on the assertion that Kashmir's majority population are Muslims and Pakistan is their natural home. This line of argument draws strength from the "two-nation" theory, which called for separate country for Hindus and Muslims. India on the other hand, accuses Pakistan of meddling in its internal affairs.

Apart from India-Pakistan rivalry, South Asia is festured with multiple ethnic conflicts, identity conflicts, secessionist movements, national self-determination movements, and terrorism, which is a more recent phenomenon but a serious threat to regional peace. In recent times, cross-border terrorism has further exacerbated relations between India and Pakistan. The aforementioned conflict categories are internal in nature albeit most of the conflicts in the region are characterized by spill-over effects. In addition, the interstate hostilities between India and Pakistan, India and China, and to some extent, Pakistan and Afghanistan are the major sources of fear of an armed conflict between states - the region has been witness to wars between India and Pakistan, and India and China on different occasions since 1947.

Not only hostility, there are also deeper economic and strategic ties that characterize the nature of politics in the region. India and Pakistan are the most hostile neighbours in the world whereas Pakistan and China are the best of friends and maintain strong diplomatic, economic, military and strategic relations. India, on the other hand, is friends with Afghanistan with whom it has deeper trade, economic, diplomatic and strategic ties. Historically, India and Afghanistan have been friends for decades in line

with Kautilya's Mandala theory that states, "Enemy's enemy is friend", so is Pakistan with China.

Although India has improved its relations with China in the recent decades with growing economic and trade relations, China remains sceptical of India's growth and wants to become the sole hegemonic Asian power. China sees India's growth as possible threat to its power ambitions in the region and across the globe, and therefore, uses Pakistan as proxy for derailing the development works in India. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is an ambitious project in this direction funded by China to build a trade route from China's Kashgar to Pakistan's warm water port at Gwadar. The major objective of China, through CPEC project, is to control trade in the Arabian Sea and reduce its import costs incurred on importing goods and commodities, mainly oil, from the Middle-East via India Ocean. Through this project China will serve the dual purpose of reducing its trade bills while gaining strategic foothold in the crucial Arabian Sea by establishing a naval base at Gwadar Port.

The rivalry in the realms of business and trade will continue to hamper diplomatic and strategic ties between India and China in the future as well. The game of power politics between the two Asian giants, therefore, will have deeper implications not only for South Asia but whole of continental Asia. If the hostility between India and Pakistan is a threat to the peace and stability in South Asia, hostility between India and China is a threat to the continental peace and security.

Intrastate conflicts have been subdivided into country-wise conflicts and security challenges. In India, the major cause of concern is the insurgency in the North-eastern states and Kashmir along with the long class struggle in the form of Left-wing Naxalite Movement. Historical enmity between Hindus and Muslims is another major

security concern for India as it has manifested with unhindered regularity across different parts of India – recent large-scale communal riots are the Gujarat riots and Muzaffarnagar riots in Uttar Pradesh. These riots caused deaths in the thousands and consequently led to the internal displacement of thousands of people.

Recent rise of Islamic Fundamentalism, often expressing itself in terrorist attacks, is another cause of concern to the security establishment in India. The violent trend found much traction after the 1993 serial bomb blasts at multiple locations in Bombay (now Mumbai). Series of bomb blasts in different cities of India had rocked the nation and reinvigorated the Hindu-Muslim divide with the Muslims of India often being accused of supporting terrorists or indulging in terror activities. These attacks were carried out mainly by cross-border Islamist militant organizations, mainly Lashkar-e-Toiba. However, in 2000s decade a home-grown organization, Indian Mujahidin, sprung up and attracted much attention from the Indian security establishment for carrying out several low-intensity bomb blasts that killed hundreds of civilians.

Emergence of Hindu radical groups and militancy is another source of threat to India's internal stability. Although it has yet to attract much attention from the government agencies, Hindu militant organizations are steadily setting foot mainly as a response to Islamic fundamentalism. The Indian government, however, is in the denial mode and abstains from recognizing it a security concern. Despite evidences of involvement of several individuals of the right wing organizations in low-intensity blasts, and also of aggravating communal violence against the Muslims, the government agencies have gone soft on Hindu militancy and tried to subvert the investigation against the individuals implicated in the terror cases.

Internal conflicts in Pakistan are a much graver source of insecurity and instability in South Asia. Pakistan's existence has been marred with periods of turmoil and internal crises. One of the major challenges for Pakistan is to consolidate democratic governance structures as the country has seen several military coups since independence in 1947. Pertinent to this tension between civilian and military establishment is the inherent dispute between ideological underpinnings of state-making. Mohammad Ali Jinnah led the partition movement on the basis of "two-nation" theory. His contention was that Hindus and Muslims are two separate nations and, therefore, are entitled to separate states. During the partition, Pakistan was conceived as an Islamic republic meant for the Muslims. However, immediately after independence Jinnah's speeches reflected a change of the idea concerning the nature of the state, and he articulated the vision of a secular state in which people from all communities – Hindus, Sikhs, and Christians along with the majority Muslims must work together.¹ This led to conflicting claims by others who wanted to establish Pakistan as an Islamic republic. The dispute that arose pertaining to the nature of Pakistani state was further worsened after the demise of Jinnah within two years of independence. Since then Pakistan has oscillated between democracy and military governments.

The objectives of state-making and statecraft could not be achieved as envisaged by the founding fathers of Pakistan. The country failed in several aspects where India succeeded significantly. The void created by the failure to consolidate governance structures was filled in by several non-state actors who proliferated in different parts of the country. The rise of Islamic militancy in Pakistan, especially of terror groups,

¹Stephen P. Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), pp. 42-43

such as Al-Qaeda, Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT), Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), led to further erosion of democratic norms of governance.

In recent times, Pakistan's inability to contain hard-line or fundamental elements within its frontiers has drawn sharp criticism from various quarters. Voices from across the world derided Pakistan as a den of religious fundamentalism, terrorism, and some have even called Pakistan a rogue² state. Growing clamour in the beginning of the new millennium to categorise Pakistan as a failed state led S Akbar Zaidi to enquire into the notion of failed states. In a brief analysis of the internal conditions that make for failure of states, Zaidi took a nuanced view of the idea of failed state.³ He refrained from terming Pakistan a "failed state" but held responsible the failure of Pakistan's elite for the weakening of the foundations of the state and their inability in consolidating democracy in the country.

Responding to the clamour, renowned American expert on South Asia, Stephen P. Cohen, who is a senior fellow at Brookings Institution, totally rejected this notion floating across the world. The clamour was similar to what India is lobbying with world powers to officially declare Pakistan a "terrorist state" after a series of terrorist attacks on the Indian soil in 2016. Cohen instead identified five kinds of failures rather than branding Pakistan a failed state.⁴ They are:

- *The failure to live up to past expectations, one's own and those of others;*
- *Failure of vision;*
- *Economic failure;*
- *Failure of leadership;*

² Mary Anne Weaver, *Pakistan: In the Shadow of Jihad and Afghanistan* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), p. 10.

³ S Akbar Zaidi, "A Failed State or Failure of Pakistan's Elite?" *Economic and Political Weekly* (Mumbai), Vol. 43, No. 28 (Jul. 12 - 18, 2008), pp. 10-11.

⁴ Stephen P. Cohen, n. 1, pp. 3-4.

- *Catastrophic failure.*

Despite such failures, Cohen expressed optimism in Pakistan as it has not ever involved in excesses, such as in China and Iran, and it could still emerge as a cohesive nation.⁵

In recent times, terror groups in Pakistan have proliferated. However, this is not a very old phenomenon as opposed to other challenges that continue to pose dangers to Pakistan's internal security. Pakistan is a complex mosaic of ethnic identities with competing claims of national self-determination. Secessionist movements in Baluchistan, Sindh, and North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) have long been a challenge to Pakistan's national integration. The ethnic groups abhor the larger Pakistani identity and believe that Pakistan has occupied their territory and colonized them. They have failed to assimilate the Pakistani identity and stuck to their ethnic identity. Movement in Baluchistan is for creating a separate Baluch state which will also include some parts of Afghanistan and Iran. Similarly, the Sindhi movement is for creating Sindhudesh for the Sindhis. In the NWFP, Pakhtuns are running a movement for creating a Pakhtoonistan which will encompass some parts on the other side of Afghanistan-Pakistan border.

Apart from the aforementioned conflicts, communal tension between Shias and Sunnis has also had a destabilising effect on the internal security situation. The country has witnessed several instances of heinous crimes by Sunnis against Shias and vice versa. Groups have been deliberately targeted by each other in the bloody Shia-Sunni strife over the decades. In addition, Sindhi-Muhajir conflict has caused hundreds of deaths in the Sindh province especially in Pakistan's largest city and

⁵ *ibid.*, p.3

commercial hub, Karachi. The province has seen suicide bombing as well as intense sectarian violence in the last few decades.

Of all the conflicts, Kashmir is the most dangerous conflict in the region, and if not resolved, may lead to a large-scale violent conflict between India and Pakistan that will put the lives of millions of people in the region to grave risk. Kashmir conflict has a dubious distinction of being reckoned among the few protracted conflicts in the world. India and Pakistan have been at loggerheads over Kashmir for nearly seven decades. They both have competing claims over the territory and fought three wars over the issue. Moreover, Kashmir conflict has an internal dimension as well. People of Kashmir want to secede from India and form an independent state of Kashmir, a movement that India vehemently opposes since it considers the territory its integral part and sovereignty over it cannot be compromised at any cost.

Kashmir has a long history of foreign occupation, which the indigenous population have opposed vigorously. Successive invasions by outsiders have trampled upon the indigenous culture and traditions, and in all cases, oppressed and terrorized the local population. Kashmiris nurture this sentiment for centuries and see the Indian rule in the valley as occupation. The Indian state is seen as a colonizer. During the 2016 summer unrest, people of Kashmir chanted slogans, such as *“India go back”* and *“Hum Kya Chahen Azaadi.”*

Intractable nature of the conflict has added new dimensions and engendered new complexities to the overall conflict dynamics. The conflict has manifested in deadly violence at different points of time, however, it also has seen periods of relative calm in the valley.

Protracted Kashmir conflict has led to the emergence of multiple stakeholders. In the initial few years of the partition, the main players were only India and Pakistan, and the people of Kashmir. There were no organized groups within Kashmir that staked claim. But decades of failure to resolve the conflict has added several stakeholders without whose participation resolution seems a distant possibility. A number of hard-line organizations, such as Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, Harkatul Mujahideen, and Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) have established its base in the valley of Kashmir. These groups are the main elements stoking violence in the state. They function like an organized militia with trained armed fighters in their ranks. Apart from the hard-line faction there is also a moderate faction led by All India Hurriyat Conference, which is the platform for moderate separatist groups who resort to peaceful protests against Indian oppression and occupation.

Afghanistan is the least peaceful country in the region. The country is perpetually under violence ever since the Soviet Union led communist movement in 1979. Since the Soviet Union moved its Red Army into Afghanistan, it has rarely seen peace for nearly four decades now. US-led War on Terror has hardly provided any solace to the people of Afghanistan. Contrary to the claims by US, the country remains one of the most insecure places on the earth. Several internal conflicts and factional fights pose grave challenge to peace and security in the country. Efforts are being made to rebuild the war-torn society through the establishment of democracy in the country.

Under the current political dispensation led by President Ashraf Ghani, Afghanistan is making a gradual transition from internal turmoil to stability. Although the scenario is still grim with regular suicide attacks albeit the little progress towards stability is proving to be a ray of hope for the people. Bringing normalcy to the country is a big challenge for the government in Kabul as the warlords who have prospered by

keeping conflicts alive are the major obstacle to the peace process. For years, the warlords in Afghanistan have exploited the fault-lines in the absence of credible governance and rampant corruption in the ministries. Afghanistan's mining sector is a scene of huge corruption owing to the nexus between corrupt politicians and warlords. Consolidation of governance structures and return of normalcy in the country, therefore, is not welcomed by such groups. Resurgence of Taliban in some parts of Afghanistan is emerging as a new challenge to Ghani administration as this will again create political crisis in the country. Prevention of day-to-day violence, containing the peace spoilers, curbing the rampant corruption, reigning in the warlords, and transparency in governance, increased spending on education, healthcare, and infrastructure development are the major challenges to Kabul in restoring semblance of peace in the country.

Sri Lanka got over a bloody civil war involving the ethnic Tamils and the Government led by Buddhist Sinhalese in 2010. The peace in Sri Lanka is still fragile at best. It is too early to predict whether the peace will consolidate further or troubles will erupt in near future. A report by Insights on Conflict has not sounded very optimistic about the fragile peace in the country.⁶ Return of violence seems very much possible with blatant disregard to human rights violations. Most of the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam have either fled or been killed in the civil war that ravaged the country in early 2010. But those who are left are subject to extreme torture and day to day misery. The process of reconciliation has hardly gained momentum leaving the historical grievances of ethnic Tamils unaddressed. People are still living on the margins of society. The ground situation is panning out in such a way that it could start fresh troubles in the country.

⁶ Insight on Conflict, "Sri Lanka: Conflict Profile". <https://www.insightonconflict.org/conflicts/sri-lanka/conflict-profile/> (accessed 12 Jan. 2017).

Oppression, discrimination, worsening socio-economic conditions, negligence by state, ethnic or religious chauvinism, policies detrimental to minorities, policy structures that discriminate against the ethnic minorities, harsh laws, and curbs on freedom to dissent among various other factors, are a ready recipe for violence. If these issues are left unaddressed by the government, the possibility of resumption of violent means of expression becomes high. This holds true not only in the case of Sri Lanka but for South Asia as a whole. Every country in the region is plagued by this contagious disease that renders them incapable of paying heed to issues which disseminate anger among ethnic minorities until it reaches a crisis.

Intrastate and Interstate Conflicts in South Asia

South Asia is home to conflicts of multifarious nature. Several conflicts, though dormant, are yet to be resolved, but there are a number of conflicts dotting the region that are of concern for the region as a whole. Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) has categorised conflicts around the world into three broad categories: state-based conflict, non-state based conflict and one-sided violence. UCDP defines state-based armed conflict as wars or lesser conflict between states or between states and rebel challengers.⁷ UCDP describes a state-based armed conflict as “contested incompatibility that concerns governments and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in one calendar year.” The recent examples of such conflicts are conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia during 1998-2000, and between Columbia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces Colombia (FARC). Non-state based conflict refers to armed conflict between two organized actors, neither of which is a

⁷ http://www.pcr.uu.se/digitalAssets/61/61335_1ucdp-paper-9.pdf (accessed 12 Aug. 2016).

state. Examples of non-state conflicts include the conflict between the Islamic State (IS) and the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) in Syria.

One-sided violence is when an organized actor (a state or some organized non-state actor) kills unarmed civilians such as the violence committed by the Rwandan government and associated militias in Rwanda in 1994 as well as violence by Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad, commonly known as Boko Haram, in Nigeria in more recent years.

South Asia's peace and security has been perpetually under threat owing to the presence of all these types of armed conflicts. A number of conflicts in the South Asian region are a result of historical enmity, such as between India and Pakistan or between Tamils and Sinhala Buddhists in Sri Lanka. But in recent years some non-conventional sources of violence, such as religious fundamentalism, right-wing extremism and terrorism, have emerged that raise serious challenges of maintaining peace in the region. The religious fundamentalism-propelled terror activities such as by the Islamist organizations, particularly in Afghanistan and Pakistan, have claimed thousands of lives in recent years. Apart from the pervasive traditional security threats, such as war, civil, war, ethnic conflicts, insurgency, etc. some other non-traditional sources of security like poverty, hunger, global warming, increasing population, illicit drug trafficking, and terrorism pose a greater challenge to the region as a whole. Besides, the region is at lower ends of vital indices that describe the level of peace, economic well-being, stability, employment opportunities and human development.

S.D. Muni, a renowned South Asian scholar and a Distinguished Fellow at Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi, has classified types of conflicts in

South Asia into four broad categories in a paper titled, '*Conflicts in South Asia: Causes, Consequences, Prospects*'.⁸ The categories include:

- i. those imposed and escalated by the global political, strategic and developmental dynamics, including the role of great powers;
- ii. those inherited and strategically induced in inter-state engagements;
- iii. those precipitated and nurtured by the internal political turbulence, socio-cultural fault-lines and developmental distortions; and
- iv. those that are caused and covered by the non-state actors.

The first category of conflict is influenced and escalated by outside powers, for example, conflicts generated in or between the South Asian countries as a consequence of the United States' intervention in Afghanistan in the aftermath of 9/11 to unleash a "global war on terrorism", and the intervention of Soviet Union's Red Army in Afghanistan in 1979-1980 followed by US's direct involvement in supporting the resistance against the Soviet forces.

The second category of conflict includes India-Pakistan conflict as the most prominent among others. Conflicts in the third category encompass all the ethnic/sectarian conflicts and insurgencies in South Asia. And the fourth category of conflicts pertains to the attacks by terrorists, such as in Mumbai in India in 2008 or the illegal activities of criminal groups or the insurgents.

According to Muni, these conflicts include both armed struggle and non-violent conflicts. There are conflicts that are manifest and cause harm to civilian populations.

⁸ S. D. Muni, "Conflicts in South Asia: Causes, Consequences, Prospects" (Institute for South Asian Studies (ISAS), National University of Singapore, 2013), pp. 3-4

But there are also active conflicts in the region that are characterized by non-violent protests, such as the recent Madhesis Movement in Nepal.

Intrastate conflicts include all the internal conflicts in South Asia. A wider comprehension also includes potential sources of threat to peace and security in each of the member states. The origins of those conflicts have been briefly discussed and enriched with a comprehensive analysis of the nature of threats and their implications on contemporary regional peace and stability. The major interstate conflict is between India and Pakistan, which has resulted in four wars including one limited armed conflict since 1947. Kashmir has been discussed separately as it has both internal and international dimensions owing to the competing claims over the territory by both India and Pakistan.

Interstate Conflict between India and Pakistan

Territorial dispute over Kashmir between India and Pakistan is the major source of regional instability. Going by the latest crisis between India and Pakistan over attacks on Indian army and air force bases by terrorists from across the Line of Control (LOC), the conflict can escalate to a level whereby the successive generations would repent and fall victim to the long-term effects.

The presence of nuclear weapons in the region is a source of great concern for the regional as well as the global community. In fact, nuclear weapons act as deterrence to a large-scale Indo-Pak war, nevertheless these also pose a threat to the entire region. An armed exchange between India and Pakistan involving nuclear weapon has the potential of total annihilation of South Asian region. Therefore, regional peace and security in South Asia hinges on the relations between these two nuclear powers. South Asia has been rightly described in the words of Stephen P. Cohen:

“The centrality of the India-Pakistan dispute, playing itself out in regular wars, crises, and a near total absence of cooperation defines South Asia.”⁹

There are several dimensions of India-Pakistan conflict: emotional, political, and the strategic. Partition has left a deep emotional scar on the psyche of people on either side of the border. The horrendous communal violence as a result of partition between Hindus and Muslims still haunt people. Emotional burden of the partition hinders reconciliation in the society. Hindus and Muslims in both India and Pakistan see each other with suspicion. Given the historical baggage, people’s sentiments dampen the political will needed to begin a conclusive bilateral dialogue. Diplomatic initiatives have been undertaken many a times but failed to arrive at a conclusion. The obstruction is spawned by ceasefire violations between India and Pakistan in which killing of army personnel evokes nationalistic passions. Political leaders had to respect the sentiments of their constituency as they fear the implications of their decisions in elections.

Coming to the political dimension, both Indian and Pakistani leaders have played politics over the long-standing rivalry. In every national election, Indian leaders whip up jingoistic sentiments through tirades against the Pakistani state. Right-wing leaders in India spare no chance in making political capital out of the killings of 2-3 soldiers at the borders. However, the argument is not that these killings are trivial issues. Indeed, killing of even a single individual is of concern. But the leaders see these incidents as opportunity to gain political mileage. Typical to their approach are hyperventilating lectures of nationalistic fervour. As the legacy proves, leaders in India and Pakistan feed on the hostility and care less about resolving the dispute that

⁹ Stephen P. Cohen, *Shooting for a Century: Finding Answers to the India-Pakistan Conundrum* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution Press, 2013), p. 30.

will possibly end the tension on the borders and ultimately preclude the reason behind the unfortunate deaths of soldiers.

On the strategic front, both countries compete with each other in consolidating strategic ground in the region. Pakistan is making all out efforts to improve strategic and economic relations with USA and Russia. USA has aided Pakistan in its War on Terror and has been providing economic assistance for many years. Pakistan also has deep strategic and economic ties with China. India, on the other hand, has entered a new phase of bilateral cooperation with USA in recent years and abhors Pakistan's growing military cooperation with USA. In fact, India has explicitly expressed its repugnance to US's decision of supply of eight F-16 fighter aircraft in February 2016. India nurtures the ambition of becoming a hegemonic power in South Asia.

Central to peace and security in South Asia is the resolution of all the outstanding issues between India and Pakistan. Stable peace in the region would be a far-cry until the India-Pakistan conflict is resolved. The fault-lines created by strained relations between the two nuclear powers is behind several regional problems, such as growing spectre of terrorism, emergence of non-state actors, militancy, human and drug trafficking, transnational criminal nexus, internal communal disturbances, and acute poverty.

The enduring rivalry between India and Pakistan is the main factor why SAARC has failed to become a vehicle for enhanced regionalism in South Asia even after more than three decades of its existence. The optimism of enhanced regionalism in South Asia is contingent on how India and Pakistan deal with the problem of Kashmir and the nuclear issue.¹⁰ Despite the inherent contradiction over Kashmir between the two

¹⁰ Ranjit Singh, "Regional Cooperation in South Asia: Problems and Prospects", Pakistan Horizon (Karachi), Pakistan Institute of International Affairs, Vol. 63, No. 4 (October 2010), p. 63.

South Asian powers, they have successfully negotiated several bilateral agreements. The Indus Water Treaty (IWT) of 1960 is a bright example of cooperation between the two hostile neighbours. Peace agreements of 1953 and 1955 along with various agreements on border disputes are some of the positives in the India-Pakistan rivalry. But the big question over Kashmir still looms large over the bilateral relations and hinders peace and comprehensive cooperation between the two countries. Resolution of conflict between India and Pakistan, which seems elusive, holds the key for greater regional cooperation in the areas of peace and security, and will open up the probability of evolving a regional mechanism for the prevention of conflicts.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan is one of the most violent and insecure countries in the world. It is going through a period of uncertainty perpetuated by the draw-down of NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). The withdrawal of troops has both security and economic implications. On the one hand reduction of force is causing resurgence of Taliban in north and east Afghanistan. And on the other hand, it has dried the flow of international funds, which is having wider ramifications on the war-driven economy of Afghanistan.

Main actors/players in conflict

Various actors play a critical role in keeping Afghanistan conflict alive. These actors operate at sub-national, national, regional and international levels. Presence of such actors with divergent or often diametrically opposite agendas have protracted the conflict. Sub-national actors may include:

- Provincial governor

- Provincial Council members
- Afghan Local Police (ALP) forces
- Tribal elders and religious figures
- Narcotics traffickers
- Ethno-tribal power
- Insurgent groups, such as the Taliban, Haqqani Network, and Hizb-e-Islam

At the national level, the main players are the Afghanistan National Army and Afghanistan National Police, which together form Afghan National security Forces (ANSF). They constitute the country's military force fighting insurgency. At the regional level, Iran and Pakistan are considered the peace spoilers often accused of not supporting the fight against insurgency or terrorism. ISI continues its support to Afghan Taliban for operating spaces in Quetta, Peshawar and other cities causing strained relations between the two countries. And at the international level, ISAF which is functioning as per the mandate defined by "Operation Enduring Freedom". However, post 2014 draw-down, the ISAF troops have shrunk substantially to 13,000.

Resurgence of Taliban in Northern Afghanistan

In late September 2016, Taliban has recaptured Kunduz, which is the first provincial capital captured by Taliban since the United States invaded the country in 2001. This signals the re-emergence of Taliban in Afghanistan. Draw-down of US forces have left vulnerable spots across the country prompting attacks by insurgents. The Afghan military and police are still not capable of combating the rise of insurgency on their own. As a result of the development in Kunduz, special US forces have to be called upon. To put it succinctly, the Afghan security forces and police are not yet trained enough to secure the country on their own.

Declining economy

For decades Afghanistan's economy has been a war-driven economy. Off late, the economy of Afghanistan is in shambles and recorded a downward growth spiral for four consecutive years. As per the World Bank's World Development Indicators, annual GDP growth fell from 14.4 per cent in 2012 to 2 percent in 2013, and 1.3 and 1.5 per cent in 2014 and 2015 respectively. The economic meltdown is a consequence of post-2014 international military drawdown. Departure of foreign troops from nearly 800 bases has deprived the country of hundreds of millions of dollars that formed its largest source of revenue since 2002. According to one estimate, more than 200,000 Afghans have now lost jobs in logistics, security, and other sectors.

Political uncertainty

All is not well within the National Unity Government as President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah are differing on matters of governance and appointments to key posts. As per an interview of Andrew Wilder (Vice President, Asia Programs) published on United States Institute of Peace (USIP) recently¹¹, Chief Executive Abdullah in particular has pushed for the ouster of the current members of the election commission, whose tenures would normally run until 2019. However, the parliament has yet to approve changes to the law allowing for those commissioners' removal. The situation may lead to a political meltdown if not settled between Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah.

Widespread corruption

¹¹ <http://www.usip.org/publications/2016/07/06/qa-obama-s-troop-decision-and-afghanistan-s-stability>, (accessed 12 July 2016).

Corruption is another source of major concern for internal stability. Afghanistan's mining sector has seen rampant corruption through illegitimate allocation of mining sector rights to warlords. According to a report by Transparency International in partnership with Integrity Watch Afghanistan, Afghans consider the police and the judiciary as the most corrupt institutions in the country.¹² The report highlights a few major problems driving corrupt practices:

- A dysfunctional police and judiciary is allowing impunity for the corrupt
- The state is failing to deliver basic services to citizens. Corruption is largely to blame
- There's a lack of integrity among many elected officials

As per latest figures of UNHCR, 2.7 million Afghans are refugee in different countries.¹³ Most of them cross over to Pakistan for fear of reprisal and attacks by hostile groups. The forced return of refugees from Pakistan is adding to the woes of already declining financial capability to sustain the population.

Unemployment and widespread poverty

According to an International Crisis Group report¹⁴, the unemployment rate rose from 9.3 per cent in 2011-12 to 24 per cent in 2014. During the same period, the number of people who were not engaged in gainful employment increased from 26.5 per cent to 39.3 per cent of the labour force; among women, the rate increased from 42.4 per cent to 49.8 per cent. As a consequence of political uncertainty and declining economic opportunities, wealthy and middle class Afghans are moving assets to the Gulf States,

¹² http://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_in_afghanistan_what_needs_to_change, (accessed 13 July 2016).

¹³ UNHCR, <http://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html>, (accessed 13 July 2016).

¹⁴ Crisis Group, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/economic-disaster-behind-afghanistan-s-mounting-human-crisis>, (accessed 13 July 2013).

Pakistan, Iran, Turkey and Central Asia.¹⁵ Flight of human capital is a cause of great concern due to lack of employment opportunities and security. A good chunk of young and educated people have left the country in 2014 and 2015 to seek refugee status in Europe.

Bangladesh

Bangladesh emerged out of a bloody war for independence from its parent state, Pakistan in 1971. Preceding its birth, Bangladesh was mired in widespread violence internally due to ethnic differences. Bangladesh has a legacy of political violence that continues to the contemporary time. Before dismemberment of Pakistan, Ayub Khan imposed martial law in the East Wing in 1969 in the face of a strengthening political clout of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his party, Awami League's (AL) growing influence. Ouster of Ayub Khan brought in Yahya Khan who promised national elections. AL won overwhelmingly in the elections securing 160 seats out of 162 in East Pakistan. The victory gave Mujib's party absolute majority at the national level. Talks of the degree of autonomy given to East Wing were faltered and Yahya ordered the arrest of Mujib which led to an uprising of against West Pakistan-dominated army by Bengali soldiers supported by armed fighters of Mukti Bahini. The bloody-civil war triggered a huge population displacement that also brought India into Bangladesh's war of secession. The civil war ensued due to the culture of political violence perpetrated by the West Wing of undivided Pakistan.

Culture of political violence is deeply embedded in the Bangladeshi society. This has been conspicuously visible from the series of recent events involving Bangladesh's ruling party, Awami League and its main political opponent, Bangladesh National

¹⁵ *ibid.*

Party. Sheikh Hasina's government is using authoritarian tactics to silence or exterminate its political opponents. ICG has warned of a growing political rivalry between AI and BNP, and its repression in its latest report.¹⁶ The report expresses deep concern of the deteriorating law and order situation because of dysfunctional justice system. In addition to political violence, growing religious extremism-driven by the emergence of Islamist forces is making the internal security vulnerable. Regular violence in recent times perpetrated by religious extremist groups against religious and ethnic minorities has disturbed the internal peace.

The year 2016 has seen a spurt in terrorist attacks, the worst being the Holey Artisan Bakery attack on 1 July 2016 in an upscale Dhaka locale. More than 20 people died and scores were injured. Suspected involvement of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS, also known as IS) was widely reported by the national and international media. An article on Bangladesh's internal security published in Foreign Affairs in June 2016 speculated the involvement of IS behind the growing attacks on minority Muslim sects, Buddhists Monks, and Hindus.¹⁷ Attacks on religious minorities, political opponents, secular activists, and bloggers have risen sharply in Bangladesh since 2013. ICG's April 2016 report on Bangladesh internal security hold the AL government responsible for deteriorating law and order situation.¹⁸ The report expresses its deep concerns over a seemingly deepening culture of violence and extremism emanating from the political conflict between AL and BNP. The Hasina

¹⁶ Crisis Group, "Political Conflict, Extremism and Criminal Justice in Bangladesh", 11 April 2016. Available at <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/277-political-conflict-extremism-and-criminal-justice-in-bangladesh.pdf>. p. ii

¹⁷ Joseph Allchin, "The Rise of Extremism in Bangladesh", 9 June 2016. Foreign Affairs, available at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/bangladesh/2016-06-09/rise-extremism-bangladesh>, (accessed 16 July 2016).

¹⁸ Crisis Group Asia Report No.227, "Political Conflict, Extremism and Criminal Justice in Bangladesh", 11 April 2016. Available at www.crisisgroup.org, (accessed 16 July 2016).

government has been reported to be involved in using its political weight against the criminal justice system in the country.

The AL government's position taken against its main rival, BNP, is denting the criminal justice system. On the margins of this unfolding situation, religious extremism and targets against the minorities are growing day by day. As per the ICG report, the ruling party is using government machineries, such as the police to harass leaders or workers of its main political rival.¹⁹ "The permissive legal environment, however, is creating opportunities for extremist outfits to regroup, manifested in the killings of secular bloggers and foreigners and attacks on sectarian and religious minorities in 2015", notes the ICG report.²⁰ Such a trend in a politically volatile condition generates a culture of impunity whereby the perpetrators develop a strong conviction that they can get away with any crime because they have legally sanctioned protection to engage in crimes. Sri Lanka is facing the same dilemma. Culture of impunity is a big problem hindering the transition to total peace in Sri Lanka.²¹ Crimes of similar nature initially pose as law and order problems but deepen over a period of time if not nipped in the bud. After a certain period of time, the ideological force behind such crimes takes more violent turn and begins to challenge the writ of the state.

Political parties everywhere including Bangladesh make use of sub-state actors for political gains, to harass or target rival leaders, or to execute hidden agendas but in doing so they create long-term threats to internal peace only for short-term gains.

Pakistan is a living example of how politicians, people in power, and government

¹⁹ *ibid.*, Executive Summary, p. i.

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ Alan Keenan, "Impunity and Justice: Why the UN Human Rights Council Must Stay Engaged in Sri Lanka", ICG, 17 June 2016. Available at <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-asia/sri-lanka/impunity-and-justice-why-un-human-rights-council-must-stay-engaged-sri-lanka>, (accessed 18 July 2016).

agencies employ such strategies for temporal benefits. But the same sub-state actors acquire monstrous forms over the passage of time and mount stiff challenges to the legitimate rule of state. In the case of Bangladesh, political parties have relentlessly used disgruntled groups within the society for serving their political purposes. BNP's association with Jamaate-e-Islami is well-known.

Jamaat-e-Islami was established as a socio-religious organisation by Abul Ala Maududi in 1941 in India. The organisation had the objective of social reform through true preaching of Islam. But later on it began to articulate its political ambition by seeking to establish Islamic Shariah rule. Jamaat's influence subsided in India after partition but it remained a dominant political force in undivided Pakistan and subsequently in Bangladesh after 1971. Various leaders of Jamaat have been implicated in war crimes including murder, rape and targeted killing against the Bengali Muslims, and other religious and ethnic groups, both before and during the War of Liberation in 1971. AL government held various top leaders of Jamaat for war crimes and executed at least four of them in recent times.

Such actions have been flayed by the international community and NGOs. Amnesty International and Human Rights have particularly criticised and protested Sheikh Hasina government for executing Motiur Rahman Nizami in May 2016. Bangladesh authorities have raised questions about the political intentions of the AL government. They believe that Hasina is weakening the political opposition on the pretext of executing war criminals.²² Jamaat has two factions: political Islamists and Islamic extremists. The former seek to transform Bangladesh into an Islamic state ruled by

²² Adrija Roychowdhury, "Why Bangladesh is executing Jamaat-e-Islami leaders: A short history", Indian Express, 12 May 2016. Available at <http://indianexpress.com/article/research/why-bangladesh-is-executing-jamaat-e-islami-leaders-a-short-history/>, (accessed 23 July 2016).

Shariah law while the latter aim to eliminate all un-Islamic elements from the society with the cooperation of transnational terrorist organisations.²³

Recent extremist attacks point toward the suspected involvement of IS and Al-Qaeda. But the Bangladesh government is in denial mode. The position of the government may further erode the rule of law in the country and engender more violence, particularly extremist violence in the recent times. Samuel Rahman identifies three actions of the AL government that have strengthened the party's position vis-à-vis its political rivals but pushed the marginalized Islamist elements toward extremism.²⁴

Those actions are:

- (i). The Bangladeshi government denies the threat posed by ISIS and Al-Qaeda
- (ii). Bangladesh is executing war criminals from the losing side of the 1971 war for independence. This has antagonized Islamists.
- (iii). Islamic extremism could be a reaction to fears that the government might become increasingly secular.

Such recent actions have raised the fears of backlash and more extremist violence in the near future. Deliberate policies of the government, if they continue to move in these directions, will generate possibilities of an increase in religiously motivated attacks. The Bangladesh government has a big challenge to tackle religious extremism and fundamentalism. To contain the growing radicalisation, the AL government must take urgent steps to prevent people, especially youth, from moving toward radical path.

²³ Samuel Rahman, "Here's how the Bangladesh government is making religious violence more likely", Washington Post, 21 July 2016. Available at https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/07/21/heres-how-the-bangladesh-government-is-making-religious-violence-more-likely/?utm_term=.c85035158fb0, (accessed 24 July 2016).

²⁴ Ibid.

Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies (BIPSS) in its latest infographic slide show, raised a few alerts and security concerns for Bangladesh:²⁵

- Increasing pressure from domestic religious militant group
- Rise in youth and female radicalisation
- Implications of linkages with international terrorist organisations
- Communal tension and violence within ethnic/religious minorities
- Emergence and expansion of Rohingya terrorist group "Harakah al Yakin"
- Political violence and stability
- Threats from water security & climate change
- New Maritime tension in the EEZ with Myanmar

These major security issues have the potential of further political instability and threat to internal peace. Refugee flow from Myanmar's Rakhine State and increasing religious extremism is putting Bangladesh government under immense pressure to maintain the internal peace. In addition, government's systematic targeting of political opponents and execution of religious leaders has undermined the legitimacy of the governance institutions and faith in the criminal justice system. The government must take immediate action to prevent the worsening law and order situation to slip out of hand. If the trend continues on the same trajectory, there is fear of an increase in religious and political violence in coming years.

The Crisis Group report has exhorted the AL government to take some urgent measures to arrest the escalating tension in Bangladesh. The foremost measure that the government should take is that it should stop the use of police machinery and government institutions to target political opposition. The report has also suggested

²⁵ Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies, <http://www.bipss.org.bd/>, accessed 25 July 2016).

some urgent steps, such as, to accommodate political opposition, restore political stability and ensure internal security; withdraw cases against human rights activists, Journalists and other civil society activists; ensure due process and ensure the restoration of criminal justice system; and push for broader political reform agenda.²⁶

Experiences from other countries show that such worsening of internal political situation and eroding societal security puts countries on the path of violence, or radicalisation. Lack of legitimate social order engenders a lot of problems that governments, most often, are unable to manage at a time. In this backdrop, the overall economic progress and development takes a hit, which leads to hardship for the common masses. The prevailing conditions slowly give rise to a lot of conflicts within the country. In such situations, the government must take steps to prevent the worsening social conditions that spawn disputes, and later on, conflicts. Strong governance mechanisms that pay heed to such emerging situations mitigate the structural causes and nip the disputes in the bud. If the dispute is allowed to fester, it becomes not only a threat to internal security but snuffs out many precious lives.

India

India has managed the internal conflicts well over the years but most often it adopts a repressive approach to quell the discontent that consequently manifests itself violently. The approach entails suppression of any movement with an iron hand. Secessionist movements in Jammu and Kashmir and the Northeast have not yet been resolved. Though these internal conflicts fuel violence intermittently and are subsequently dealt with strongly by the Indian security establishment. Nevertheless, outstanding issues pertaining to the conflicts remain unaddressed, and that keeps the

²⁶ Crisis Group, n. 18, pp. iii-iv.

potential for future violence very much alive. The cycle of violence in Kashmir and in the Northeast, and the counter-violence by the Indian state is repeating itself again and again for several decades.

Apart from the Kashmir conflict, which is the biggest concern for India's security establishment and has been discussed in the chapter separately, continued insurgencies in Northeast particularly in Manipur, Nagaland and Assam are the greatest sources of threats to internal peace and security. The history of dealing with these internal conflicts by India has been a history of crisis management, not proactive prevention of violence that takes away precious lives.

Insurgency in Northeast

Insurgency in Northeast is one of the biggest internal conflicts that have long worried Indian security establishment and always kept the region under constant threat of violence. The region has time and again erupted in violence involving different separatist groups. Peace in the region still seems elusive even after successive central governments' efforts. Although the NDA government led by BJP signed a Peace Accord with the leading insurgent faction, National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isaac-Muivah) [NSCN (I-M)], in August 2015 but how much the region will be stabilized is a wait-and-watch game. NSCN is just one of the insurgent groups in the Northeast, there are other groups operating in the region and are fighting for greater autonomy or secession. This section briefly discusses the main insurgent groups in Northeast and the potential of violence in the future.

Northeast is a region comprised of seven states euphemised as seven sisters. The region includes the states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. It is connected with the rest of India by a narrow

strip of land ensconced between Bangladesh and Nepal. Generally, the geographical mass of Northeast, leaves a deceptive impression about the homogenous demographic composition of the region on the minds of people in India, but the reality is markedly different from the popular perception. Northeast, in fact, represents a rich mosaic of cultural diversity, a delight for the anthropologist or ethnographers. As many as 209 different tribes and sub-tribes dot the state of Northeast. The breakup of state-wise ethnic composition is sketched in Table 4.1.²⁷

Table 4.1 Distribution of Scheduled Tribes in India’s Northeast

Area	Number of Tribes
Arunachal Pradesh (including sub tribes)	101
Manipur	28
Assam	23
Nagaland	20
Tripura	18
Meghalaya	14
Mizoram	5
Total	209

Insurgency in Northeast dates back to colonial period when the British Empire invaded the region. Tribal groups resisted their incursion into their territory for reasons of cultural invasion. Society in different states has been organized into customs and practices followed by different tribal groups. Onset of colonial power in

²⁷ The Table is cited from Madan P. Bezbaruah, “Cultural Sub-Nationalism in India’s North-East: An Overview”, in Subrata K. Mitra and R. Alison Lewis, eds., *Subnational Movements in South Asia*. (New Delhi: Segment Books, 1998), p. 172.

the region was seen as invasion on their indigenous cultures, customs, mores and traditions. That perception of foreign invasion remained within the collective conscience of the indigenous groups even after India's independence. For the groups, independence of India did not equate with their liberation, hence the struggle continues till today.

Bezbaruah has classified the insurgency in Northeast into three categories.²⁸ First category of conflict finds its legitimacy in the concept of distinct nationality engendering secessionist movement. Conflicts in this category include movement in Nagaland, some strands of movement in Manipur and Mizo National Front rebellion in 1966. The second category of conflicts encompasses the demands of some groups for a distinct political identity within the broad framework of present one and within the Constitution of India. The Bodoland agitation is one example of such a conflict. The demand of Bodoland has resulted in large-scale violence in Assam over the years. The third category includes the demands of geographically dispersed and numerically thin group of the same ethnic origin. Because of dispersion of their ethnic kin these groups do not harbour a dream of separate political identity but they resist any attempt to subsume their indigenous cultural identity by other dominant groups.

Northeast is a region of many contending nationalities and sub-national movements. The claims of competing nationalities engendered a number of insurgent groups in the region. The principal groups²⁹ are "NSCN (IM), NSCN (K), and NSCN (U) (three Naga factions active in Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, and Assam); United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) anti-talks faction; National Democratic Front of

²⁸ *ibid.*, p.173

²⁹ The list is taken from Mirza Zulfiqur Rahman, "Northeast India: Bordering on Renewed Conflict or Building on the Peace?", in D. Suba Chandran and P. R. Chari, eds., *Armed Conflict, Peace Audi and Early Warning 2014: Stability and Instability in South Asia* (New Delhi: Sage Publications India Pvt Ltd, 2015), p. 107.

Bodoloand (Ranjan Daimary and IK Songbijit factions), Dima Haram Daogah-Jewel (DHD-J), Karbi People's Liberation Tigers (KLPT), All Adivasi National Liberation Army (AANLA), United People's Democratic Solidarity (UPDS), and Muslim United Liberation Tigers of Assam (MULTA); People's Liberation Army (PLA), Peoples United Liberation Front (PULF), and Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP) (Metei groups in Manipur); Kuki National Front (KNF), and Kuki National Army (KNA) (Kuki groups in Manipur) hills; The All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF) and National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) (Tripuri groups from Tripura); Hynniewtrep National Liberation Council (HNLC) (Khasi group in Meghalaya); Hmar People's Convention-Democracy (HPC-D) (Hmar group spanning Manipur, Assam, Nagaland and Mizoram) and Achik National Volunteer Council (ANVC), Garo National Liberation Army (GNLA), People's Liberation Front of Meghalaya (PLF-M) and Liberation of Achik Elite Force (LAEF) (Garo groups in Meghalaya).

Of all the groups, NSCN (IM) is the most powerful insurgent group because of its widespread presence in Nagaland, Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh. The objective of NSCN (IM) is to create Greater Nagaland carved out from parts of these four states. Influence of other factions of NSCN is limited to certain pockets of Northeast India.

NSCN (IM) projects itself as the most important group waging war a movement against the alleged occupation by India to form a Greater Nagaland. Even the Union Government of India considers NSCN (IM) as the sole representative of Naga Movement. The Union Government and NSCN (IM) have signed a ceasefire agreement in July 1997 to stop the spiral of violence ravaging the states of Northeast since the early days of India's independence. After 18 years of the ceasefire

agreement both the parties entered into a framework agreement in August 2015 that will pave the way for the eventual peace agreement.

Ever since the signing of Naga Peace ‘framework agreement’ incidence of violent attacks by Naga groups has come down remarkably. According to South Asia Terrorism Portal, number of attacks in Northeast has decreased substantially in 2015 and 2016 (62 and 62 respectively) as opposed to the year 2014, which saw 245 incidences of violent attacks.³⁰ However, sustained violence during the period 1999-2016 has left more than 21,400 dead including civilians, security forces and insurgents; out of these civilian casualties are in excess of 10,220. In recent times, positive intent has been shown by both Union Government and main insurgent group resolve the long-standing regional demand. Sustaining this gradual transition toward a lasting peace accord is the key to arriving at a conclusive agreement. In this backdrop, prevention of violent manifestation of conflict in near future is imperative to meet the stated objectives of parties in negotiation.

The framework agreement is significant for the change in position by the Naga representative party. One significant aspect of the agreement is the toning down of demand by NSCN (IM) from a separate and independent state from India to the integration of all-Naga inhabited areas in the Northeast into the state of Nagaland. There is also a hint at shared sovereignty in the agreement and the final outcome could well be similar to the status accorded to Jammu & Kashmir. However, this framework is not acceptable to NSCN (K) faction. It has broken the ceasefire agreement when it carried out a powerful attack on a Dogra Regiment in Manipur’s Chandel district in June 2015 in which 18 soldiers were killed. Imminence of similar

³⁰ Fatalities in Terrorist Violence in India’s Northeast 1992-2017. Available at: www.satp.org, (accessed 19 Dec. 2016).

attacks cannot be ruled out in future. The situation must alert the Indian government to take cognizance of the deteriorating ground situation in the Northeast.

The ambiguity left in the framework agreement has left a few groups dissatisfied. Simmering dissent among groups like NSCN (K) and a lesser known, Eastern Nagaland People's Organisation (ENPO) is not a good omen for times to come. General Secretary of NSCN (U), Khitovi Zhimomi, has openly opposed the accord. Wasbir Hussain, Executive Director, Centre for Development & Peace Studies, Guwahati, raised concerns over the centre's hackneyed carrot-and-stick policy.³¹ Hussain expressed apprehension over the lack of a concrete strategy to deal with the insurgent groups. Not taking every important group on board the peace process leaves a lot into the realm of speculation. Will an agreement signed with only one insurgent group while leaving others be long-lasting? Nothing can be said with certainty now.

For the time being, violence by Naga insurgent groups has died down. But insurgency in Manipur is still a big security concern. Main insurgent groups in Manipur are led by Meiteis and Kukis. Manipur is home to Kuki insurgency and Meitei insurgency. Kuki and Nagas nurse deep antagonism for each other. The hostility has generated lot of violence in Manipur.

Two insurgencies in Manipur with two different demands run parallel and are opposed to each other: The Kuki insurgency and the Meitei insurgency. Kuki insurgency is led by Kuki National Army (KNA), which was formed in 1958 for addressing the political, economic and social interests of Kukis. The movement did not gain popular support because of lack of legitimacy of Thadou tribe. This

³¹ Wasbir Hussain, "Forecast 2016: Security Situation in Northeast India, IPCS, 25 January 2016. Available at <http://www.ipcs.org/article/india/forecast-2016-security-situation-in-northeast-india-4971.html>, (accessed 20 Dec. 2016).

movement aimed at spearheading the movement for an autonomous state. Other groups, such as Hmar National Union (HNU) and Paites National Council (PNC), organized themselves for their exclusive political demands. PNC sought to carve out an Independent State of Chinland from parts of Manipur, Assam, Bangladesh and Myanmar for the people of Chin origin. Simultaneously, competing interests of others led to the formation of various Kuki groups with diverse political interests.

Incompatible interests have spawned violent clashes between Nagas and Kukis. Kukis have contested with Nagas over NSCN (IM)'s demand of land tax and their share of Naphau Dam compensation. Such demands have led to large-scale violence during 1992-1994. In September 1993, the Nagas inflicted heavy casualty to the Kukis. Known as Joupri massacre, the incident resulted in the killing of 88 Kukis. The rivalry between Nagas and Kukis continues till date. In fact, a triangular rivalry runs parallel in Manipur: between Nagas and Kukis; between Kukis and Meiteis; and between Nagas and Meities.

Meities oppose NSCN (IM)'s demand for Greater Nagaland as it also includes Naga inhabited areas of Ukhrul, Chandel, Tamenglong and Senapati districts of Manipur. Ongoing Meitei insurgency in Manipur goes back to 1964 when United National Front Liberation (UNLF) was established. Demand of Nagas put the question mark over the very existence of Manipur, which led to emergence of another radical group, PLA, which had a leftist orientation and sought to unite all the tribal groups. The Meiteie resisted the Nagas demand with all their might but the fear of losing parts of state to Greater Nagaland led to the formation of various other groups in the Imphal valley region. In June 2001, the ceasefire between Union Government and NSCN (IM) extended to Nagas inhabited areas beyond Nagaland. This was later withdrawn by the central government but acted as a catalyst for the Meiteis to intensify their

struggle. From that till today, Meitei insurgency has become very difficult for the central government to deal with. Ill-conceived policies of central government led to entrenchment of conflict in Manipur.

Commenting on the Naga Peace Accord, Brigadier Sushil Kumar Sharma who is posted as DIGP, CRPF in the Northeast Region, analyses the implications of the accord for both Kuki and Meitei insurgencies in Manipur.³² The implications are summed as below:

Implications for Kuki insurgency:

- The relevance of Kukiland in the backdrop of the Naga non-territorial agreement.
- The viability of opposition by the United Naga Council for the creation of Sadar Hills as a district.
- The consequences of the existence of Kuki SoO designated camps on closure of NSCN (IM) “Taken-Note-Off camps”.

Implications for Meitei insurgency:

- Relevance of the demand for sovereign Manipur and continuation of insurgency.
- The need to engage with Meitei Leaders like UNLF Chief Raj Kumar Meghan in the peace process in order to progress towards peace in Manipur.

As the apprehension shown by Sharma, this may well inflame passions among the groups in Manipur if not for the government to engage with other key actors in the

³² Brigadier Sushil Kumar Sharma, “Naga Peace Accord and the Kuki and Meitei Insurgencies in the Northeast”, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), 5 January 2016. Source: http://www.idsa.in/policybrief/naga-peace-accord-and-the-kuki-and-meitei-insurgencies_sksharma_050116, (accessed 23 Dec. 2016).

region. The central government's approach to dealing with insurgencies shows a lack of cohesive strategy. Rahman questions the central government's surrender and ceasefire policy in Northeast.³³ He also raised concerns over the increased factionalism in the region, and the central government's policy to split and rule. This conscious policy of glossing over the need to make an honest attempt for resolving the insurgency politically in the hope that the insurgencies will weaken and worn out with the passage of time is part of centre's policy.³⁴ Such an approach is palpable in Kashmir also. But increasing factionalism in Northeast is fast reducing the region into a maze of insurgent outfits. This emerging trend does not bode well for the future. The implications could well be felt in whole of Northeast India and in mainland India as an extension.

Kashmir

Conflict in Kashmir is one of the most protracted conflicts in the world. Kashmir conflict has both interstate and intrastate dimensions. On the one hand, it is a bone of contention between India and Pakistan and the root cause of interstate rivalry. India and Pakistan have fought three wars over Kashmir. On the other hand, Kashmir is facing insurgency movement by home-grown insurgents since the 1990s to secede from India through the demand of right to self-determination. The conflict is historically entrenched in deep sense of antagonism to foreign occupation as successive rulers have occupied the territory and oppressed the locals in pre-independent India. Even the annexation by India in October 1947 through the Treaty of Accession with the then ruler of Kashmir, Maharaja Hari Singh, is perceived as occupation by indigenous Kashmiris. This perception over the years has grown owing

³³ Rahman, n. 29, p. 121.

³⁴ *ibid.*

to some misplaced or ill-conceived policies of the Indian government. Since then the region is perpetually going through unrest with occasional violent manifestations.

Kashmir is under deep trouble since July 2016. The Killing of a Hizbul Mujahideen militant sparked protest across the valley against the Indian security forces, which has resulted in hundreds of deaths and several hundreds injured mainly due to the use of pellet guns. India's suspicion of Pakistan's involvement in Kashmir unrest coupled with the September 18, 2016 Uri Army base attacks by terrorist has once again escalated the conflict to a crisis. India did respond with a surgical strike on the night of September 28, 2016 to send across a clear message to Pakistan that attacks in India emanating from Pakistan's soil will be responded with strong retaliation. Fear of an escalation to war loomed large after the strike. But both countries have wisely chose to tone down the war rhetoric; not any significant statement from leaders of either country has come that could fuel the war cry. DGMOs (Directorate of General of Military Operations) of both India and Pakistan are in regular contact with each quashing any speculation or suspicion of any surprise preparation for war. Since the surgical strikes war rhetoric from both sides has subsided, which is a comforting sign. But the crisis in Kashmir continues unabated.

How the crisis will pan out in coming days is difficult to predict now. However, efforts need to be strengthened from regional and international communities to prevent any further escalation.

International Crisis Group in its latest Kashmir alert has raised serious concerns over the intensified militants operations in parts of Jammu and Kashmir.³⁵ More than half a dozen gun-battles and terrorist strikes have happened in the month of January itself.

³⁵ International Crisis Group, Crisis Watch, January 2017. www.crisisgroup.org, (accessed Feb. 2017).

Such attacks are perpetually deteriorating security situation in the Kashmir Valley. Aggressive protests involving clashes with security forces is a common sight in Kashmir since the encounter of Hizb-ul-Mujahideen militant Burhan Wani on 8 July 2016. ICG has reported a public protest on 20 January 2017 in which security personnel and protesters clashed in Sopore district. Such protests have intensified in recent months. The latest crisis in Kashmir is a matter of deep concern not only for India but also for the world.

Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, a leading South Asian think-tank on peace and security, has raised serious concerns of the deadlock in the valley in a series of reports. Writing for the think-tank, Ashok Bhan, former Director General of Police, J&K and former Member, National Security Advisory Board, India, has expressed deep concerns over the prevailing situation in Kashmir.³⁶ On the hand one, security forces are facing stiff challenge from relentless attacks by militants in different parts of the valley. On the other hand, harsher measures will further alienate the Kashmiris especially the youths. Such a dilemmatic situation is pushing the peace process toward more uncertainty.

A commentary in another south Asian think-tank, *South Asia Monitor*, brought the attention of the Indian government toward the dynamics of latest protests in the valley and unabated violence.³⁷ The commentary highlighted the urgency to engage with stakeholders in order to resolve the dispute and strike a solution which will be acceptable to all stakeholders. The continued disenchantment among the youths in Kashmir is a serious issue that needs to be addressed before the situation slips out of

³⁶ Askoh Bhan, "J&K: Need for an Urgent Review". 24 February 2017. Available at www.ipcs.org, (accessed 27 Feb., 2017).

³⁷ Gaurav Dixit, "Kashmir crisis will not fade away: Need to engage responsible stakeholders", 28 September 2016. Available at www.southasiamonitor.org, (accessed 27 Feb. 2017).

hand. The delay may create new problems for the Indian government, therefore, it must take urgent note of the worsening security situation in Kashmir.

The recent uprising in the valley, triggered by Wani's encounter, illustrates the failure of successive Indian governments to reach out to the people of Kashmir. Policies followed by the government since the signing of Instrument of Accession in 1947 glossed over the internal dynamics in the valley. Although the Indian government has refurbished its focus on development progress and economic well-being of Kashmiri population time and again but still the process has not been very receptive to the people.

A preponderant approach of the Indian government has been to play the wait-and-watch game. The government's Kashmir policy gives primacy to keep waiting till fatigue gets the better of the protesters. Such policy of letting the protests tire out is also employed in the Northeast region, which is also infested with a number of insurgency movements. However, the policy of waiting for the protests to die down may not be a prudent one vis-à-vis any serious attempt at resolving the Kashmir conflict once and forever. Through such a tactical approach the central government manages to contain the uprising for a short period but it may prove imbecile strategically in the longer run. Such an approach is very much contrary to the principles of conflict prevention. The approach is rooted in the precepts of conflict management that gives precedence to managing a conflict when it has become overt. The negative repercussion of this dominant approach leaves the principal causes of conflicts unaddressed. Eventually the roots of conflict remain firm even if some branches are removed.

Pakistan

Pakistan ranks 153 among 163 countries on the Global Peace Index.³⁸ It ranked 147 among 188 nations in 2014.³⁹ It is the most insecure and fragile country in South Asia after Afghanistan. US-based NGO, Fund for Peace (FFP), has put Pakistan under the ‘High Alert’ category in its Fragile States Index (FSI).⁴⁰

All of the above indices indicate the current state of Pakistan. The country is in a complete mess. The situation in Pakistan can best be described as worse if not completely out of control. Its obsession with Kashmir is causing lot of heart-burns internally. Pakistan faces a lot of internal challenges to peace and security. The challenges come from some decades long conflicts along with erratic sectarian violence and terrorism. The challenges can be broadly categorised as:

- Ethnic Conflicts in Pakistan
- Civil-Military Conflict
- Sectarian Violence, Religious Fundamentalism and Terrorism

According to the latest figures of casualties in Pakistan by South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP), nearly 1500 people including civilians, security force personnel and terrorists have lost their lives in different incidents of violence emanating as a result of the aforementioned types of conflicts in 2016.⁴¹ Of all the regions in Pakistan the worst sufferers are Baluchistan, Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA), Punjab, Sindh and Khyber-Pakhtunwa (KP). Baluchistan, FATA and KP have been a victim of ethnic conflicts for decades but Punjab has seen a spurt in violence by terrorist groups off late. The most deadly attack was Gulshan-e-Iqbal Park suicide attack in the

³⁸ Institute for Economics and Peace, 2015.

³⁹ United Nations Development Programme Report

⁴⁰ Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, <http://www.ipcs.org/article/pakistan/fragility-in-pakistan-5121.html>, (accessed 27 Feb. 2017).

⁴¹ http://www.satp.org/satporctp/countries/pakistan/database/fatilities_regionwise2016.htm, Figure updated till 16 October 2016

Iqbal Town area of Lahore on March 27, 2016. At least 74 people were killed and more than 300 were injured. Most of the victims were Christians who congregated in the park for celebrating Easter.

Baluchistan is a perpetual victim of terror attacks by different factions. In August 2016, a suicide bombing at a hospital in Quetta in south-western Pakistan killed at least 74 people and injured over 150 people. Pakistani Taliban faction Jamaat-ur-Ahar took the responsibility for the suicide attack. The region has been a theatre of ethnic conflict for decades. It has been a victim of both state-based conflict and one-sided violence. This section of the chapter sketches a brief profile of major internal conflict and sources of threat to political stability and peace in Pakistan.

Ethno-national Conflict in Baluchistan

Ethnic-based conflict in Baluchistan is a serious challenge to Pakistan's security establishment. The conflict, which started with the objective of securing better livelihood for local Baluch population, transformed into a movement of secession. Again, this is a conflict that could have been resolved through political means turned into armed struggle. Reports from various think-tanks and scholarly articles have criticised successive Pakistan governments for failing to achieve peace and prevent violence that ensued owing to bad policies.⁴²

First signs of the conflict manifested when Pakistan annexed Baluchistan at the time of independence from British colonial rule. The British Empire had set its foot in

⁴² The failure of the successive governments of Pakistan to acknowledge purely political demands based on economic deprivation and extremely pathetic social conditions of Baluchis has been summarised in various reports and articles over the years. Some of them includes: International Crisis Group (ICG), "Pakistan: The Worsening Conflict in Baluchistan", *South Asia Report No.119*, 14 September 2014, available at www.crisisgroup.org, Frederic Grare, "Pakistan: The Resurgence of Baluch Nationalism", *Carnegie Papers*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, No.65, January 2006, and Adeel Khan, "Renewed Ethnonationalist Insurgency in Baluchistan, Pakistan: The Militarized State and Continuing Economic Deprivation", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 49, No.6 (November/December 2009), pp.1071-1091

1884 by annexing Baluchistan although with intentions of little intervention in internal matters. British interest in the province was limited to strategic military importance for creating a buffer zone between the Indian colony and Russian Empire.⁴³ During this period the province was under indirect rule through a political agent of governor-general and the tribal leaders were given freedom to manage their own affairs except in matters of strategic significance. A shift in British policy from erstwhile strategic to economic and social structure of the province was necessitated toward the end of nineteenth century when the British administration decided to build supporting infrastructure for establishing a cantonment for its troops. This led to a semblance of market economy which brought in economic migrants to economically developed areas. Adeel Khan argues that such economic activities did not translate into economic well-being of Baluch people as these were intended only to serving the strategic interests of the British colonial Empire.⁴⁴

The trend of economic marginalization of Baluch people never subsided even after the decolonization in August 1947 when partition of British India led to the creation of India and Pakistan. A few years preceding independence from British Raj, the Baluch secretly campaigned for establishing an independent Baluchistan and got a rude shock when Pakistan annexed it through coercion.⁴⁵ Since then the Baluch people consider Baluchistan's inclusion in Pakistan as occupation of their land. They feel colonized under the federal government's rule. The feeling of alienation was further compounded by misplaced policies by successive governments of Pakistan, which sought a military solution of a political problem. Incompatible interests of Baluch people and the central government led to a low-intensity armed conflict in 1948. The

⁴³ Khan, n. 42, p. 1073

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p. 1074

⁴⁵ Selig Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow: Baluch Nationalism and Soviet Temptation* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1981), pp.22-24

province has since been engulfed into political instability punctuated with emergence of armed conflict between the nationalist groups in Baluchistan and the Pakistan military in 1958, 1962, and most vigorously, in 1973-77.

Competing worldviews of the issues in Baluchistan have propelled the conflict thus far. On the one hand, The Baluch people believe that centre's denial of democratic rights and exploitation of the natural resources are the major causes of insurgency.⁴⁶ According to this view, exploration projects and development works have not benefited the locals but only elites from mainly Punjab and people associated with Pakistan's military. On the other hand, the central government contends that only a handful of sardars (tribal chiefs) are opposed to centre's plans because they are concerned with the loss of their power base due to development projects in the province.⁴⁷

Frederic Grare, in his research paper for Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, put forth some notable causes behind the persistence of resentment against central government of Pakistan including "the central government's suppression of nationalistic aspirations; the absence of economic and social development in Baluchistan despite its possessing almost 20 per cent of the country's mineral and energy resources; and the exclusion of the provincial authorities and local population from decision on major regional projects, most notably the construction of the Gwadar port."⁴⁸ The historical grievances of the Baluch were never heeded by the national government that led to deepening of the crisis in contemporary times. Grare identifies three fundamental issues that are fueling tension in Baluchistan:

⁴⁶ Crisis Group, n. 42, p. 10.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p. i.

⁴⁸ Grare, n. 42, p .3.

expropriation, marginalisation, and dispossession.⁴⁹ Baluchistan generates 40 per cent of primary energy needs and accounts for 36 per cent of Pakistan's total gas production.⁵⁰ Despite rich deposits of natural gas, the province receives only 17 per cent and the rest 83 per cent goes to other parts of Pakistan.

As per the 1998 census, Baluchistan is the least literate and employed province in Pakistan. Unemployment rate is as high as 33.48 which is way above the national average of 19.68.⁵¹ Lack of economic development, employment opportunities, and education coupled with continued marginalisation and fear of dispossession from their own lands among the Baluch people are the deep-rooted cause of an intractable political strife in the region. The conflict has entrenched due to awful policies of Pakistan. Policies followed by governments in Pakistan gave primacy to military strategy rather than a political approach to resolve the outstanding issues.

In its report, ICG held responsible Pakistan's hackneyed policy of using military force to suppress the nationalistic aspirations of Baluch people. The report argues, *"Tensions between the government and its Baluch opposition have grown because of Islamabad's heavy-handed armed response to Baluch militancy and its refusal to negotiate demands for political and economic autonomy."*⁵²

The government's failure to recognise the necessity of a politically negotiated settlement has been further accentuated by Pakistan's failure to establish a strong democratic state in seven decades of its existence. Since the state's inception, it has seen military governments for more years than civilian. This has led to the gradual erosion of democratic means of settling disputes. This dominant, and somewhat rigid,

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 5.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

⁵¹ Pakistan Census of 1998, available at www.pbs.gov.pk.

⁵² Crisis Group, n. 42, p. i

ideology in Pakistan also raises a barrier against the prospects of resolving the conflict with India.

Successive governments, particularly of the army, saw the Baluchistan national movement through the military lens. They abstain from adopting an alternative to the military strategy. There is no denying the fact that Baluchi people have been engaged in violence but the trend has developed because of continued suppression of their voices and denial of their rights. Regional parties have for long demanded provincial autonomy. Call for secession and complete independence from Pakistan has still not found widespread support. Nationalist groups, such as Baluchistan National Party (BNP), The National Party (NP), Jamhoori Watan Party (JWP), Baluch Haq Talwar, (BHT), Pashtoon Khwa Milli Awami Party (PKMAP), and Baluchistan Students Organisation (BSO) are divided in their objectives.⁵³

ICG believes that the conflict could be resolved smoothly if the federal government changes its tack. And it warns the central government that militancy could rise if it does not change ill-advised policies including:

“exploitation of Baluchistan’s natural resources without giving the province its due share;
construction of further military garrisons to strengthen an already extensive network of military bases; and
centrally driven and controlled economic projects, such as the Gwadar deep sea port, that do not benefit locals but raise fears that the resulting influx of economic migrants could make the Baluch a minority in their homeland.”⁵⁴

The province has seen three low-intensity armed insurrection and another four-year long armed guerilla fighting between Baluch Liberation Army and Pakistan military.

⁵³ Grare, n. 42, pp. 7-8 and Crisis Group, n. 42, pp. 10-11.

⁵⁴ Crisis Group, n. 42, p. i.

Conflict still festers in the province. Strategically and economically, Baluchistan is highly important for Pakistan. But instability in the province is not in Pakistan's long-term interest. The central government must work toward maintaining peace in the province through an acknowledgement of the grievances of the locals, stopping human rights abuses, abandoning use of force, and moving toward creating framework of political solution. Baluchistan possesses the potential of creating widespread destabilization in South Asia region by destabilizing Pakistan, and parts of Afghanistan and Iran. Since this province is located off the coast of Arabian Sea and close to Strait of Hoormuz, intensified conflict could well spillover to the sea-lanes.

Civil-Military Conflict

Pakistan state has oscillated between civilian and military rule since the very early days. Untimely demise of Pakistan's supreme leader, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, known as Quaid-e-Azam (Great Leader) and Baba-e-Qaum (Father of the Nation), left in the lurch the process of nation-building. Jinnah was to Pakistan what Jawaharlal Nehru was to India. Nehru's 18-year tenure as Prime Minister consolidated democratic and secular character of the Indian state. But Jinnah's death in September 1948 and the subsequent death of his lieutenant, Liaquat Ali Khan in October 1951 created a leadership crisis in the newly created state. Whilst India benefited from the long service of Nehru, Pakistan was thrown into chaos in the absence of its top leaders. Cohen holds responsible several other factors apart from the leadership crisis for the chaos and eventual imposition of military rule in Pakistan.⁵⁵ For Pakistan, the challenge was not only to consolidate the state structures but also to prove India wrong whereby the top Indian National Congress leaders had predicted a dramatic

⁵⁵ Cohen, n. 1, pp. 54-55.

failure of the state. Pakistan remained afloat to defy the expectations of failure by the Indian side.

Of the seventy years since its creation, Pakistan has been under direct military rule for 33 years. But even in the years ruled by democratically elected governments, hardly any government has completed its full-five year tenure. The elected governments have either been suspended over some domestic issues or deposed through military coups. Even during civilian rules the military has held its sway over governance, strategic affairs, foreign policy and national security affairs.

Military authoritarianism in Pakistan has created a kind of deep state. Every institution in Pakistan bears a stamp of Pakistan's military and engendered notions, such as authoritarian bureaucracy. That trend, in effect, has undermined the legitimacy of civilian rule. Influence of military in every sphere of Pakistani state is the principal reason of weak civilian governments. This is succinctly expressed in the words by Aziz Mazhar who argues that "...a transition from the military rule to an elected form of government in Pakistan is likely to produce weak civilian governments due to the presence of a strongly institutionalised military."⁵⁶

The first phase of military rule in Pakistan began with the coup led by the then Pakistani President Iskander Mirza on 7 October 1958 when he imposed martial law in the country by dismissing central and provincial governments. Mirza cited widespread corruption, politicians' lust for power, food crises and general predicaments of the masses as the reasons behind his action. Another reason of this authoritative action by Mirza was the demands by provincial governments, such as in Baluchistan, of greater political and economic autonomy. Behind the attempt to

⁵⁶ Aziz Mazhar, *Military Control in Pakistan: The Parallel State* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), p. 7.

centralize governance, one of the strong reasons was the fear of loss of control over provinces. Therefore, the central government at that time went on to strengthen military to hold its sway through coercion, if needed. After the imposition of martial law Mirza appointed Ayub Khan as the chief of army and chief martial law administrator. Very soon after the coup, Mirza was exiled to London and Ayub Khan assumed presidency of Pakistan. This marked Pakistan's tryst with military rule punctuated with periods of civilian governments.

Military in Pakistan draws support from the Islamist elements in Pakistan. The collusion between Islamism and military began with the coup d'état led by General Zia-ul Haq in 1977 to dismiss the Zulfikar Ali Bhutto government. Zia's regime was most closely linked to Islamization, and which had the strong legitimacy to embody the growing Islamic identity.⁵⁷ Hussain Haqqani, a leading South Asian expert from Pakistan and former Pakistan Ambassador to the United States, devoted a full volume, *Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military*, to sketch a profile of the nexus between Military and Islamist forces.

Ayesha Siddiqi, a prominent Pakistani author and South Asian security expert, highlights the military economy of Pakistan in her seminal work, *Military Inc.: Inside Pakistan's Military Economy*. In this volume, Siddiqi draws a picture of the economic, social, and political effects of military rule in Pakistan. She elaborated a specific term, 'Milbus', to describe the parallel economy helping in amassing military capital. Siddiqi uses Milbus to refer to "*military capitals that is used for the personal benefit of the military fraternity, especially the officer cadre, but is neither recorded*

⁵⁷ Vali Nasr, "Military Rule, Islamism and Democracy in Pakistan", Middle East Journal, Vol. 58, No. 2 (Spring, 2004), Middle East Institute, p. 197.

nor part of the defense budget."⁵⁸ Military officer cadre has economically benefited through various means; one of them being land grabbing in different parts of the country. Adeel Khan notes that land grabbing by military in Gwadar district in Baluchistan is one of the several reasons of opposition to development projects by local population as they are feeling marginalised and afraid of dispossession from their own lands.⁵⁹

The civil-military conundrum in Pakistan reflects the deep mistrust between the Army and the politicians. As clearly articulated by Army Generals leading the coups, the main factors driving such extra-constitutional means to wrest power from civilians are the widespread corruption and civilian government's incompetency in running the country. Cohen cites three major reasons that pushed the army into acquiring so prominent a role in Pakistan politics. The first was the loss of a competent leader with the demise of Jinnah, the second was the threat from a hostile India, and the third is the military support from USA that equipped the army in early 1950s and 1960s.⁶⁰ The civil-military conflict, according to Cohen, is also perpetuated by the fact that the Pakistan Army believes itself as being the saviour, and that the civilians will ruin the country.⁶¹ As opposed to the stated position of Pakistan Army, Cohen notes that each of the three extended military regimes had left the country worse off than it was prior to military takeover.⁶²

Due to direct or indirect involvement of Pakistan Army in the internal affairs, the country has remained in perpetual political instability. Heavy-handed responses to

⁵⁸ Ayesha Siddiqa, *Military Inc.: Inside Pakistan's Military Economy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 1.

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⁶⁰ Stephen P. Cohen, "The Militaries of South Asia", in Paul R. Brass, ed., *Routledge Handbook of South Asian Politics: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), p. 356.

⁶¹ *ibid.*, p. 358

⁶² *ibid.*

internal or ethnic conflicts have only helped in making the conflicts intractable. Empirical studies testify that democracies are amenable to accommodating people's demands whereas military regimes lack a broader vision of conflicts and see the problems through the prism of military actions. Protracted conflict in Baluchistan, rise of religious extremism, incessant troubles in NWFP, Sindhi ethno-nationalism, and strong non-state actors are some of the by-products of preponderance of military strategy to dealing with political problems. Referring to the ongoing conflict in Baluchistan, ICG Report admonishes Pakistan military that it has failed to learn from the past mistakes.⁶³ The report was published to highlight the worsening crisis in Baluchistan after a heavy-handed response by army to the re-emergence of insurgency in the province in 2005-06.

Insurgency with widespread local support requires a well-thought out strategy. Failing to read the situation and labeling an entire population as sympathisers of militants or accusing of involvement in militancy often backfires. Such failures are followed by wrong policy choices. This situation emerges from the wrong analysis of the unfolding crisis. Misreading of the ground situation often results in giving primacy to the use of force. This argument can be extrapolated to what is happening in Myanmar now whereby the government is pursuing a policy of ethnic cleansing in the pretext of fighting a few Rohingya insurgents. Cohen discusses the classic British counterinsurgency doctrine, which teaches, "Fighting an insurgency is 80 per cent political and economic and only 20 percent military."⁶⁴

Sectarian Violence, Religious Fundamentalism and Terrorism

⁶³ Crisis Group, n. 42, p. 2.

⁶⁴ Cohen. n. 60, p. 358.

Inside Pakistan, sectarian violence between Shias and Sunnis has taken thousands of lives in the last few decades. Relentless violence by Sunni extremist groups directed against Shias is driven by the ideology of internal Jihad against the Shias who are considered ‘infidels’ by the orthodox Sunnis. Shia-Sunni conflict is centuries old but has not engendered the kind of violence that has not been experienced anywhere in the world as in Pakistan in recent decades. The surge in terror strikes predominantly against the Shia sect is an outcome of the process of Islamisation of the state as a prominent Pakistani, Zahid Hussain argues.⁶⁵ According to Hussain, religious sectarianism presents the most credible threat to internal security of Pakistan.⁶⁶

The theatre of terror activities has shifted from Karachi and Punjab province to Quetta and North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) in recent years. During the decade 2006-2016, more than 1150 incidents of sectarian violence has taken place inside Pakistan that includes suicide bombing, gun-firing, bomb planting, and attacks on individuals.⁶⁷ These incidents caused the deaths of more than 3500 people. During the same decade, nearly 800 people from Baluchistan alone were killed in the attacks, which include casualties mostly from the Shia sect.

Most of the sectarian violence in Baluchistan has been perpetrated against the Hazara community, predominantly Shia but also includes Barelvis and Isma‘ilis. Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, a militant organization having close links with Al-Qaeda, has claimed the responsibility for most of the attacks against Hazaras.⁶⁸ Another Sunni group, Sipah-

⁶⁵ Zahid, Hussain, *Frontline Pakistan: The Struggle with Militant Islam* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2007), p. 90.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ South Asia Terrorism Portal, <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/database/sect-killing.htm>

⁶⁸ Farhan Siddiqi, “Sectarian Violence in Baluchistan, Middle East Research Institute”. Available at http://www.mei.edu/content/map/sectarian-violence-Baluchistan-siddiqi#_ftn14, (accessed 17 Jan. 2017)

e-Sahaba, has been behind most of the attacks that ripped through different locations during the 1990s.

Sectarian violence has continued unabated in Pakistan. This is one of the biggest sources of threat to internal peace. However, the entrenchment of a militant culture and festering of so many jihadist groups inside Pakistan territory is a fall-out of Pakistan's policy. The state has patronised illegal militant activities to serve its foreign policy objectives as well as domestic aims. Such a trend inside Pakistan started to take roots because of some prominent factors. One of these was the process of Islamisation initiated by General Zia-ul Haq's military-regime.⁶⁹ Seth G Jones and C. Christine Fair identify a number of factors behind Pakistan's deliberate support to militant groups,⁷⁰ which has emboldened them over the years. In its ploy of waging asymmetric warfare against its neighbours particularly against the militarily stronger India, Pakistan has a history of using militants groups flourishing on its soil. However, its strategy seems to be impinging upon its own security. The militant groups, with a clear agenda of establishing a state completely based on Islamic Sharia, have become a migraine for the ruling elite. This is evident from the periodical anti-terrorist and anti-militancy operations inside Pakistan. In response to Peshawar School attack on 16 December 2014 that claimed 141 lives including 132 children,⁷¹ at a school in Peshawar carried out by Taliban, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif pledged to intensify anti-terrorist operations by establishing military courts for terror related

⁶⁹ Zahid Hussain, n. 65, p. 91.

⁷⁰ Seth G Jones and C. Christine Fair, "Counterinsurgency in Pakistan", RAND Corporation, p. 12. PDF available at www.rand.org, (accessed 17 Jan. 2017)

⁷¹ The Diplomat, "After Peshawar School Attack, China Pledges Deeper Anti-Terror Co-op With Pakistan", 18 December 2014. <http://thediplomat.com/2014/12/after-peshawar-school-attack-china-pledges-deeper-anti-terror-co-op-with-pakistan/>, (accessed 14 Jan. 2017).

cases.⁷² The same year, Pakistan has launched Operation Zarb-e-Azb to fight Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Al-Qaeda, the Haqqani network, and various other militant outfits active in North Waziristan along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. This operation was undertaken in response to 8 June 2014 attack on Jinnah International Airport in Karachi. Again in February 2017, Pakistan government has expressed its commitment to fight home-grown militancy in Punjab in the wake of a series of attacks in different spots in a span of a week that killed 125 people.⁷³

Pakistan has a history of flip-flops toward the issue of militancy on its soil. The problem has been compounded by the vested interest of leaders who often use the sub-state actors for their political gains. Many of the government heads including General Zia-ul Haq and General Parvez Musharraf were known to have links with religious extremist groups. The current Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif also alleged to have latent ties with extremist elements in Punjab. These leaders only take cognizance of the grave threats that the militant groups pose to the Pakistani society when pressures from domestic constituency and civil society organizations to rein in the unbridled religious extremists.

Sri Lanka

Since the defeat of Tamil Ealam tigers and conclusion of *Ealam War IV* in May 2009, the country is relatively in peace. But the peace can be described as fragile at best. Widespread human rights abuse, attacks against minorities, fledgling economy,

⁷² Live Mint, "Pakistan announces anti-terrorism action plan after school attack", 25 December 2014. <http://www.livemint.com/Politics/VV0TXwDDdhQTG6DM3YbBAK/Pakistan-announces-antiterrorism-action-plan-after-school-a.html>, (accessed 14 Jan. 2017).

⁷³ The Hindu, "Pakistan includes Punjab in anti-terror drive", 22 February 2017. <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/Pak.-announces-new-anti-terror-operation/article17348373.ece>, (accessed 24 Feb. 2017).

weakening democratic norms and institutions, rising population, arbitrary application of the rule of law, and massive movement of refugees or internally displaced populations (IDPs) are some of the problems that plague the island nation today.

Positive peace still seems elusive. Establishing sustainable peace in the country is contingent on a variety of factors that the Sri Lankan government, led by President Mathripala Srirsenana and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, must address. The government is pushing the reform agenda, reconciliation and transitional justice but the pace is too slow to be comfortable for all sections of the society especially the Tamils. Some of the major challenges Sri Lankan government faces today are:

- Strengthening of democracy at national, provincial and local levels
- Political settlement of ethnic grievances
- Resuscitating the beleaguered economy
- Strengthening the rule of law
- Tackling corruption
- Promoting reconciliation efforts with the Tamil population in the north and east
- Controlling violence against minorities including Tamils, Muslims and Christians
- Rehabilitating the surrendered Tigers or child soldiers

As per a report by ICG:

“The most critical element of the reform agenda is how to tackle the entrenched culture of impunity, which has fed multiple bloody insurgencies over the past 40 years. Failure to succeed in this effort will undermine virtually all the other reforms the government says it wants to achieve. Progress toward ending impunity is essential

to reestablishing the rule of law for all ethnic communities, reasserting civilian control over the military and building the trust needed for a lasting political solution.”⁷⁴

Apart from reforms agenda, transitional justice is another focus area of the government but again, the progress is a cause of concern. As per the ICG report, Sri Lanka has made only halting efforts toward developing the four transitional justice mechanisms pledged to the Council:

1. a truth commission
2. reparations
3. office for missing persons
4. an independent special court for war crimes with international participation.

Whether the Sri Lankan government will be able to sell transitional justice effort as part of its larger agenda to promote good governance and the rule of law, which has widespread public backing in communities, is a wait and watch game. A lot depends on the technical capability of the National Unity Government – a coalition between President Mathripala Sirisena’s Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and Prime Minister Wickremesinghe’s United National Party (UNP).

Common regional problems for South Asia

Besides various conflicts in South Asia there are a number of pressing issues that call for greater attention. These issues affect region as a whole, directly or indirectly. If we take a look at the issues having the potential to create instability and pose security challenges, the region is infested with a number of social, political, economic as well

⁷⁴ Crisis Group, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-asia/sri-lanka/impunity-and-justice-why-un-human-rights-council-must-stay-engaged-sri-lanka>, (accessed 25 Nov. 2016).

as environmental problems. Some of these common regional challenges are burgeoning population, poverty, unemployment, food insecurity, lack of education, political instability in certain states, religious bigotry or intolerance, social inequality, increasing burden on the natural resources, acute shortage of basic amenities in rural areas, communal disharmony, transnational terrorism, population migration, internal population displacement, and refugee. The region also faces some environmental factors, such as the changing weather patterns, famines, and cyclones among others.

The increasing population is one big worry. According to population data compiled by United Nations' Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the population of South Asia in the year 2015 was 1.82 billion out of a total population of 7.34 billion worldwide or 24.79% (approximately one-fourth of the global population. At the turn of this millennium, the population of the region was over 1.45 billion. There is an increase of over 25% during the fifteen year period and is projected to cross the 2 billion mark in the next 5-6 years.

Unbridled rise of population will put the natural resources under enormous pressure. With lack of innovative solutions to meet the energy needs, agricultural methodology, and water and soil conservation techniques, too much dependency on fossil fuels, depleting underground water table in certain pockets, widespread deforestation, and river pollution, conflicts on natural resources could well be a real possibility. South Asian countries share the natural resource, such as water. India is one country having water agreements with Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and China. Strain on this precious resource will lead to rethinking the water agreements. Very recently, India threatened to revise Indus Water Treaty (IWT) over the heightened tension with Pakistan in response to Uri and Pathankot attacks. Hawkish voices in Pakistan retorted with the threat of an all-out war if India considers curbing the IWT.

In Afghanistan, a potential conflict over natural resources is unfolding within the larger conflict complex in the country. The dispute pertains to award of contracts of mines in the north and south regions, which may potentially have deposits of hydrocarbons. USIP has published a detailed report in January 2015 about the irregularities in awarding contracts and nexus between private players and political establishments that may create conflicting situations with the local inhabitants. In fact, nineteen people have already died in violence between contending groups. The weaker local communities have asked for support from Taliban groups for protection. Engagement with Taliban elements will further exacerbate the current situation and may escalate into large-scale violence in the region.

Apart from the traditional conflicts, South Asia faces tough challenges from several non-conventional threats to peace and security. The threats emanate from transnational terrorism, cyber warfare, human trafficking, cross-border drug smuggling, weak or unstable states, and proliferation of terrorist groups.

Transnational terrorism is a major challenge to peace and security in the region. The region has seen sharp increase in terror activities since the late 1990s. A spurt of terror strikes in India, Pakistan and Afghanistan has rocked the entire region. Beginning of new millennium saw a marked increase in incidence of terror strikes in different cities. In fact, Afghanistan and Pakistan are the worst victims of terror strikes. Nearly one or two explosions take place every fortnight. India is not immune to this menace either. Almost every year the country has experienced terrorist attack in the new millennium.

Conclusion

The beauty of conflict prevention lies in focusing on issues with potential of future violence at the incipient stage and not when they escalate to become a crisis whereby deadly violence becomes imminent. What would be the use of any effort when the damage has already been done and when precious human lives have been lost? However, this view does not reflect the efforts needed in post-emergence of violence as that is indeed imperative to contain the unfolding crisis through ceasefire and peacemaking efforts. The delay in actions result in loss of precious human lives, and in some cases, the delay in taking a decision to act early costs hundreds of thousands of lives. Several historical disasters, such as in Rwanda, Bosnia, Somalia, etc. are a blot on the global community that has failed to act when it was urgently needed.

South Asia region as a whole has yet to catch up with the idea of conflict prevention. It has yet to evolve a regional mechanism to deal with existing disputes and resolve them before they begin to unravel. Over the years multilateral and bilateral efforts have been undertaken to resolve outstanding regional disputes/conflicts of both interstate and intra-state types. However, these efforts are mostly facilitated by outside players. Although the peace processes – like the Norway Peace Process in Sri Lanka – have done exemplary work in containing violence in the country through diplomatic and back channel efforts but did not fully succeed in resolving the conflicts.

In the earlier sections, a brief profile of the major conflicts in the region has been sketched. South Asia region is home to several other conflicts but not as entrenched as those outlined above. Sindhi-Mohajir conflict in Pakistan, Chittagong ethnic conflict in Bangladesh, Madesh movement in Nepal, and Left Wing movement and Hindu-Muslim divide in India also poses credible dangers of violence. Hindu-Muslim

communal violence is a persisting source of threat to human security for centuries, and when manifests it results in hundreds or thousands of death.

Attitude of respective governments is a big constraint to conflict prevention efforts. The governments hardly take cognizance of socio-economic problems of ethnic groups before their grievances manifest in violence. Ministers and officials at the top echelons react only when these oppressed groups pose a credible law and order problem and later on, internal security threat. Such an apathetic attitude is characteristic of each of the governments in the region. Not only the listless attitudes, but in majority of cases the state governments themselves perpetuate the grievances through systemic policies of oppression; examples are aplenty: Sri Lankan government against Tamils, Pakistani government against Baluch, Sindhis and Hindus, Indian government against Kashmiris and North-eastern ethnic minorities, and Bangladesh government against Chakmas and Hindu Bengalis.

Numerous examples substantiate the fact that governments' apathy toward historical grievances of ethnic minorities is a fertile ground for proliferation of a conflict and its violent manifestations. Sri Lankan government's long discriminatory policies that began in the early 1960s continued against the Tamils for three decades. Chelvadorai Manogaran notes that the systemic oppression started in the aforementioned decade sustained through the deliberate denial of legitimate rights to both India and Sri Lankan origin Tamils by the Sinhalese dominated government.⁷⁵ Similarly, Pakistan is resorting to same strategy in suppressing voices of dissent in NWFP, Sindh and Baluchistan, and India in Kashmir and North-eastern states. A comprehensive understanding of the causes and dynamics of conflicts is indispensable for

⁷⁵ Chelvadorai Manogaran, *Ethnic Conflict and Reconciliation in Sri Lanka* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987), pp. 31-32.

formulating a response mechanism in order to prevent conflict escalation in future within and between the countries of South Asia.

A major hurdle to such an effort is the historical grievances between communities. Communal tension between Hindus and Muslims in India, ethnic conflict between Sinhalese and Tamils, ethnicity based conflict between Sindhis and Muhajirs, sectarian conflict between Shia and Sunni, and several other such dichotomous relations act as major sources of conflicts as well as pose obstacles to conflict prevention efforts. Thereby, troubled majority-minority relation impinges on the urgency to take actions needed to prevent deadly violence. Although taking appropriate actions against the trouble-makers is what demanded of a government, but police and other security forces hardly take actions against whom they consider their own. This inherent bias towards minority communities becomes too apparent during communal disturbances in which the protectors of law collude with the rampaging mobs in exterminating people who are considered not their own but “the others”.