

## Organised Violence In The South Asian Region

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**Abstract:** Organised violence can be of multiple forms and purposes, so common that it has become a part of modern life. Such type of violence are political in nature and may be sponsored by internal as well as external sponsors and includes both state and non-state actors. Terrorism, guerrilla wars, political assassinations, communal violence, police actions come under the sources of organised crime. I am going to discuss the various cases of organised crime in South Asia.

### 1. Introduction

Regarding organised violence the popular opinion is that tackling such crimes is the duty of the law enforcement agencies alone, It is important to note that unless organised crime figures on the list of national threats it won't be tackled seriously. South Asian states possess a long position in the chain of trade routes established by the colonial rulers. These routes can be infiltrated by organised criminals directly. The growth of internet connectivity also increases this threat.

The role of military and security forces also contain few organised criminal elements. This is possible since they possess a monopoly on the means of violence, as well have access to classified information, natural resources and arms stock. So naturally they have an upper hand position in the country.

### 2. Why does organised crime take place?

As I have mentioned above, the privilege that the military enjoys might be susceptible to organised criminal elements. Growing corruption in the defence sector might add fuel on the issue. A strong International community is required to omit corruption from military and defence sectors. Secondly, those countries which have a crippled law and judiciary system, where armed conflicts are an ongoing process, might become easier hubs where organised crime takes root and grows. Another cause maybe, the way the international forces operate as intervening forces in different regions. Post war in Afghanistan, the institutional structure was paralysed, and the Western money ended up in the hands of warlords and criminals as well as the Taliban. This lack of knowledge of these forces in the environment they are working in has triggered the militancy through their financial assistance.

### 3. Cases of organised crime in south asia

#### THE RISE OF TERRORISM IN BANGLADESH

After the 2016 attack by the IS (Islamic State) in the Holey Artisan Café in Dhaka, Bangladesh, the authorities conducted several counter terrorism operations. Religious minorities such as Hindus, Christians, Buddhists, Bahai's and Shia's were killed. IS has been showing interest in Bangladesh. IS has been successful in forming a base in Bangladesh with active propaganda being spread through local videos and articles in Bengali language. A lot of urban as well as rural, educated and uneducated men have been recruited by the IS. Due to military interventions in Syria and Iraq, ISIS is losing its hold in these places, so they have become more active in places such as Bangladesh and Afghanistan, with Bangladesh having at least 50 persons working under IS.

Another terrorist network that prevails in Bangladesh is the Al Qaeda. Since 2013, the Al Qaeda has carried out 12 violent attacks in Bangladesh. Al Qaeda has a well spread network in Bangladesh and they are able to carry out their work through the use of internet. The radicalisation and the call for the muslim youths to join Al Qaeda mostly operates through the internet.

### 4. Efforts to counter terrorism

Bangladesh has formed a new task force known as Counter Terrorism and Trans national Crime Unit which carried few major operations and was successful in killing the IS leader in Bangladesh Tamim Ahmed Chowdhury. Local police has been working closely with the residents of the country to find out about the whereabouts of the suspected individuals. Mobile apps has been launched to help its citizens to provide any suspicious activity related to terrorism to the security agencies. Various ways to increase awareness regarding terrorism are done through lectures and talks being organised for students.

Bangladesh needs to ensure and strengthen its security and counterterrorism measures for the long run.

### 5. Sinhala-muslim riots in sri lanka

Despite being a majority in their country, the population growth of Muslims is more than the Sinhalese. So they suffer from resentment against the Muslims. The separatist group Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) had gone for an ethnic cleansing in Sri Lanka killing 147 Muslims in August 1990. There has been growing prejudices and discrimination against the Muslims in Sri Lanka because of the increased influence of “Salafism” and “Wahabism” of the middle east among these Muslims of Sri Lanka.

## **6. THE RIOTS OF 2018**

“On 28<sup>th</sup> Feb 2018, a group of Sinhalese youths arrived at a restaurant in Ampara town and alleged that there were infertility pills in their food. They attacked the owner of the restaurant and mobilised a mob, which attacked hotels and shops in the surrounding area of Ampara.”

## **7. Common people’s position**

Most of the Muslims and Sinhalese do not withstand to the recent riots and tensions. They believe in a peaceful solution to this problem so that both the community can coexist together in harmony. The ones who are behind these violence are the “Organised Groups” which exist at the borders of each of the communities. These groups have managed to instigate violence in the society by exposing these communities to religious extremism and exclusivism.

## **8. Plan of action to be taken to avert the violence**

A legal framework should be developed in Sri Lanka which would be strong enough to punish the inciters of violence. Such acts should be criminalised and the leaders should take sustained course of action to punish the directing figures of these groups. There should be a sustained operational network between the structures of nation, district and local bodies to create mutual coexistence between both the communities.

## **9. Rise of neo religious groups and terrorism in Pakistan**

Pakistan has a diverse ground for terrorist activities to take place. The Global Terrorism Index ranks Pakistan as the 5<sup>th</sup> country to be mostly effected by terrorism. Since 2000, Pakistan has seen number of deaths with 50,000 civilians being killed and 6000 security personal being killed in the war against terrorism. The statistics show that life of civilians are in a constant threat in Pakistan and they are the worst victims of this war against terrorism. 2017 has seen a rise of neo religious groups in Pakistan, namely Tehrik-e-Labbaik Pakistan, who has massive following and was able to grab the position of 5<sup>th</sup> largest political party in Pakistan.

“TLP engaged in a nationwide protest in November 2018, against the Supreme Court’s decision to acquit a Christian woman, Asia Bibi, accused of blasphemy, who was on death row for more than eight years. The TLP demanded the public execution of Bibi, called for an overthrow of the local government and encouraged its followers to kill the Supreme Court judges that had acquitted her. The protests ended after the government gave into TLP’s demand of filing a review petition against Asia Bibi’s acquittal by the Supreme Court and put her name on the Exit Control List (ECL), a roster of people banned from leaving Pakistan.”

One reason for TLP’s success is that they have weaponized the “Khatam-e-Nabooat” narrative. Pakistan has strong blasphemy laws, disrespecting Islam or the Prophet has serious consequences resulting in death or imprisonment for life. The TSP has legitimised this and defended the blasphemy laws, and have taken it upon them to perform their religious duty by defending the Prophet’s honour and thereby inciting violence against minorities.

## **10. Nature of terrorist groups in Pakistan**

Another important threat to human life is the rise of terrorist groups in Pakistan. These groups operate in a decentralised network. A lot of these groups have been uprooted from their bases by the International Security forces, yet they are very much alive and functioning in this changing security environment. These groups often are in a competition with each other, and face the forces of counter terrorism together.

The group known as “Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan” has caused some notorious acts of violence by targeting the Army Public School (2014) and Bacha Khan University (2016). This group had limited its activities in 2016 and 2017 according to The Global Terrorism Index, but after the appointment of their new head Wali, they claimed two attacks of July 2018. Both were suicide bombings, one in a ANP rally in Peshawar and the other before the General Elections.

Another group is the Islamic State of Khurasan. In Pakistan the IS operates through its affiliate ISK. The ISK targets are mainly in Balochistan, they attack Shias, Sufis and representatives of the Pakistani government. This group has claimed responsibility for the third most violent attack in Pakistan's history by a suicide bombing in Balochistan which claimed 128 lives and injured many more. ISK has since then continued to conduct attacks and bombed the Shia community of Orakzain in November 2018. They can operate easily because of the permeable border Pakistan shares with Afghanistan so there is easy movement of terrorists between the borders.

Third organisation is the Al Qaeda which has bases all over the Indian sub-continent, especially active in Pakistan. They believe in the creation of Sharia law in the country and resent against their own government as well as foreign interference especially by the US. Al Qaeda operates in a very localised manner, therefore it adds to their strength and makes it difficult for the authorities to put them under their custody.

### **11. The us approach**

Issue of terrorism in Pakistan has been taken very seriously by the US, as Pakistan faces a very difficult geographical position with Afghanistan. Terrorists in Pakistan can easily surpass their boundaries and reach Afghanistan and vice versa. Therefore both these countries are complementing each other and has become a combined threat to the world. The US wants the country to not foster Afghanistani terrorists in their country as US is highly active in its missions in the Afghan soil. Pakistan has accepted US's proposal to contain terrorism in the country and has plans to create a border between the two countries by the end of 2019.

### **12. Organised crime in india**

India has had a long history of struggles with various separatist claims, insurgencies, terrorism, conflicts which are spread across the country. Organised crime in India is related to the nexus of terrorism in India. The regional drug trade in India is rampant with states such as Punjab being the worst drug affected regions.

### **13. The north eastern states**

The North eastern part of India has seen a number of ongoing revolutions. The separatist groups in the north east are quite powerful as well as have political and popular support. The United Liberation Front of Assam is one of the groups operating in Assam. The Naga Insurgency group in Nagaland has also been active since Independence. These groups have links with high officials and they are indulged in activities such as drug trafficking and smuggling of goods. Militants from Bangladesh and Myanmar also operate through these groups. These are funded by terrorist organisations across borders. Groups such as "Jamaat-ul-Mujahedeen Bangladesh" is operating in India through the help of these militants in north east.

### **14. The naxal problem**

The Naxalites who emerged from Naxalbari, West Bengal have been successful in spreading beyond West Bengal to its neighbour states such as Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh. They have built links with the CPI(M) as well as have links with the communists groups functioning in Nepal. The Maoists mainly attack the state and national level government personnel as well as the armed and security forces. They have launched a series of attacks and have led to deaths of high profile leaders such as VidyaCharan Shukla of the Congress Party. They have been called as "The Gravest Challenge to Indian Security" by Manmohan Singh.

### **15. Terrorism and drug problem in punjab**

The demand for a separate state of Khalistan in Punjab during the Indira Gandhi rule led to the rise of militancy and extremism in Punjab. Soon after the army raid in the Golden Temple had hurt the Sikh sentiments and this led to the assassination of Indira Gandhi at her own residence by her own bodyguards.

The second problem that the state of Punjab is dealing is the drug trafficking and growth of these cartels, giving away to terrorist activities. Terrorism and Drug trade are directly related because the terrorism activities in Punjab by smuggling drugs from Afghanistan.

"The drug money has become a major source of funding of elections in Punjab and over time, a well-organised drug cartel has come into existence with active connivance of politicians, police officers and drug lords" stated by Indian Defence Review article.

## 16. The kashmir issue

Separatist organisations have taken its root in Jammu and Kashmir. Various Pakistani extremist groups such as “Lashkar-e-taiba” and “Jaish-e-Mohammad” are operating in these areas. The latest Pulwama attack that shook India was possible because of the close link between the home grown groups with organisations of Pakistan. These groups demand for a separate state of Kashmir, free from the Indian Union. Pakistan sponsored attacks on Indian soil have also been retaliated by the Indian government. India doesn't tolerate terrorism and have given a befitting reply to Pakistani terrorist organisations with surgical strikes and the latest air attack of Feb 2019.

## 17. Terrorsim inspired by hindutva ideology

Religious extremist ideology such as Hindutva have gained popular support and have caused attacks on minorities of other faiths and religions. They recruit Hindu unemployed youths and aim to convert India into a Hindu Rashtra. Several cases of mob lynching and attacks against minorities are seen to be carried out by these extremists in the past few years. The infamous blasts that were carried out in Malegaon in 2006 were the work of these extremists.

## 18. Response by the indian state

India's strategic options towards curbing terrorism has been half successful. India has successfully flushed out terrorist activities from Punjab. But the Kashmir issue continues to be an ongoing debate between India and Pakistan. India has been successfully using its counter terrorism activities towards these violent attacks on Indian soil. After the 26/11 Mumbai attacks, the Indian state has taken stringent actions to look into terrorism activities.

## 19. Violence in afghanistan

Non state actors such as Taliban has been a cause of distress since a long time. They have carried out multiple attacks in and out of Afghanistan. This group carries out high profile attacks and have captured the provinces of Ghazni and Farah. The US has been intervening from time again but they have redrawn their forces from Afghanistan in 2014. This has created a situation of “Stalemate” in Afghanistan. The “Al-Khandaq” operation of the Taliban in 2018 aimed at attacking the US and the Security forces of Afghanistan. The Taliban have changed their capturing strategy. Instead of aiming for provinces and capitals, they aim to bring under the rural areas and they have managed to do so under the “Al-Khandaq” operation. And instead of going for high profile attacks it has begun to carry out multiple smaller attacks, which were visible in early 2018 in Kabul. Taliban have positioned themselves as the rulers of Afghanistan and have started working with the International community. They carry out these activities through their political office in Qatar.

The other terrorist group working in the Afghanistan-Pakistan nexus is the “Islamic-State of Khurasan (IS)” group. They have become a formidable militant group.

ISK has two factions: (a) the Pakistani faction eastern and north-eastern Afghanistan.

(b) Uzbek faction based in northern Afghanistan's Jawzjan province.

ISK's alliances with groups such as “Lashkar-e-Jhangvi Al-Almi” (LJA), “Lashkar-e-Islam” (LI), TTP factions like Jamaat-ul- Ahrar (JuA) and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) have managed to strengthen ISK in Afghanistan. The geographical distribution of ISK attacks from Kabul to Jalalabad (Afghanistan) and Quetta to Peshawar (Pakistan) shows the extent of the group's geographical outreach.

## 20. Possible course of action

2019 will be a crucial year for Afghanistan, since the elections are coming. The outcome of presidential elections will determine the peace process, political stability and conflict in Afghanistan. At the same time, the US decision to withdraw or keep its troops in Afghanistan will be equally significant. If the US withdraws in a phased manner then violence will come down. Given the conflicting demands and interests of the contending parties and peace can prove to be challenging. Few trade-offs by all parties is required for peace to be achieved. If the US withdraws hastily as it did from Iraq in 2011 through quick fix solution, then Afghanistan's situation could get worse.

## 21. Civil war and violence in nepal

Nepal faced its civil war from 1996 to 2006 which led to deaths of 13,000 people. This war was backed by the Communist Party of Nepal(Maoists) aiming to overthrow the existing monarch in the country and to establish a communist rule in Nepal. The Maoists gained control over most of the areas of Nepal especially the rural areas.

They launched a parallel rule with the government by controlling the rural areas and the government controlling the urban cities and towns. Lately they started attacking military forces and the local police. The “Upsala Conflict Data Program” estimates that annual fatalities reached its height in 2002 with 4,433 deaths. Upto 200,000 people were displaced. In this war between the government security forces and the Maoists gross human rights abuse took place. Again violent protests grew later in 2015 in Terai when people opposed the new constitution. More than 1600 people were killed between 2007 and 2012 in the post conflict.

Violence of all sorts are taking place in Nepal such as violence against women in Nepal are endemic in nature. Domestic and sexual violence against women have grown in the recent years. There are loopholes in the system as the Nepal Judiciary limits the date to complaint against a rape case to 35 days from the day of occurrence of rape.

Nepal’s youth have involved themselves in various violent activities. A recent study in the Terai region shows that “violence and crime are not always the works of organised groups; they are sometimes perpetuated by unknown groups or by a handful of youths pursuing 3 M’s- money, machines and masti.”

## 22. Conclusion

While progress has been made by the different governments of South Asia to control its crime and violence rates, South Asia still struggles to convert their societies from a post war to a stable one. In this article I have mentioned the major countries of South Asia where organized crime has or is taking place. Bhutan can be seen as an exception with extremely low crime rates, very few cases of crime takes place in the country. So far no organised violence has taken place in the country. In the age of social media, due to misinformation and hate messages may spread and cause unrest against the minorities. Since South Asia is ethnically diverse, there is a possibility for a small incident to transform into violent riots. While controlling these riots and violence, the state machinery often suppresses them sometimes leading to human rights violation. For example in India, Armed Forces Special Protection Act (AFSPA) is launched in J&K and the North Eastern states. The forces sometimes abuse their powers as during AFSPA rule the military gets sole power to administer the region. Several cases of civilians being harmed and violated off their rights and dignity has come up. There should be a check on the force personnel to not misuse their power over the innocent civilians. Also various stabilising operations and peace settlement are not the only ways to check the organised crime. The national and the international community should stress and focus on the sustainability that would result from peace.

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