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ARMED CONFLICT AND TERRORISM IN SOUTH ASIA: AN OVERVIEW

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A B S T R A C T

The study aims to scrutiny the nature of armed conflict and terrorism in South Asia. A mixed method of qualitative and quantitative analysis has used to conduct this study. The study has also followed an analytical model to make an assessment on the variation of the intensity of armed conflict and terrorism in the leading and lagging region of South Asia. Methodologically, the study does not directly address the policies of the South Asian countries but rather uses already available literatures of policy experts to conclusively make a judgment based on the research question-to what extent the incidence of terrorism is varied from the leading region to the lagging region of South Asia? To reach to an answer of this query the study has conducted a statistical analysis of the MIPT data sets and found that armed conflict and terrorism increase rapidly in lagging regions in compare to the leading region of South Asia. From 2005 to 2014 the increasing trend of terrorist incidence and the number of fatalities (per million populations) in the lagging region of South Asia is 1.897% and 1.231% higher than the leading region. Further country wise statistical analysis indicates that, terrorist incidence in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka is respectively 0.545 percent, 1.87%, 1.947% and 2.232% higher in the lagging region in compare to the leading region. Based on the statistical findings the study has recommended to initiate an organized study on terrorism in South Asia. The study has also stated the requirement of a database on terrorism in South Asia and lastly concludes with the outcome that the prevalence terrorism in South Asia can only be curtailed with joint efforts especially with regard to India and Pakistan.

Keywords: Armed Conflict, Lagging Region, Leading Region, South Asia, Terrorism.

INTRODUCTION

The nature of armed conflict and terrorism has once again brought forth South Asia into the lime light of the world. Based on this argument the article has made an overview of the present state of armed conflict and terrorism of this region.

In South Asia, the country with the fifth largest increase in deaths from terrorism is Afghanistan. Study conducted by Cohen claimed that, from the first days the interim government assumed office, its weakness was evident not only from the near absence of government and administrative capabilities, but also from the presence of powerful "warlords" in many provinces and the remnants of al Qaeda and the Taliban, who pose a security threat within Afghanistan (Cohen, 2002). To justify the credibility of the claim of Cohen the study has used data from Global Terrorism Index (GTI) 2014 and found that, from 2012 to 2013 there was an increase of 13% or 350 deaths due to terrorist incidence (Global Terrorism Index, 2014). This increase is largely due to further activity by the Taliban, which killed almost 2,350 people in 2013 up from 2,050 people in 2012 (Global Terrorism Index, 2014). This indicates that, in Afghanistan terrorism is increasing, with 10% more terrorist attacks and 13% more fatalities in 2013 than 2012 (Global Terrorism Index, 2014).

Whilst there were seven different terrorist groups active in Afghanistan, one group, the Taliban, was responsible for the majority of attacks and casualties. In both 2012 and 2013 the Taliban was responsible for 75% of all terrorist fatalities in Afghanistan (Global Terrorism Index, 2014). In 2013 unknown actors accounted for 23% of deaths by terrorism in Afghanistan (Global Terrorism Index, 2014) and the remainder of fatalities was claimed by six terrorist groups. In the same year there were terrorist acts in over 440 different cities in Afghanistan, clearly highlighting the breadth of

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terrorism across the country (Global Terrorism Index, 2014). However 304 cities suffered only one terrorist attack, there were 36 attacks in the capital Kabul and 25 attacks in the old capital of Kandahar (Global Terrorism Index, 2014). Police are the targets of most attacks, being targeted 46 percent of the time and suffering 53% of the deaths (Global Terrorism Index, 2014). Private Citizens are the second biggest target group, with 21% of attacks and 19% of deaths. Although attacks on schools and educational institutions account for only two percent of attacks they result in one of the highest injury rates per attack averaging nearly ten injuries but only one death.

The main cause of such attacks is that, Taliban is opposed to the education of girls and when in power banned girls above the age of eight from attending school. In 2013 the Taliban conducted at least seven attacks targeting girls attending school, mostly in the north, resulting in over 160 casualties (Global Terrorism Index, 2014). Bombings and explosions were the most common tactic used in Afghanistan, accounting for over half of all attacks and fatalities. A quarter of all terrorist attacks were armed assaults, with 37% of deaths attributed to this tactic (Global Terrorism Index, 2014). Almost all armed assaults were with firearms, although there were a few instances of knives and axe attacks with at least 19 beheadings. There were over 100 suicide bombings in 2013, mostly by the Taliban. Suicide bombings were very deadly, averaging five deaths and ten injuries per attack (Global Terrorism Index, 2014).

So in line with Cohen it could be said that, the weak administrative structure of the interim government of Afghanistan is the main causes of the increasing trends of terrorist incidence in this state. Such increasing trends of terrorist incidence are considered as the main security threat. Washington concludes that, Afghanistan could not build a state without addressing the security problem (Cohen, 2002). The study suggested that, to solve the security problem in Afghanistan, engagement with armed groups and their formal and informal constituencies in dialogue, including those designated as 'terrorists', can be an essential part of exploring, encouraging and finding alternatives to violence. It can help understand and address the underlying causes of conflict and extremism, and can strengthen moderate, pro-dialogue elements within a group.

Along with Afghanistan, the nature and prevalence of terrorism in Pakistan and India is also very tremendous. In India terrorism has increased by 70% from 2012 to 2013, with the number of deaths increasing from 238 to 404 (Global Terrorism Index, 2014). The number of attacks also increased, with 55 more attacks in 2013 than 2012 (Global Terrorism Index, 2014). However, the majority of terrorist attacks in India have low casualties. In 2013 around 70% of attacks were non-lethal (Global Terrorism Index, 2014). There were attacks by 43 different terrorist groups who can be categorized into three groups: Islamists; separatists; and communists.

Communist and Maoist terrorist groups are by far the most frequent perpetrators and the main cause of deaths in India (Global Terrorism Index, 2014). Three communist groups claimed responsibility for 192 deaths in 2013, which was nearly half of all deaths from terrorism in India (Global Terrorism Index, 2014). Accordingly police are overwhelmingly the biggest targets of Maoists, accounting for half of all deaths and injuries. This is mainly through armed assaults, which killed 85, and bombings and explosions, which killed 43 (Global Terrorism Index, 2014). Kidnapping is also a common tactic of the Maoists where it is often used as political tool to force the government to release Maoist prisoners. The majority of Maoist attacks occurred in the provinces of Bihar, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand.

Islamic terrorism is also prevalent in India. Generally, the dispute with Pakistan over Jammu and Kashmir is the source of Islamic terrorism. Cohen argued that, Islamabad was a major supporter of the Taliban and of terrorists operating in Kashmir, both of which groups it regarded as freedom fighters. The Afghan and Kashmir terrorist operations strengthened domestic Islamic radicals, who were visibly and publicly defiant of Islamabad (Cohen, 2002). Such argument of Cohen has found as contradictory as Islamabad had already joined with USA to the war against terrorism. To justify the rationality of this argument the study has used data from Global Terrorism Index and found that, in 2013 three Islamist groups were responsible for around 15% of deaths in India (Global Terrorism Index, 2014). This includes Hizbul Mujahideen, an Islamist group allegedly based in Pakistan with a membership of around 15,000. This group was the only group in India to use suicide tactics in the same year (Global Terrorism Index, 2014). Islamist groups in India commonly use armed assaults targeting the police or bombings targeting private citizens. The majority of attacks by this group occurred in Hyderabad in the south, a city with a 40% Muslim

population, and Jammu and Kashmir in the north, an area which is nearly two thirds Muslim (Global Terrorism Index, 2014). The nature and prevalence of terrorism in India became more apparent when in September 2014 al-Qaeda announced a presence in India, hoping to unite other Islamist groups (Global Terrorism Index, 2014). So it is evident that, there is a connection between terrorist groups of India and Pakistan but the argument of Cohen that Islamabad was a major supporter of Taliban and the terrorist groups operating in Kashmir is found as confusing. This is because Pakistan is also not beyond the target of terrorist attacks.

Terrorism in Pakistan is strongly influenced by its proximity to Afghanistan with most attacks occurring near the border involving the Taliban. Like in Afghanistan, terrorism increased significantly in Pakistan in 2013, with a 37% increase in deaths and 28% increase in injuries since 2012 (Global Terrorism Index, 2014). Nearly half of all attacks had no groups that have claimed responsibility. The deadliest group in Pakistan in 2013, responsible for almost a quarter of all deaths and 49% of all claimed attacks, is Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the Pakistani Taliban. Terrorism in Pakistan has a diverse array of actors (Global Terrorism Index; 2014). In 2013 there were 23 different terrorist groups in Pakistan, down from 29 groups in 2012 (Global Terrorism Index, 2014). However, 11 groups account for the majority of the 270 claimed attacks, many of these groups are Islamist there are also other organizations such as separatist movements for Baloch, the Bettani tribe and Sindhi people (Global Terrorism Index, 2014). Over 60% of fatalities were from bombings and explosions and around 26% from firearms (Global Terrorism Index, 2014). A quarter of targets and deaths were against private citizens, with police accounting for 20% of targets and deaths (Global Terrorism Index, 2014). The deadliest attacks were against religious figures and institutions which, on average, killed over five people and injured over 11 per attack (Global Terrorism Index, 2014). This includes the killing of 87 people attending All Saints Church in Peshawar city from two suicide bombs by a sub-group of the Pakistani Taliban (Global Terrorism Index, 2014).

The Pakistani Taliban also, like the Taliban in Afghanistan, is opposed to the western education and the education of girls and has targeted schools and advocates of equal education. This issue gained worldwide recognition in October 2012 when a 15 year old school girl and advocate of female education, Malala Yousafzai, was shot by gunmen from the Pakistani Taliban on a school bus in the northwest (Global Terrorism Index, 2014). In 2014 Malala Yousafzai, along with the Indian activist Kailash Satyarthi campaigning against forced childhood labor, were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize (Global Terrorism Index, 2014). Despite the international attention brought to the issue, violence continues and in 2013 there were over 100 attacks on educational institutions, with a total of 150 casualties (Global Terrorism Index, 2014). Suicide bombings were used by the Pakistani Taliban and three other groups, all of which have some affiliation with the Pakistani Taliban. In 2013 there were 71 suicide attacks responsible for around 2,740 casualties (Global Terrorism Index, 2014).

More than 500 cities in Pakistan had at least one terrorist incident in 2013, with two or more incidents occurring in 180 cities (Global Terrorism Index; 2014). Of all attacks 16% occurred in the largest city of Karachi in the south (Global Terrorism Index, 2014). However, the majority of attacks occurred in the north closer to the border with Afghanistan. This includes cities such as Peshawar, Quetta and Jamrud, which combined, had more attacks than Karachi. The city of Parachinar in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, the closest point in Pakistan to Kabul in Afghanistan, has among the highest rates of deaths per incident in Pakistan with 87 people killed from seven incidents (Global Terrorism Index, 2014).

Considering all the above discussions the article has assessed the nature of armed conflict and terrorism of the South Asian states with particular emphasis on the case of Afghanistan, India and Pakistan. The study has found that the number of terrorist incidence and fatalities in South Asia have dropped from a peak of 29,638 (of which 15,565 were in Sri Lanka alone) in 2009, to just 6,668 in 2013 (South Asia Terrorism Portal, 2015). In the first quarter of 2014 approximately 1,343 persons have already been killed across the region (Iyer; 2009). This suggests the continuation of terrorist incidence as well as fatalities.

To make a concrete analysis the article has documented the extent of armed conflict and terrorism within the countries of South Asia. In this study has recommended that it may be imperative to initiate an organized study on armed conflict and terrorism in South Asia. As a

perquisite of such organized study a database on terrorism in South Asia is considered essential. As such the article has proposed to create such a database on armed conflict and terrorism in South Asia. The study concludes that the nature of armed conflict within this region often pave the way of terrorist activities and terrorism could only be curtailed with joint efforts especially with regard to India and Pakistan.

The study includes six sections. The first section has made an introductory discussion on armed conflict and terrorism in South Asia. The second section has focused on the methodology of the study. Conceptualization of armed conflict and terrorism has made in the third section. The fourth section has made an overview of the nature of armed conflict and terrorism in South Asia. Discussions of this section have divided South Asia into leading and lagging region. The study has found that in the lagging region the incidence and fatalities of terrorism are more severe than the leading region. This section has also made an analysis to find out why there is a variation of the terrorist incidence in the leading and lagging region? The findings have discussed in the fifth section of the study and lastly in the sixth section a concluding remarks with few recommendations have given.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this research relied largely on qualitative analysis. Quantitative methodology has been used in this research to a limited extent. It was a field of inquiry cutting across several disciplines and subject matter. The study has also followed an analytical model to make an assessment on the variation of the intensity of armed conflict and terrorism in the leading and lagging region. Methodologically, the study does not directly address the policies of the South Asian countries but rather uses already available literatures of policy experts to conclusively make a judgment based on the research question-to what extent the incidence of terrorism is varied from the 'leading region to the lagging region.[i]As part of secondary source of data the study uses several scholarly literature (Podder, 2012; Mishra, 2007; Akter, 2010 and so on)-to conduct an analysis that contextualizes the assertions of the literatures, assesses nature of terrorist incidence in South Asia. Inconsistencies in the method are to be expected for two reasons. One, it does not contextualize policy through a microcosmic study of a single country in the region, and as such lacks a specific case study. Two, it assumes that political violence often paves the way of terrorism in South Asia. Further study has investigated not only the what, where and when of terrorism but also the why and how of the prevalence of terrorism in South Asia. To scrutiny such query the study has essentially relied on two methods of information gathering-

- **Analysis of document and other materials:** A focused study and analysis of literature on the areas and the issues under study. The available document and other scholarly materials related to the study has analyzed to find why there are a difference of incidence of the armed conflict and terrorism in the lagging and leading region of South Asia.
- **Data Collection:** Any empirical analysis of terrorism or conflict is complicated by data constraints and the lack of a universally accepted definition of conflict. The study uses multiple data sources in analysis, and focus on the common trends which the study has observed across these data sets. These data have been put together by several different organizations, each of which employs their own definition, counting methodologies, data sources and time periods (see Tables 1 and 2 for details); the trends which the study detail are therefore not strictly dependent on specific definitions or data collection methodologies.

The primary cross-country data sets which are used in this research are the Global Terrorism Database 2 (GTD2), covering the period 2005-2014, and the Rand-MIPT Terrorism database (MIPT). The GTD2 data base employs a fairly specific definition of "terrorism," covering acts of intentional violence perpetrated by subnational non-state actors. Further, the acts must satisfy two of the following three criteria: they must be aimed at attaining a specific political, economic, religious or social goal, there must be evidence of an intention to coerce, intimidate or convey some message to a larger audience than the immediate victims and/or the actions must be outside the context of legitimate warfare activities. Two caveats are immediately obvious from this description: this methodology requires several judgment calls to be made, notably about the intentions of the perpetrators, and this database explicitly excludes incidents of state-caused violence. This data base consists of high-quality data, only including incidents confirmed by multiple independent open-source reports (or a single "high-quality" source), and is specifically designed to be comparable over time. The biggest

downside is the limited time frame, 2005-2014; in fact, as detailed below, several South Asian countries have experienced an increase in internal violence after 2004.

The MIPT database employs a slightly broader definition of terrorism. The motives of all terrorists are assumed to be political, and terrorism includes all violence calculated to create an atmosphere of fear and alarm to coerce others into actions they would not otherwise undertake, or refrain from actions they desired to take. Acts of terrorism are generally directed against civilian targets, and carried out in a way that will achieve maximum publicity. The data is put together from newspaper, TV or radio reports, and there is no requirement for incidents to be confirmed by multiple data sources. The study has obtained this data over 2005-2014, a longer time period than the GTD2.

Table 1. Coverage of Data Se from Data Se to Data Set.

Data Set	Full Name	Year	Countries
Cross-country data	RAND-MIPT Terrorism Incident database (2005-2014)	2005-2014	Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka
MIPT			
GTD2	Global Terrorism Database II 2005-2014	2005-2014	Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka
WITS	Worldwide Incidents Tracking System, National Counter Terrorism Center	2005-2014	Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka
Country Specific Data	Ministry of Home Affairs Annual Report	2005-2014	India
MHA			
INSEC	Informal Sector Service Center, Kathmandu	2005-2014	Nepal
Long-term data	Global Terrorism Database 1	2005-2014	Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka
GTD1			
PITF	Political Instability Task Force Database of Violent Political Events in India	2005-2014	Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, India

Source: Authors Compilation

In addition to these cross-country datasets, the study uses two country-specific data sets to confirm the trends we observe. For India, the study has gathered state-level data from the Ministry of Home Affairs over the period 2005-2014 (MHA), which does not specify the exact definition used to count incidents of conflict, but has the advantage of including some measures of the intensity of counterterrorism operations. Specifically, there is data on the number of terrorists killed by security forces in different years. For Nepal, there is district-level data put together by the Informal Sector Service Center (INSEC), an NGO with staff members reporting on human rights violations from every district in the country. This data set also includes the number of people killed by government forces in each year. Since none of these data sets contains information prior to 2005, the study has examined two further data sets for a longer-term analysis.

The Global Terrorism Database (GTD1), originally collected by Pinkerton Global Information Services, documents violent incidents in South Asia from 1970-1997. This data was based on a single open-source report and hence is likely to be less comprehensive and of lower quality than the GTD2 database. Another database, put together by the Political Instability Task Force (PITF), focuses on incidents of violence in India over four decades (1960-2000), and also includes incidents of communal violence.[ii]

Table 2. Variable Definition and from data to Data Source.

Data Set	Criteria for inclusion	Source of Information	State-induced violence included?
MIPT	Violence calculated to create an atmosphere of fear and alarm to coerce others into actions they would not otherwise undertake, or refrain from actions they desired to take. Acts of terrorism are generally directed against civilian targets. The motives of all terrorists are political, and terrorist actions are generally carried out in a way that will achieve maximum publicity.	Newspaper, radio, and TV report	No
GTD2	Incidents of intentional violence perpetrated by subnational non-state actors, which must satisfy two of the following three criteria: it must be aimed at attaining a specific political, economic, religious or social goal, there must be evidence of an intention to coerce, intimidate or convey some message to a larger audience than the immediate victims and/or the action must be outside the context of legitimate warfare activities.	Multiple independent open-source reports or a single "highly credible" source	
WITS	Premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents.	Available open source material	No
MHA	None specified	Internal statistics	Yes
INSEC	None specified	Reports by staff members	Yes
GTD1	The threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to attain a political, economic, religious or social goal through fear, coercion or intimidation.	Single open-source report.	No
PITF	Not clearly specified	Reports in Keesing's Record of World Events	Yes

Source: Authors Compilation

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF ARMED CONFLICT AND TERRORISM: SOUTH ASIAN CONTEXT

The term armed conflict can generally be categorized into two groups: firstly, international armed conflict, opposing two or more states and secondly non-international armed conflict between governmental force and non-governmental armed groups. The study has argued that armed conflict caused violence and the state of violence ultimately paves the way of terrorist incidence/terrorism.

To study terrorism in South Asia, one must need to answer a number of questions that exists in the terrorism discourse (Khan, 2009) are attacks on political leaders to be qualified as acts of terrorism? Can acts of terrorism be inflicted by a state? Is terrorism always international? Should acts of terrorism be physically violent, or is it enough to install fear? Can an act of terrorism be inflicted by an individual not acting on behalf of any specific terrorist organization or ideology? Are terrorist goals always political or religious by nature? These questions may be answered differently in line with the stipulated definitions of terrorism. But the fact is that constructing a characterization of terrorism that would be satisfactory for everyone is a downright impossible undertaking (Omar, 2008).

A lot of the theoretical work on terrorism revolves around definitions (i.e. Cooper, 2001; Gibbs, 1989; Hoffman, 1998: 13-15; Jenkins, 2001; Ruby, 2002; Schmid & Jongman 1988: 32-38; for a collection of definitions, see Goodwin 2006). For example, for Enders and Sandler-Terrorism is the premeditated use or threat of use of *extra normal* violence or *brutality* by subnational groups to obtain a political, religious, or ideological objective through *intimidation* of a huge

audience, usually not directly involved with the policy making that the terrorists seek to influence (Omar, 2009).

The U.S. Department of State defines terrorism as-politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience (Ruby, 2002). This is similar to Chomsky's definition: Terrorism is the use of *coercive* means aimed at populations in an effort to achieve political, religious, or other aim (Chomsky, 2001).

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) categorized terrorism into "international terrorism" and "domestic terrorism". According to FBI "International terrorism" means activities with the following three characteristics (http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/investigate/terrorism/terrorism-definition)-

- Involve violent acts or acts dangerous to human life that violate federal or state law;
- Appear to be intended (i) to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; (ii) to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or (iii) to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping; and
- Occur primarily outside the territorial jurisdiction of the U.S., or transcend national boundaries in terms of the means by which they are accomplished, the persons they appear intended to intimidate or coerce, or the locale in which their perpetrators operate or seek asylum.

"Domestic terrorism" means activities with the following three characteristics:

- Involve acts dangerous to human life that violate federal or state law;
- Appear intended-
    i. to intimidate or coerce a civilian population;
    ii. to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or
    iii. to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination. or kidnapping; and
- Occur primarily within the territorial jurisdiction of the U.S

Terrorism is asymmetrical deployment of threats and violence against enemies using means that fall *outside the forms of political struggle routinely operating* within some current regime. Stern defines terrorism as-an act or threat of violence against non-combatants, with the objective of *intimidating* or otherwise *influencing* an audience or audiences (Stern, 1999). Peter Chalk offers a definition similar to the ones above when he conceptualizes terrorism as-the systematic use of *illegitimate* violence that is employed by sub-state actors as means of achieving specific political objectives, these goals differing according to the group concerned (Chalk, 1999).

Notice that most of these definitions-with the exception of Chomsky and the State Department-point to some ineffable-extra normal, brutal and extraordinary aspect of terrorist violence, which is designed to mostly to-intimidate civilian audiences. Surely the term-extra normal cannot in this context be used to imply that terrorists are *more* violent than state armies.

Taking a birds-eye view of the field, it is clear what is wrong with current characterizations of terrorism: they are either too specific or too vague, they concentrate on particular (and theoretically arbitrary) aspects of the phenomenon while de-emphasizing others, or are too normatively oriented, mixing up descriptive and prescriptive terminology. Using inconsistent definitions of the term is not helpful for a variety of reasons (Gibbs, 1989; Goodwin, 2006). First, semantic vagueness has served to make it difficult for researchers to consistently study the phenomenon, as people use the same term to refer to a wide variety of events, ranging from state oppression and killing of civilians, to shootings in public places by lone gunmen (Omar; 2008). Second, normative definitions of the term attempt to arrive at a characterization of terrorism in the abstract without either trying to-

i. Look at terrorist phenomena as examples of a more inclusive category of events or *in relation* to other forms of political violence or
ii. Define terrorism using a strategy in which it is contrasted with other phenomena that already have relatively consensually established definitions.

In this respect, the use of legal or a moral model may obscure important variables that influence the development of terrorist groups and terrorist actions. Thus, normative definitions do not help in the task of situating the phenomenon of terrorism as a possible structural variant of collective action phenomena that are better understood.

Taken all the above definitions of terrorism into consideration the study has made an attempt to conceptualize terrorism in the South Asian context. As a perquisite of such conceptualization the study has tried to find the answer of the query-What are the main

caused of terrorism in South Asia? The study has used the view of Gupta to seek the answer of this query. According to Gupta, four factors are significant in this regard-poverty, religious fanaticism, lack of democratic freedom, and lastly psychological disorder. Gupta has argued that, poverty is the first instrument which generates socio-political violence. In the South Asian context this argument of Gupta is found as relevant. In fact his argument has found as linked with the view of Aristotle as well as members of the exclusive community of Nobel laureates. According to Aristotle the link between poverty and terrorism seems almost self-evident. Likewise, Kim Dae-Jung, South Korean Nobel prize winner, stated that, 'At the bottom of terrorism is poverty'. However, in the South Asian region, like poverty, religious fanaticism and psychological disorder is also considered as one of the factor of terrorism, lack of democracy has also found as the breeding ground for the rise of terrorism. If these above are the main causes of terrorism then the question arise-how the South Asian states viewed terrorism?

It is expected that this query will help to conceptualize terrorism in the context of South Asia. The answer of this question has made it clear that, in the context of South Asia terrorism cannot be the same despite that fact that the reality of terrorism is same for everyone Hence their national interests differ from each other and as such their views about terrorism also differ from each other. Such difference of views is really for the difference of national interests of the political parties and interests groups of the respective states of South Asia. As for example, the concept of terrorist acts conducted by Islamist groups or Hindu fanatic groups in India or any other states of this region may not be the similar reaction of the Congress and BJP due to their different party interest based on their different source of vote-bank. Same is the fact about difference of opinion in this context for two main political parties in Bangladesh. However, the above difference of views on terrorism may be true in the case of almost all the south Asian states, there are also the prevalence of few cases where states and political parties are found as having common concept of terrorism. As for instance, on the concept of terrorism as well as anti-terrorist policy a few political parties and interests groups of India, Nepal and Bhutan are found as having same views due to their common national interests. More specifically, in India, due to their common political ideology, the political parties like- the BJP, RSS and the Shiv Sena often maintain almost similar view in case the Muslims are suspected to have done terror act. On the contrary if any members of the Hindu fanatic groups are ever suspected or arrested by state police for their act of terrorism, all such Parties and groups react together against government.

So in the in the context of South Asia, it could be said that, the political parties, interests groups, as well as people views terrorism as per their respective ideology and interests.

ARMED CONFLICT AND TERRORISM IN SOUTH ASIA: AN OVERVIEW

MIPT data set from indicate to indicates that there exist a sharp difference in the trends of armed conflict and terrorism within the South Asian region before and after 2001. More specifically MIPT dada set indicates that after 2001 the number of terrorist incidence is increasing in this region. Through analysis and review of scholarly literature the study has found that such increasing trends of terrorist incidence are not same among all the states of South Asia. The data set of MIPT indicates that in India the fatalities of armed conflict and terrorist incidence are increasing from 2001 to 2014. The present study has identified three sources as the root cause of internal armed conflict and terrorism in India.

- The ongoing separatist movement in several north-eastern states (i.e. Assam, Manipur, Nagaland and Tripura) of India. For the purpose of the study the North-eastern states are classified as 'lagging';
- The left-wing extremist groups of India (i.e. Naxalite movements); and
- The third source of armed conflict and terrorist incidence in India is often fueled by the first two sources.

In 1979 the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) was formed in Assam. Since its emergence this front is demanding for the establishment of a 'sovereign socialist Assam. In order to reach to its goal ULFA target businessmen, government security forces, and infrastructure facilities such as oil pipelines, freight trains and government buildings. However the Indian government is trying to negotiate with ULFA since 2005 through People's Consultative Group, they continue their campaign of violence, and did not respond to a unilateral ceasefire announced by the

government in 2006. The insurgency in Manipur Nagaland and Tripura are also a long standing one. In Manipur after the formation of the United National Liberation Front (UNLF) in 1964 which has independence for Manipur as its goal, numerous other violent groups have espoused the same cause.[iii] There are also several militant groups claiming to represent the interests of specific ethnic groups. For instance, the Kuki National Front (KNF) wants a separate homeland for the Kukis, the Zomi Revolutionary Army (ZRA) aims to gather all the Zomi people into a single state, and the Hmar People's Convention-Democracy (HPC-D) has the goal of an independent state for the Hmar people. None of these groups have shown much interest in negotiations with the government.

On the other hand in 1980, the formation of the People's War Group (PWG) in Andhra Pradesh marked the revival of left-wing violent movements. The geographical spread of such groups has been rising in recent years: in 2007, 194 districts in 18 states were affected by left-wing extremism, up from 165 districts in 14 states in 2005.[iv] In line with geographical spread of left-wing extremism the numbers of fatalities are indicating a decreasing trend from 2005-2015 due to active governmental actions (Figure 1). Left-wing groups were especially active in the lagging states of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa and West Bengal, and the leading states of Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. Study has found that however the trends differ significantly across states: Andhra Pradesh and Bihar show a decline in Naxalite violence in 2006 and 2007, while such violence is on the rise in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Orissa (Iyer, 2009).

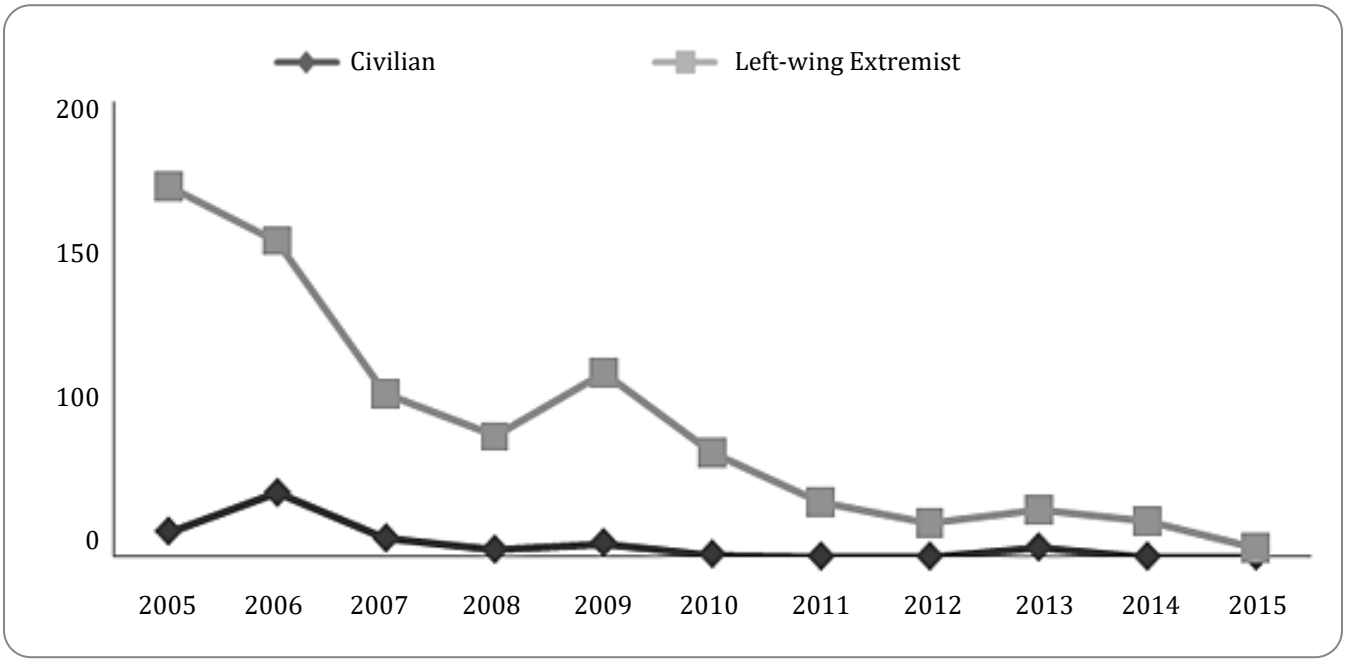

Figure 1. Fatalities-Left-wing Extremism 2005-2015.
Source: Author's calculation, data collected from South Asia Terrorism Portal, 2015,

Lastly both separatist movement and left-wing extremist groups are considered as the main cause of terrorism in India. Analysis of scholarly literature (Riedel, 2008; Eckert, 2012; Praful, 2008; Noor, 2007; KC, 2007) reveals that in recent years, there have been several instances of multiple coordinated bomb blasts in India's cities. These include the seven explosions in Mumbai's trains in July 2006, terrorist attacks on Taj and Oberoi Trident hotels in 2008, the twin bomb blasts in Hyderabad in August 2007 as well as series of bomb blasts in Jaipur, Bangalore and Ahmedabad in 2008. Many of these attacks are suspected to be orchestrated by fundamentalist Islamic groups, such as the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) and the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI).[v] The main argument of such suspicion is the growing global reach of terrorist organizations which demonstrated most tragically in the events of September 11, 2001. Study argued that however the urban focus of these groups' stands in contrast to the

separatist movements and left-wing extremism, the terrorist groups like LeT just utilize the scope of internal violence. In other words the internal extremist groups often patronize the terrorist groups (i.e. LeT, JeM and others). More specifically the study has argued that event outside the country or region might have played a role in increasing the incidence of conflict in India and other states of South Asia.

In other countries of South Asia the severity of terrorist incidence is quite different in compare to case of India. KC in his study argued that, after 11 September 2001 the situation of Bangladesh has first deteriorated, than is normally understood (KC, 2007). A good number of terrorists, reportedly with Pakistan intelligence support, found Bangladesh as safe haven when Pakistan and Afghanistan came under pressure. KC contends that, using Islamic card for political gains, the Bangladeshi society stands highly radicalized-most local groups working on the franchise of Pakistan-Afghanistan terrorist outfits including Al Qaeda (KC, 2007). The collective strength of terrorist groups like Harkat-ul-Jihadi Islami, Harkat-ul Ansar, Okaye Jote and others are now estimated in several thousands. It is assumed that, the proximity to arm bazaars in Pacific Rim countries has enabled them to procure sophisticated weapons and explosives. Illustratively, on April 2, 2004 at Chittagong port, 1,790 rifles, 150 rocket launchers, 2,700 grenades, one million rounds of ammunition and other weapons were seized while being loaded in ten trucks (KC, 2007). KC claimed that, the two trawlers who brought the consignment from Malaysia were owned by the brother of then ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) leader (KC, 2007). The weapons, it is reliably learnt, had India as their destination. However, incidents of terrorism had been on the rise after 2002, mostly due to bomb blasts orchestrated by Islamic fundamentalist groups, as well as an ongoing separatist movement in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, from 1998 to 2004, since the last 5 years due to active counter-terrorism initiatives of the present government. The prevalence of terrorism in Bangladesh is found as comparatively low.

The case of Sri Lanka is quite different from Bangladesh. In Sri Lanka before 2006 the Tamil rebel group was very active in fueling terrorist incidence in this state. The study has found a decreasing trend of armed conflict and terrorist incidence in Sri Lanka after 2009.

In Afghanistan, Pakistan and Nepal the study has noticed an increasing trend of conflict incidence after 2001. The armed conflict and terrorist incidence in Afghanistan and Pakistan are linked to each other. Armed conflict and terrorism is now considered as a part of the daily life of Afghan citizen. Since the Soviet invasion in this state armed conflict is still ongoing. In fact from Incidents to incidents of conflict in Afghanistan have risen sharply after 2004, due to increased clashes with the Taliban. In 2002 after the US invasion the Taliban regrouped themselves in the eastern provinces of Afghanistan, with the help of the Pashtun population in the border areas of Pakistan. In between 2007 and 2008 the Al Qaeda terrorist network of Afghanistan changed their tactics of attacking from large-scale armed attacks towards attacks explicitly targeting non-combatants, and an increasing number of suicide attacks. Such new style of terrorist attacks caused an expansion of the areas designated as “no-go” or “high abduction risk” by the United Nations.

Study has found spillover effects of armed conflict and terrorism of Afghanistan on Pakistan. In Pakistan a branch of the Taliban (Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan) was officially formed under the leadership of Baitullah Mehsud in 2007. This group is accused by the government of Pakistan for their involvement in the assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in the December 2007.Terrorist attacks in Pakistan are increasing gradually from two sources after 2004. The first consists of violent incidents perpetrated by groups based in the lagging regions of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and the North West Frontier Province (NWFP), which share a border with Afghanistan. The second source of terrorism in Pakistan is rooted into the separatist movement in Balochistan province.

ANALYSIS

Analysis indicates a clear variation of trends in armed conflict and terrorism between lagging and leading regions. The data sets of MIPT showed that armed conflict and terrorism increase rapidly in lagging regions in compare to the leading region (figure 2).

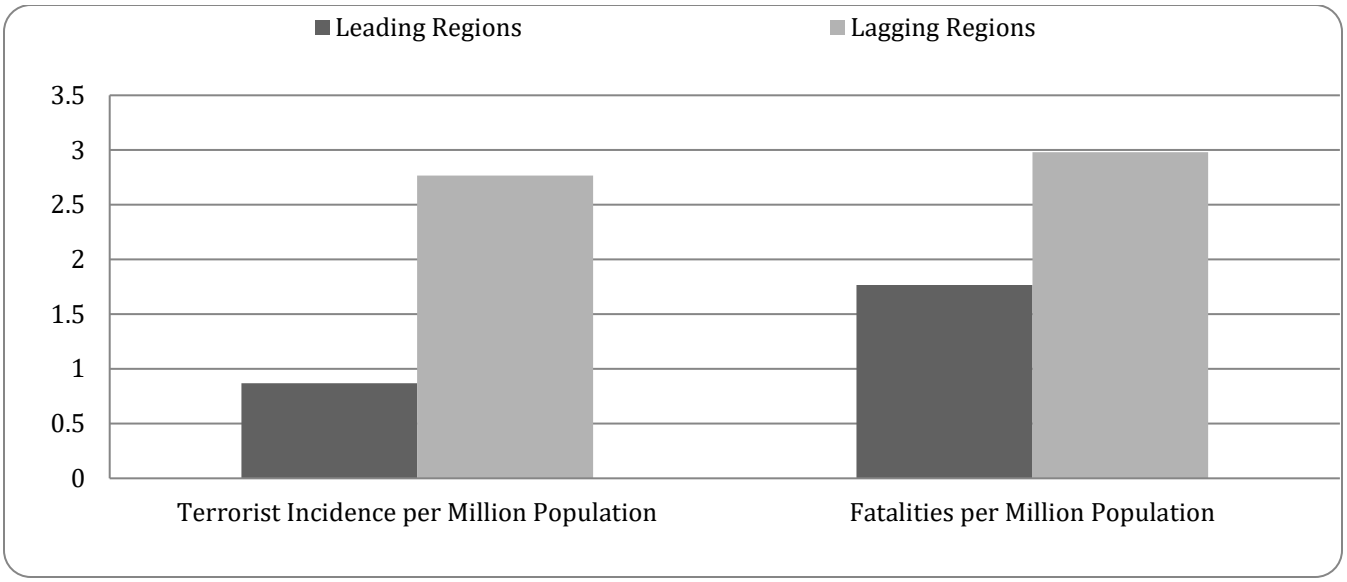

Figure 2. Do lagging regions in South Asia experience more conflict?
Source: Author's analysis, data collected from South Asia, MIPT, 2005-2014.

The figure 2 given above indicates that from 2005 to 2014 the increasing trend of terrorist incidence and the number of fatalities (per million populations) in the lagging region of South Asia is 1.897 percent and 1.231% higher than the leading region of this region. After considering the statistical ratio of terrorist incidence and the fatalities caused by it the study has made a country wise analysis to show how far terrorist incidence and fatalities is higher is in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka (figure 3).

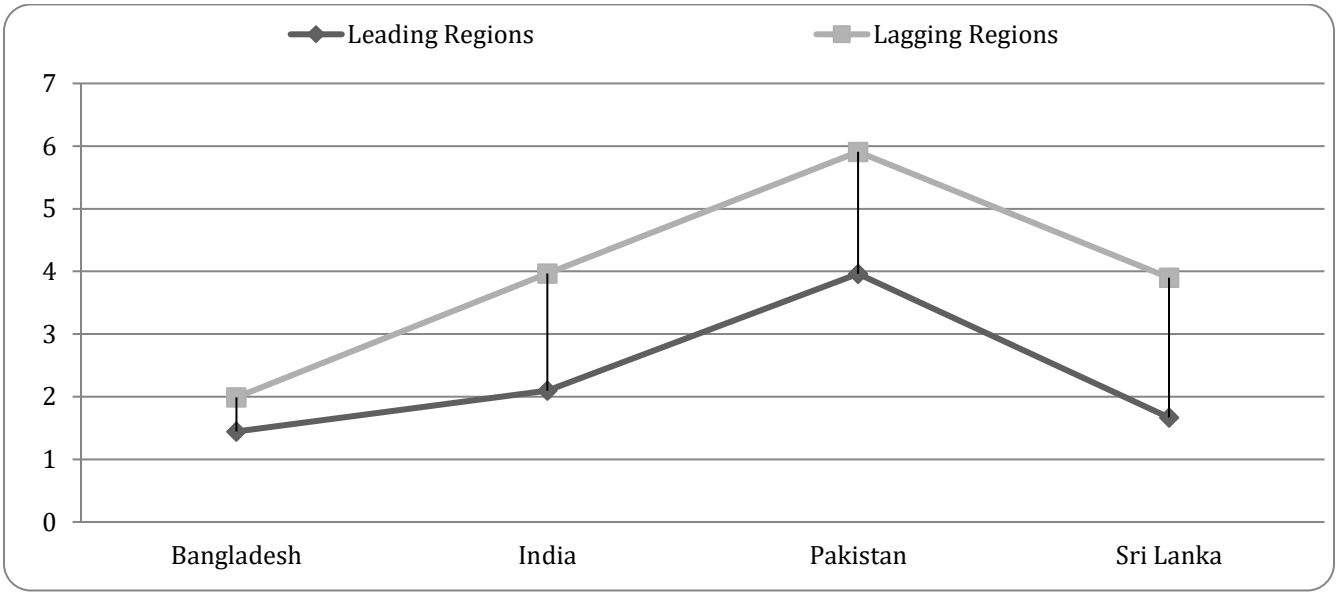

Figure 3. Terrorist Incidence in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka (per Million Populations).
Source: Author's analysis, data collected from South Asia, MIPT, 2005-2014.

From the *figure 3* given above it is clear that terrorist incidence in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka is respectively 0.545%, 1.87%, 1.947% and 2.232% higher in the lagging region in compare to the leading region. This is a very large difference and remains statistically significant even after controlling for changes which impacted the whole region in any given year. Under this statement it is important to find out the root causes of such variation in armed conflict and terrorist incidence in South Asia. Based on these statistical findings the

study has reviewed several scholarly literatures on incidence of civil war and found that poor countries are at greater risk of internal armed conflict and terrorist incidence (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004; Fearon & Laitin, 2003). The latter study has also found that geographical conditions which favor insurgency, such as the presence of forest cover, is significantly associated with the incidence of terrorism. Do and Iyer (2007) find similar results in an analysis of conflict intensity across the districts of Nepal. Social divisions are often cited as a driver of conflict. For instance, the separatist movement in Sri Lanka began with the demands of ethnic Tamils for greater autonomy. Similarly, the Maoist rebels in Nepal often claim to be fighting on behalf of marginalized sections of society, such as members of the lower castes. The northeastern states of India, which are the scene of long-running separatist movements, are also socially and ethnically different from the majority of the states in India. Considering the current status of terrorist incidence and fatalities the next section of the article has discussed the research findings.

FINDINGS

The term terrorism has found as elusive in this study. In fact there is no agreed definition of terrorism at present. In the South Asian context the concept of terrorism has also found as linked with the interests of political parties and groups. The study has attempted to find the root factors of terrorism and reached to an outcome that, however, there is no single particular factor/reason as main cause of armed conflict and terrorism in South Asia; the factors suggested by Gupta are more or less responsible for the variation of conflict intensity between the lagging and region in South Asia. In this case one can best cite the work of Lakshmi Iyer. He examines some correlations between the incidence of conflict and the geographic, economic and societal characteristics of South Asia and has reached to a conclusion that economic backwardness or poverty, matters. The poorer districts have a significantly greater incidence of armed conflict and terrorism in South Asian states (Iyer, 2009).

CONCLUSION

This study has focused on the nature and intensity of armed conflict and terrorism in South Asian states and has found a clear variation of the intensity of terrorist incidence in the leading and lagging region of South Asia. The study has agreed with the statement of Gupta that poverty is significant in explaining the spatial variation of the intensity of armed conflict and terrorism of this region. There is the prevalence of a sharp increasing trend of terrorist incidence and fatalities in the South Asian states. Based on this finding it is argued that however the national governments of this region are trying to combat terrorism by reorganizing their police force and militia, such initiatives are not sufficient as well as effective enough to counter terrorism. Rather the study has suggested to take collective initiatives by all the states of this region against terrorism. Such collective initiatives may be taken under a co-operative security umbrella. This is because whatever the nature is internal or external, armed conflict and terrorism is not a threat for any single state. Moreover it is also not possible to stop armed conflict and terrorist activities by single efforts.

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[i] Regions have been defined as "lagging" or "leading" based on per capita income levels in 2004. According to this criterion, the lagging regions are as follows: the states of Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Orissa, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and West Bengal in India; the North West Frontier Provinces, Balochistan and FATA in Pakistan; all regions except Dhaka in Bangladesh; all provinces except the Western Province in Sri Lanka, and the entire countries of Afghanistan and Nepal.

[ii] This database does not cover the other South Asian countries. Dr. H.A Rizvi, Pakistan-India Relations: Post Mumbai Deadblock & The Way Forward, (Islamabad: PILDAT, 2010), 10.

[iii] Such groups include the People's Liberation Army (PLA), the People's Revolution party of Kangleipak (PREPAK) and the Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP).

[iv] See for details, http://satp.org/satporgtp/sair/Archives/6_10.htm, accessed January 7, 2014.

[v] The Ministry of Home Affairs says, "The hand of Pakistan based terrorist organizations, viz. LeT and JeM and, increasingly, of the Bangladesh based HuJ AI, who, in turn, are known to have close links with Pakistan ISI has been observed in most of these cases." (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2008): 23.