

Intra-State Armed Conflicts in South Asia

Impact on Regional Security

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DEFINING ARMED CONFLICT

The paper is narrowly focused only on the armed intra state conflicts in South Asia.

While 'intra state conflicts' is a vast subject including ethnic, environmental, economic and social aspects, this paper take into account only those conflicts that have witnessed armed struggle between two or more groups.

Second, the paper does not make any distinction on the basis of intensity of conflict. An *armed conflict* is defined as "a contested incompatibility which concerns government 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."¹ A *major armed conflict* is defined as "a contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory over which the use of armed force between the military forces of two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, has resulted in at least 1000 battle related deaths in any single year."² An earlier definition of a *major armed conflict* stated it as "prolonged use of armed force between the military forces of two or more governments, or one of one government and at least one organized armed group, incurring the battle related deaths of at least 1000 people during the entire conflict and in which the incompatibility concerns government and/or territory."³ For the purpose of this paper, intra state armed conflict is defined as an armed conflict between two groups, of which one is the state, in which violence has been used by either or both parties resulting in human and material casualties.

¹ Uppsala University's Conflict Database has been following this definition. See Peter Wallensteen and Margareta Sollenberg, 'Armed Conflict 1989–2000', *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol.38, No.5, pp. 629–644. Also see <http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/UCDP/>

² See Mikael Eriksson, Margareta Sollenberg and Peter Wallensteen, "Definitions, sources and methods of conflict data," Appendix 2 B in *SIPRI Yearbook 2003* (Oxford University Press, 2003), p.122.

³ See Margareta Sollenberg, Peter Walensteen and Andres Jato, "Major Armed Conflicts," *SIPRI Yearbook 1999* (Oxford University Press, 1999), p.15.

Third, the paper focuses primarily on ongoing armed intra state conflicts. In South Asia, some of the armed conflicts have come to an end either, while some lie dormant and others remain active. Analysis is limited to data on armed conflicts since 1991.

INTRA STATE ARMED CONFLICTS IN SOUTH ASIA: SALIENT FEATURES

An analysis of armed intra state conflicts in South Asia would reveal the following:

First, armed conflicts in South Asia have been primarily intra-state rather than inter state since the 1950s. Since the late 1980s, South Asia has been witnessing a sudden growth in the intra state conflicts. When compared to intra state conflicts, inter state conflicts in South Asia in the last two decades were negligible or absent. The only inter state armed conflict occurred between India and Pakistan during 1999. Besides 1999, there were two instances in which there were threats of an inter-state armed conflict, but due to various reasons, there were no open hostilities. Even at the global level, the armed conflicts were more at intra state levels rather than inter-state. For example, according to a study, between 1990 and 2002 there were 58 major armed conflicts in 46 different locations, in which all but three were internal.⁴ According to another study, published latest, between 1989 and 2003, there were 116 armed conflicts, in which 89 were intrastate, 20 internationalized intrastate and 7 interstate.⁵

Second, intrastate armed conflicts in South Asia are not monolithic in nature. They differ in their nature, causes of birth, intensity etc. For example the intrastate armed conflicts in Pakistan are related to terrorism, jihad and sectarianism; secessionism in Sri Lanka; left wing, terrorism, communalism and secessionism in India; and left wing in Nepal. Even Bangladesh and Bhutan also have witnessed armed intra state conflicts in the recent past. Maldives has been the only country in South Asia that has remained free from any intrastate armed conflict.

Third, the intrastate armed conflicts in South Asia do not have the same intensity in terms of armed violence since 1991. In most cases, the intensity waxed and waned

⁴ Mikale Eriksson, Margareta Sollenberg and Peter Wallenstein, "Patterns of major armed conflicts, 1990-2002," Appendix 2A in *SIPRI Yearbook 2003* (Oxford University Press, 2003), p.109.

⁵ See Mikael Eriksson and Peter Walenstein, "Armed Conflict, 1989-2003," *Journal of Peace Research*, vol.41, no.5, September 2004, p.626. The study considers those intrastate conflicts with foreign interventions as 'internationalized intrastate conflicts'.

throughout the period. However in certain cases, armed hostility continued without any major respite.

INTRA STATE ARMED CONFLICTS IN SOUTH ASIA: CRITICAL QUESTIONS

I. Why intrastate conflicts are more and protracted in South Asia than interstate?

There have been more intrastate conflicts than interstate conflicts at the global level, as has been seen earlier. The same trend was also reflected in South Asia. While there are many reasons for this trend, the following are crucial.

Problems of Nation Building

First, invariably every state in South Asia is still in the process of nation building. The process of nation building is complex and is burdened with the presence of numerous actors with different demands and grievances – real and imagined. The state invariably in the whole of South Asia, unfortunately considered themselves as successors of the British India, perceived these demands as threats to its legitimacy and instead of addressing them attempted state building rather than nation building. Instead of co-opting the various groups into its fold in the nation building process, the state alienated them through confrontation. As William Zartman has phrased it eloquently that the internal conflicts emerges due to the “inability or unwillingness of the government to handle grievances to the satisfaction of the aggrieved; that is they begin with the breakdown of normal politics.”⁶

Multiple Actors with Diverse Objectives

Second, unlike in interstate conflicts, in most cases, there are more than two actors in any intrastate conflict. An agreement between two state actors engaged in an interstate conflict is likely to be resolved sooner, where the stakes are high. In an intrastate conflict, besides the state, there are other actors which are both political and militant. In the case of India, even the state is reflected in two entities – the federating unit and the federation. The case of Jammu and Kashmir is a classic example of this. The

⁶ William I Zartman, ed., *Elusive Peace: Negotiating an end to Civil Wars* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution, 1995), p.5.

'state' is represented by the Union government and the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The governments in New Delhi and Srinagar at times had different objectives. The difference between these two has been reflected in so many cases. For example, in 2000, the State legislative assembly passed a resolution in June 2000 demanding more autonomy to the state.⁷ Though Atal Vajpayee, the then Prime Minister of India commented that the resolution was within the framework of the Indian Constitution,⁸ it was rejected in the subsequent Cabinet meeting.⁹

Besides the differences between the state actors, non state actors are divided. In the case of Jammu and Kashmir, besides the main stream political parties, there are other actors including the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) and the militant groups. The Hurriyat is vertically divided into two factions after the split in 2003.¹⁰ The two factions are now being led by Syed Ali Geelani and Moulvi Omar Farooq. The militant groups are also equally divided and there are three main groups – Lashkar-e-Toiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad and the Hizbul Mujahideen.¹¹

Problems of De-Weaponizing and De-Militarizing

Third, the problems of the state and society in de-weaponizing and de-militarizing create an uncertainty factor about the post conflict situation and opportunities amongst the non state actors. In an interstate armed conflict, the actors get back to their pre-conflict situation without disbanding and disarming, with their personal and economic security stable and safe. Unfortunately, in an intrastate conflict where there

⁷ For the major recommendations of the State Autonomy Committee Report and its explanations, see, "From the State Autonomy Committee Report," *Frontline*, 08-21 July, 2000.

⁸ "Autonomy resolution within Constitution: PM," *The Hindu*, 01 July 2000.

⁹ For the text of Cabinet decision on J&K autonomy resolution see *The Hindu*, 05 July 2000.

¹⁰ See the following articles on why the Hurriyat split. Anirudh Suri, "Recent Developments in the Hurriyat – I," Article no. 1134,

http://www.ipcs.org/Kashmir_articles2.jsp?action=showView&kValue=1143&issue=1012&status=article&mod=a, 13 September 2003; Anirudh Suri, "Recent Developments in the Hurriyat – II," Article no. 1135,

http://www.ipcs.org/Kashmir_articles2.jsp?action=showView&kValue=1144&issue=1012&status=article&mod=a, 13 September 2003; Anirudh Suri, "Recent Developments in the Hurriyat – III," Article no. 1136,

http://www.ipcs.org/Kashmir_articles2.jsp?action=showView&kValue=1145&issue=1012&status=article&mod=a, 13 September 2003; and Amin Masoodi, "Is Hurriyat a Political Force," Article no. 1088, http://www.ipcs.org/Kashmir_articles2.jsp?action=showView&kValue=1097&issue=1012&status=article&mod=a; 11 August 2003.

¹¹ For the differences amongst various militant groups fighting in Jammu and Kashmir see Suba Chandran, "Kashmir: Issues and Actors," in PR Chari and Suba Chandran ed., *Kashmir: The Road Ahead* (New Delhi: IPCS, 2001), p.9.

are non state actors involved, the problems of integrating them with the main stream starts with an element of disarming and disbanding, leading to create a fear of insecurity among them.

In South Asia, there are numerous cases in which an initial agreement with a non state actor failed to materialize, due to this factor. One of the reasons for the government of Pakistan failing to reach an agreement with the militants in South Waziristan has been over disarming and disbanding. Even in Sri Lanka, disarming was one of the main reasons for the LTTE resume fighting after the July 1987 agreement between India and Pakistan.¹²

Besides, there are severe problems in dealing with the surrendered militants and this issues is acute in Assam and Jammu and Kashmir. In Assam, a section of surrendered cadres of the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) are called "Surrendered ULFA (SULFA)." There are nearly 7000 SULFA members in Assam, and the government is yet to come out with a comprehensive package to deal with them.¹³

The SULFA "control the coal and transport syndicates, have indulged in large-scale extortion and intimidation, and usurped government tenders. Most of them have not cared to refund their bank loans... It is alleged that the SULFA cadres played an important part in the former Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) government's 'secret killings' policy to eliminate the relatives of the ULFA leadership; but they have proved to be a real menace now in the State."¹⁴ Even amongst the state security forces, there are differences over whether the SULFA needs to be completely disarmed and disbanded.¹⁵

In Jammu and Kashmir, the surrendered militants known as *Ikhwans*, are today seen as a liability. According to a news report, "local residents view them (the Ikhwans)

¹² See SD Muni, *Pangs of Proximity: India and Sri Lanka's Ethnic Crisis*, (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1993) p.132.

¹³ "Special package for SULFA men soon: Gogoi," *The Assam Tribune*, 7 June 2004.

¹⁴ Bibhu Prasad Routray, "Surrendered Militants in India's Northeast: Outlived Utilities?," http://www.ipcs.org/North_east_articles2.jsp?action=showView&kValue=273&status=article&mod=a; For a critical analysis of the surrender policy in Assam and their success see Ajai Sahni and Bibhu Prasad Routray, "SULFA: Terror by Another Name," *Faultlines*, Volume 9, pp.1-38.

¹⁵ Nitin Gogoi, "Assam police divided over disarming SULFA," 8 January 2001, <http://in.rediff.com/news/2001/jan/08assam.htm>

with deep suspicion – some even with contempt – for switching sides. Mainstream parties sneer at their recent attempts into electoral politics. Even the Army admits their limited use.”¹⁶ There were also reports accusing the Ikhwans aiding in finding new infiltration routes even after being appointed as the Special Police Officers within J&K police.¹⁷

There was no standard policy towards Ikhwans in Kashmir. There are around 3000 Ikhwans, being paid by the different security forces including the Army, BSF and J&K Police. The Army used to pay a monthly salary of Rs 3000 along with Rs 5 lakh insurance, while the J&K police used to pay Rs. 1500 per month.¹⁸ There was an attempt in December 2003 to convert these Ikhwans into a full-fledged Territorial Army battalion.¹⁹ Most of the Ikhwans were incorporated into the J&K’s Special Operations Group (SOG), which was disbanded after Mufti Sayeed became the Chief Minister of the state. On the other hand Mufti has also been advocating for a rehabilitation package for the surrendered militants, which would be entirely funded by the Union government.²⁰

II. Why intrastate conflicts waxes and wanes in certain regions and why they remain constant in the other?

Invariably in most protracted armed conflicts, the intensity has never remained constant. Many factors contribute to the level of intensity and its sustenance. First is the level of popular support for the armed conflict in the region.

Impact of Popular Support

The popular support to an armed conflict could be overt and/or covert and also voluntary and/or forced. If the support to conflict is overt and voluntary, then the situation reaches dangerous proportions. The initial phases of militancy in Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir and Sri Lanka witnessed such overt and voluntary support; as a

¹⁶ Kanwar Sandhu, “Former militants and their law of diminishing returns,” *The Indian Express*, 9 December 1999.

¹⁷ “6 SPOs held for searching new infiltration routes,” *Daily Excelsior*, 01 January 2001.

¹⁸ Kanwar Sandhu, “Former militants and their law of diminishing returns,” *The Indian Express*, 9 December 1999.

¹⁹ The decision was pending in the Cabinet Committee and Security in December 2003 and there have been no further reports on the outcome. See Saikat Datta, “Army to explore new territory: Surrendered militants,” *The Indian Express*, 13 December 2003.

²⁰ “Many militants ready to discard gun: Mufti,” *Daily Excelsior*, 11 February 2004.

result the armed conflict was at its peak, with the state having fewer clues to bring the situation back to normalcy. Invariably in all such cases in South Asia, this overt and voluntary support for the initial phase of militancy declined to covert and forced support for the armed movement.

Why does the initial overt and voluntary support decline into covert and involuntary? Primary reasons are as follows: People and those who are leading the armed conflict, after a period of time realize the futility of such action against the state which is well armed and also better equipped – economically and politically to deal with the situation. Also the initial romance of fighting the state dissipates once it is realized that the state is not weak enough to be demolished. The initial phases of militancy in J&K and Sri Lanka witnessed this phenomenon. The JKLF led by Yasin Malik and Javid Mir were the first one to realize the futility of an armed conflict with the Indian state, hence came over ground and started fighting politically. In Sri Lanka, many of the non-LTTE militant groups came over ground by the second half of the 1980s.

Second, the state response to the armed conflict in economic, political and military terms also has an impact in reducing the overt and voluntary popular support to the armed conflict in its initial phase. The state, besides responding militarily also provides adequate economic and political space for the grievance to be met. The intelligence and counter militancy efforts become more focused, making it difficult for the armed groups to operate freely. Coupled with this modicum success on the military front, the state provides adequate space to the political groups and even militant groups to negotiate. The state, in certain cases also rejuvenates its machinery, thus improving the standard of governance. When there is an improvement in the delivery mechanisms of the state in terms of governance, many of the local grievance are met; hence the local support for an armed conflict declines.

Third, the intra conflict amongst the various armed group in an armed conflict ultimately hits the local people. Both in J&K and Sri Lanka, the rivalries between the various armed groups had its own collateral damage, making the people to realize that the militant groups are an immediate threat to their peace and security.

Fourth, over a period of time, most of the armed groups degenerate into nothing more than criminal groups with their own vested interests. The armed conflict is used to as means to further their ends and for any popular cause. When the militant groups resort to kidnapping and extortion from the local population, they get totally alienated from the people for who they were allegedly fighting. In northeast there were numerous cases of militant groups engaging in extortions.²¹

State's Response

Besides popular support, the response of the state is crucial in determining the longevity of an armed conflict and its intensity. In most cases, the beginning of an armed conflict and the popular support towards it appears from nowhere. The state after the initial shock wakes up to the reality and pursues a series of economic, political and military measures. This economic, political and military response has a crucial role to play in terms of sustenance of the armed conflict. If the state fails to use these three components in the right combination, then its efforts only increase the gap between it and the people, thereby increasing or sustaining the armed conflict. On the other hand, if the state succeeds in providing adequate space to the people while dealing successfully with the armed groups, the intensity of conflict automatically would come down.

The State in many cases extended an invitation to negotiate with the armed groups and to an extent has also succeeded in keeping them engaged in select regions in South Asia. This has a direct impact in the intensity of the armed conflict, even if one principle group is engaged in the dialogue. In the recent years the government of India was willing to engage, so were the armed groups. In 2004, the Union government has been engaged in a dialogue with the NSCN (IM)²²; The All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF) in Tripura announced its willingness to negotiate with the government of India in May 2004²³; Two factions of the National Liberation Front of Twipra (NLFT) decided to engage in talks in April and one led by Mantu Koloj and also lay down its

²¹ See "ULFA, NDFB extortion unabated in State," *The Assam Tribune*, 1 May 2004

²² See the following for the Union government's dialogue with the NSCN-IM: "NSCN (IM) leaders to come India for talks," *The North East Tribune*, 12 February 2004; Wasbir Hussain, *Naga Peace Talks: Can Delhi Convert The Truce Into A Deal?*, IPCS Issue Brief No. 25, August 2004; "NSCN (IM) leaders likely to visit India in Feb," *The North East Tribune*, 17 January 2004;

²³ "Tripura militants to hold talks with New Delhi," *Hindustan Times*, 1 May 2004

arms in May 2004²⁴; and the NDFB recently in October 2004 has declared a ceasefire announcing its willingness to initiate a dialogue.²⁵ In Jammu and Kashmir, in the recent years, in July 2000, the government of India initiated a negotiation with the Hizbul Mujahideen.²⁶ Even the security forces, as a part of building their public relations with the society have initiated welfare programmes. For example, the Indian Army carryout welfare measures in both J&K and the Northeast, which have a positive impact.²⁷ In J&K, the Indian Army has been carrying out a successful programme called *Operation Sadhbhavana*.

In Nepal, the government engaged the Maoists in a dialogue on many occasions, but failed to convert the ceasefire into a permanent peace. Since 2001, there were many dialogues between the Maoists and the government. In July 2001, the Maoists declared ceasefire, followed by a three rounds of negotiations during August-November.²⁸ Next round of negotiations took place during February to August 2003, after the government and Maoists declared a cease fire in January 2003.²⁹ In South Waziristan in Pakistan, the government initiated a series of negotiations with the tribal militants in 2004.

The success and failure of these negotiations have a crucial impact on the armed conflict. Whenever they have failed, as in the cases of Nepal, Sri Lanka, J&K, and

²⁴ See "NLFT factions declare ceasefire for talks," *The Assam Tribune*, 17 April 2004; "NLFT faction to lay down arms on May 6?," *The North East Tribune*, 5 May 2004; "Over 60 NLFT ultras to lay down arms today," *The Assam Tribune*, 6 May 2004; "72 NLFT bids farewell to arms," *The North East Tribune*, 7 May 2004.

²⁵ See "NDFB declares unilateral ceasefire," *The Assam Tribune*, 9 October 2004; "NESO, AASU hail NDFB truce offer; urge ULFA to follow suit," *The Sentinel*, 12 October 2004; "Centre asks NDFB to make formal offer," *The Assam Tribune*, 14 October 2004; and "NDFB formally appeals for ceasefire," *The Assam Tribune*, 15 October 2004

²⁶ See "Centre invites J&K militants for talks," *The Hindu*, 29 July 2000; "PM hails ceasefire offer," *The Hindu*, 26 July 2000; "Security forces told not to jeopardize ceasefire," *The Hindu*, 27 July 2000; "Positive development: Hizbul," *The Hindu*, 30 July 2000

²⁷ See Nishit Dholabhai, "Army project heals old scars," *The Telegraph*, 7 June 2004;

²⁸ See "Government, rebels declare cease-fire," *The Kathmandu Post*, 24 July 2001; "Priority to Dialogue: Maoists respond to Deuba's offer, halt offensive acts," *The Rising Nepal*, 24 July 2001; "Maoists Call Off Violent Tactics: Hopes Rise For Resolving Problem," *The Rising Nepal*, 27 July 2001; Prem N. Kakkar, "Government-Maoists' Talks: A Good Beginning," *The Rising Nepal*, 31 August 2001; "Maoists to present agenda in next round of talks," *The Rising Nepal*, 01 November 2001; "Govt-Maoist Talks Rekindle Peace Hope," *The Rising Nepal*, 01 November 2001; J Pande & Kamal Panthi, "Govt-Maoists talks get underway in Bardia," *The Kathmandu Post*, 14 September 2001;

²⁹ See "Govt, Maoists announce cease-fire," *The Kathmandu Post*, 30 January 2003; "Pun holds informal talks with Maoist team," *The Kathmandu Post*, 05 February 2003; "Govt officially invites Maoists for talks," *The Kathmandu Post*, 07 February 2003; Yuvraj Acharya, "Maoists commit to nationalism and peace: Sign 22-point code of conduct for peace talks," *The Kathmandu Post*, 14 March 2003

South Waziristan, the armed conflict have resumed with an added intensity. Where there have been relative success, there is adequate pressure created by the civil society, to maintain the cease fire to take it to the logical conclusion. Besides any success in one set of negotiation influences the other armed groups in the region to enter into negotiations. Recent successes in select armed conflicts India's northeast in terms of engaging the armed group into a negotiation to an extent is the outcome of ongoing dialogue between the government and the NSCN-IM.

Support from Diaspora

The support from diaspora is another crucial element in sustaining the armed conflict in a region. The diaspora support is crucial especially in terms of economic and political sustenance of an armed conflict. The Sri Lankan diaspora in case of Tamil Eelam movement and the present support to the LTTE and the Punjabi diaspora during Khalistan movement played a significant role in the armed conflict.

III. Is there a change in the nature of intra state conflicts in South Asia?

Intra state armed conflicts in general were primarily based on sub-nationalistic identity. Outside the leading sub national armed conflicts, South Asia also witness naxalite movements, whose intensity of the armed nature also waxed and waned over a period of time. The armed conflicts to a large extent have remained secular.

There seems to be a slow but steady change in terms certain conflicts becoming sectarian and communal or sectarian and communal conflicts becoming the dominant armed conflict in select regions. In Pakistan, the armed conflicts have assumed sectarian nature, as could be seen from the last couple of years. In Kashmir, there is a clear trend in which the struggle for an independent Kashmir is becoming a jihad and the struggle for Islam. There have been numerous reports linking religion and militancy in the recent years in India's northeast.

Recent years witness many reports on the growth of Islamic militancy in India's northeast. The case of October 2 attack in Dimapur is worth mentioning in which not only the state, but even non state actors have been claiming the link between religion and militancy. Two bombs exploded simultaneously in Dimapur - in the railway

station and a nearby market, killing more than 25 people.³⁰ An army officer was quoted telling that "We had positive information about a group of 20 fundamentalist organisation-trained Bangladeshi jihadis sneaking into Nagaland through the Karimganj border. They had an agenda of carrying out large scale violence in the Northeast, but nobody probably realised that it would be such a devastating attack in Dimapur."³¹ The Khaplang faction of the NSCN in Nagaland blamed the al Qaeda for the bomb blasts in October 2004.³² Earlier an unknown outfit called "Al Jihad-e-Islam" claimed the responsibility for this blast.³³ Select groups in India's northeast also are believed to have increased their contacts with the religious militant groups. For example, there are numerous reports linking the ULFA with fundamentalist organizations.³⁴

The change is clearly visible in Jammu and Kashmir, where the armed conflict is slowly but steadily being over taken by the jihadi forces from militant groups. There were a series of attacks on minority community in the last few years. Most of these attacks are not isolated, but well organized, with an objective to terrorize the minority community.

Attack on Minority Community in J&K since 1998

District	No of Attacks	Persons killed in each attack	Total
Udhampur	5	9,4,5,7,8,3	36
Doda	17	26,15,20,29,13,4,5,6,5,5,15	141
Rajori	10	11,9,3,12,10,5,4	54
Poonch	4	9,5,2,6	22
Anantnag	4	15,7,13,2	37
Pahalgam	3	23,5,8	36
Jammu	4	13,30,28,13	84
Pulawama	1	24	24
Anantnag	4	15,7,13,2	37

Source: Collected from various news paper sources

In Pakistan the armed conflict that one is witnessing now in South Waziristan, besides the organized attacks in all parts of the country, have jihadi and sectarian undertones.

³⁰ "Terror bursts, blood gushes," *The Telegraph*, 3 October 2004

³¹ "Army harps on jihadi hand," *The Telegraph*, 5 October 2004

³² "NSCN-K sees Al Qaeda footprints in Dimapur blasts," *The Assam Tribune*, 21 October 2004

³³ "Muslim outfit behind Dimapur blasts," E-Pao.net, 16 October 2004.

³⁴ "Police sees link between ULFA and Islamic fundamentalist groups," *The North East Tribune*, 20 September 2004.

Sectarian Killings in Pakistan

Month/Year	Persons Killed
June 2003	13
July 2003	54
March 2004	47
May 2004	15 & 18

IV. Are the intra state armed conflicts becoming more violent?

The intra state armed conflicts have always been violent. However a crucial question need to be asked is are the intrastate conflicts becoming more violent when compared to the previous decade? An analysis of the armed conflicts in the recent years proves to be the case, in select regions including Pakistan, J&K and India's northeast.

While there were always casualties on a regular scale, there is a trend in recent years in which there have been colossal attacks involving massive casualties. Also some of these attacks are spectacular, though minor in terms of human casualties, but major in terms of the target chosen.

Why are the intra state conflicts becoming more violent and spectacular? The following could perhaps could be the reasons. One, the state has been successful in its counter militancy operations; hence the armed groups find it difficult to conduct their day to day operation. As a result, they plan meticulously to make their operations successful, so as to make their presence felt. Two, due to continuous splits and also due to mushrooming of new armed groups, there are many groups in the same region, at times fighting for the same cause. In order to make them popular or seen the most active group, they need to indulge in such spectacular activities. The fact that after every major attack, a particular group owns the attack could be taken as a proof to substantiate this thesis. Three, perhaps the violence threshold has increased among the local population, thanks to the prolonged nature of an armed conflict in a region. People become indifferent to killings and view them as a routine affair; hence one needs spectacular attacks to draw the popular attention.

Some of the recent attacks would highlight the changing nature of armed conflict in terms of increased intensity and the target chosen.

Major Attacks since 2001

April 2001	On 02 April, 300 Maoists attacked police post in Rukum district killing 31 policemen and abducting more than twenty. ³⁵
July 2001	On 07 July 2001, the Maoists killed 41 policemen in the remote districts of Nuwakot, Lamjung and Gulmi ³⁶
November 2001	On 24 November 2001, 39 were killed including soldiers and policemen. ³⁷
February 2002	On 17 February 2001, the Maoists killed 138, mostly from the security forces. ³⁸
September 2002	On 8 September 2002, the Maoists killed 65, mostly from the police forces. ³⁹
June 2003	On 8 June 2003, 13 shite police trainees were massacred in Quetta. ⁴⁰
July 2003	On 4 July 2003, 44 shites were killed in a sectarian attack in Quetta. ⁴¹
December 2003	On 14 December 2003, a suicide attack was carried against Gen Musharraf. ⁴²
July 2004	On 30 July 2004, a suicide attack was carried out against Shuakat Aziz, who luckily survived. The attack killed seven others in Fateh Jang. ⁴³

³⁵ "Rebel hits kill 35 policemen, Two dozen more abducted," *The Kathmandu Post*, 3 April 2004.

³⁶ "Maoists kill 41 policemen in Lamjung, Nuwakot and Gulmi: Rebels loose five in fierce gun battles," *The Kathmandu Post*, 7 July 2001

³⁷ "A bloody end to the cease-fire: At least 39 killed in Maoists hit in Dang, Syangja," *The Kathmandu Post*, 25 November 2001

³⁸ "Govt forces suffer heavy losses in Achham: At least 138 dead, Mangalsen torched, Bank looted," *The Kathmandu Post*, 18 February 2002

³⁹ "Maoists kill 65 in Arghakhanchi: Toll could soar, as dozens reported missing," *The Kathmandu Post*, 09 September 2002

⁴⁰ "11 police recruits gunned down in Quetta," *Dawn*, 9 June 2003.

⁴¹ "Attack on Quetta imambargah leaves 44 dead: Suicide bombing suspected; curfew clamped after rioting," *Dawn*, 5 July 2003.

⁴² "Musharraf's convoy escapes bomb blast," *Dawn*, 15 December 2003.

⁴³ "Seven killed in suicide bomb attack: Shaukat survives assassination bid," *The News*, 31 July 2004

Suicide terrorism, though have been witnessed in Sri Lanka since the late 1980s,⁴⁴ it has attained alarming proportions over the last few years in other parts of South Asia, especially in Pakistan and Jammu and Kashmir. The fidayeen attacks in Jammu and Kashmir, though cannot be strictly defined as suicide attacks, the fact is such attacks have increased the intensity of the armed conflict, affecting the morale of the security forces and creating a sense of helplessness in the society.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ For suicide attacks in Sri Lanka, see R Ramasubramanian and Beryl Anand, "Suicide bombings in Sri Lanka: A Chronology (1987-2003)," *IPOST*, September 2004, Vol.1, No.2, pp.7-14, available at <http://www.ipcs.org/02-IPOST-Sep04.pdf>; Also see R Ramasubramanian, *Suicide Terrorism in Sri Lanka*, IPCS Research Paper 5 (New Delhi: Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, August 2004) available at <http://www.ipcs.org/IRP05.pdf>

⁴⁵ For suicide and suicidal attacks in Jammu and Kashmir see B Rajeshwari and R Radhakrishnan, "Suicide and Suicidal Attacks in Jammu and Kashmir: A Chronology," *IPOST*, October 2004, Vol.1, No.3, pp.4-9, available at <http://www.ipcs.org/03-IPOST-Oct04.pdf>