



The Role Of Non-State Actors In India-Pakistan Rivalry And Their Effect On Regional Cooperation"

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Abstract

The India-Pakistan rivalry has seen important developments because of non-state actors such as militant organizations and insurgent groups that have intensified hostilities while obstructing regional partnership initiatives. State institutions and actors who receive support from governments conduct asymmetric warfare and proxy conflicts which makes peacebuilding and diplomatic initiatives increasingly difficult to implement. This research evaluates both historical and present-day NSAs who influence the rivalry while studying their regional security consequences and the strategic NPAs deployment by India and Pakistan. This analysis presents policy proposals to minimize NSA threats that incorporate intelligence exchanges and diplomatic dialogue together with the expansion of SAARC and BIMSTEC institutions. The reduction of NSA influence remains fundamental to ensure long-term stability between nations that aim to cooperate in South Asia.

The concepts include Non-state actors together with India-Pakistan rivalry as well as asymmetric warfare through proxy conflicts with regional security and SAARC and BIMSTEC platforms and counterterrorism strategies.

Keywords: Non-state actors, India-Pakistan rivalry, asymmetric warfare, proxy conflicts, regional security, SAARC, BIMSTEC, counterterrorism.

INTRODUCTION

Modern international relations show the India-Pakistan rivalry as their most enduring and complex conflict because of historical grievances and territorial disputes and contradictory national identities. India and Pakistan split apart from each other in 1947 which started multiple conflicts and long-running diplomatic confrontations where Kashmir stayed as their basic disagreement. Most of India-Pakistan hostility has involved conventional warfare yet non-state actors have become key forces that shape their ongoing rivalry. Outside state structures NSAs such as militants and insurgent groups and transnational terrorist networks function while being supported in different amounts by governments or intelligence agencies and by ideological factions. These

actors function in conflict areas through proxy engagement to increase asymmetric warfare and border terrorism activities and execute subversive operations.

The national security advisors of India and Pakistan hold fundamental responsibility for influencing security conditions especially in Jammu and Kashmir territory. High-profile attacks conducted by Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed groups have worsened regional tensions making it harder for both governments to establish cooperation at a diplomatic level. Internal unrest grows more worrisome because of insurgent operations in the regions of Balochistan and Punjab. The analysis of NSA activity in this rivalry stands vital because their military-run

activities intensify conflicts while limiting regional cooperation between countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The influence of NSAs reaches further than direct violence because it disturbs economic stability while destroying political trust and delaying peace negotiations.

Understanding NSAs within the India-Pakistan rivalry is crucial for building effective conflict resolution mechanisms because of warfare transformation and more prevalent unconventional strategies. The systematic analysis of NSAs within this rivalry provides crucial knowledge to handle security dangers while improving diplomatic processes and sustaining lasting regional peace. This study explores NSAs' impact on conflict enhancement by analyzing historical data and state policies along with international intervention methods to identify elements for cooperation in times of disruptive military activities.

Literature Review

Non-State Actors in the India-Pakistan Rivalry

The tension between India and Pakistan has significantly intensified because non-state actors (NSAs) launch cross-border terror attacks and fight asymmetric warfare. The militant organizations LeT and JeM conducted crucial roles in the Kargil (1999) conflict as well as the Mumbai attacks (2008) based on Fair (2014) and Hussain (2019). These actors create diplomatic complications and maintain a lasting security dilemma between the two countries (Munive & Somer, 2015).

State Sponsorship and Proxy Warfare

Strategic needs serve as the basis for which India and Pakistan provide backing to NSAs. The Pakistani government supports military groups operating in Kashmir against Indian rule (Akca, 2010) at the same time India sponsors Balochistan regional separatists (Verma, 2024). Broadly used now as an asymmetric power control method the tool of proxy warfare creates exceptional obstacles for traditional peace negotiations (Small, 2015).

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RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How do non-state actors (NSAs) influence the trajectory of the India-Pakistan rivalry, and what role do they play in shaping regional security dynamics?

To what extent have state institutions in India and Pakistan supported or countered NSAs, and how has this affected diplomatic relations and conflict resolution efforts?

How do NSAs contribute to asymmetric warfare and proxy conflicts in South Asia, and what are the implications for regional stability and cooperation?

What strategies can India and Pakistan adopt to mitigate the threats posed by NSAs, and how can regional institutions like SAARC and BIMSTEC facilitate counterterrorism efforts?

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Becoming clear about non-state actor definitions alongside their classification methods serves as a foundation for comprehending their influence within the India-Pakistan confrontation and their effect across the region. The concept of non-state actors includes independent entities which wield influence on political, economic and social matters across and within state borders without state supervision. Global actors engaged in the rivalry between India and Pakistan include terrorist organizations as well as insurgent groups, political movements, transnational corporations and international NGOs and criminal networks. In conflict areas where non-state actors operate for military purposes armed non-state actors (ANSAs) hold significant importance because they both conduct organized violence and may gain control over territories along with residents (Munive & Somer, 2015).

Terrorist groups represent a vital NSA classification which performs politically-targeted violent attacks to create anxiety and force governmental targets and pursue ideological goals. The operators use asymmetric warfare methods together with clandestine networks to maintain their operations while crossing international borders. Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) along with Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) has emerged as prominent actors in the India-Pakistan conflict by defying state authority while making it difficult for both states to maintain stability in the region (Munive & Somer, 2015).

The insurgency movement belongs to Non-State Actor groups which undertakes armed resistance against established state authorities to remove them from power. Terrorist operations differ from insurgencies because groups who operate as insurgents try to gain political control over specific regions and maintain long-lasting battles with government forces. Such groups have the ability to influence interstate relations as well as regional security dynamics in South Asia through the Kashmir insurgency example.

The NSA framework encompasses political movements even though they do not need to be violent. Within the framework of NSA exist movements that unite people to shape political institutions and back reforms and spread ideological concepts. Some movements function according to legal standards but numerous other groups take subversive approaches that oppose state governance. Nationalist and religious movements in India and Pakistan combine security interests in ways that affect their home policies together with their diplomatic relations toward one another.

NSA involvement in the India-Pakistan rivalry makes traditional frameworks which center on state control inadequate for understanding their foreign relations. National Security Agencies use their authority to affect military activities but also create consequences in economic sectors along with diplomatic structures and ideological processes in both countries. Knowledge about NSA characteristics and operational mechanisms helps researchers determine their influence on regional peace efforts.

Theories of state-NAG (Non-State Armed Groups) cooperation

States and Non-State Armed Groups (NAGs) establish collaborative relationships because of their mutual tactical requirements and shared ideology and inter-state political competition. According to Akca (2010) states do not provide support to NAGs based on their weakness but both entities take part in deliberate selection mechanisms to establish beneficial partnerships.

States and rebel groups select each other because they need self-governance functions and resource access as well as tactical advantages against their opponents.

States utilize NAGs through Proxy Warfare Theory to attack opponents without resorting to open military conflict according to existing thought. The framework provides India-Pakistan rivalry with a way to challenge Indian control of Kashmir using Kashmiri militant groups that Pakistan allegedly supports while preserving claims of innocence. The previous support provided by India to Baloch separatists functioned as an attempt to pressure Pakistan in response to the destabilizing role Islamabad played in Kashmir.

States tend to support NAGs through the Ideational Affinity Theory since they show connections based on ethnic, religious, or ideological beliefs. Groups that need state backing prefer countries which share a natural affinity with their cause due to similar religious beliefs and this factor enabled the Pakistani support for Afghan Mujahideen during the past according to Akca (2010). In the setting of India and Pakistan Kashmiri insurgent ideologies find strong support because they align with local Islamist factions alongside the Pakistan military establishment.

Weaker states implement Non-State Armed Groups as per the Realist Balance of Power Theory to balance out their powerful rivals. Pakistan chose to support militant groups as an unconventional warfare strategy after detecting its inability to compete with Indian conventional military power. The support of NAGs by states for

achieving regional power occurs similarly to how Iran backs Hezbollah against Israel.

These theoretical frameworks present a combined explanation of the reasons behind state-NAG cooperation between India and Pakistan even in the presence of international counterterrorism interventions. Regional power dynamics combined with strategic interests and ideological motivations keep NAGs active within their rivalry which directly affects the prospects for regional cooperation. These theoretical models provide a more complete understanding of how non-state actors affect South Asian diplomatic relations between Pakistan and India while keeping security-related issues alive.

THE ROLE OF NSAs IN ASYMMETRIC WARFARE AND PROXY CONFLICTS

The challenge of state adversaries occurs through non-state actors (NSAs) who utilize unconventional battle strategies during asymmetric warfare and proxy conflicts. A conflict becomes asymmetric when one participant uses strategies based on material disadvantage

together with weak points found in their opponent's capabilities (Arasli, 2011). NSAs such as insurgent groups together with terrorist organizations and private militias utilize guerrilla tactics and cyber warfare and irregular combat methods to level the playing field against the superior conventional military strength of their adversaries (Mullins, 2024).

States involved in proxy conflicts maintain their geopolitical ambitions through NSAs without engaging in direct military action with a purpose to gain global security advantages. South Asian states including Pakistan and India have used NSAs through the prism of their rivalry as tools of their political strategies in the region. The Pakistani government stands accused of supplying both resources and ideas to Kashmir militant groups whereas Indian authorities supposedly support separatist activities in Balochistan (Mullins, 2024). States use these proxies to affect their foreign policy goals through deniable activities which make it harder for opponents to find appropriate international military or diplomatic responses (Arasli, 2011).

Target states face problems retaliating against NSA activities in proxy conflicts because these operations create unclear distinctions between state forces and non-state actors (Mullins, 2024). The India-Pakistan relationship demonstrates this phenomenon since militant groups LeT and JeM have conducted cross-border attacks that affect bilateral ties and regional stability (Mullins 2024). NSAs affect regional stability negatively through both their continuous contribution to violent cycles and their creation of distrust which blocks diplomatic progress toward international cooperation.

NSAs face major constraints because of their ability to adapt in asymmetric warfare operations. The dispersed operational structure of these groups creates obstacles for destroying their networks. Adopting improvised explosive devices alongside cyberattacks and urban warfare methods enables such groups to maintain their capabilities through limited resources (Arasli 2011). NSAs maintain operations through their effective control of political discourse and public opinions together with their utilization of local grievances for gaining legitimacy and support (Arasli, 2011).

Historical Overview of Non-State Actors in India-Pakistan Rivalry

NSAs have a documented historical presence in India's previous military engagements which include Partition events and Kashmir conflicts as well as Kargil wars and the Mumbai attacks and other similar incidents.

India-Pakistan relations experience both critical and disruptive effects from non-state actors because NSAs steer major conflicts towards new diplomatic paths. NSAs consisting of militant groups along with intelligence agencies and paramilitary forces utilized their influence to heighten tensions while transforming foreign policy narratives through events from British India Partition in 1947 up until Mumbai attacks of 2008.

Social groups along with irregular paramilitary organizations and extremist factions used violent means to perpetrate mass population displacement that worsened religious tensions in the Indian subcontinent while Partition took place in 1947. Cross-border fights during the subsequent decades were established by these militant groups that received inconsistent backing from political leaders (Secrecy and Democracy, p. 19).

NSAs exercised their role even more prominently during the Kashmir conflicts which occurred between 1947-48 and 1965 and 1999 (Kargil War). Pakistani tribal militias started the first Kashmir conflict through backing from Pakistan's military organizations. This infiltration force produced a decisive outcome which triggered the conflict and compelled both India and Pakistan to establish the Line of Control (LoC). Pakistani-trained guerrillas under Operation Gibraltar carried out infiltration into Indian-administered Kashmir during 1965 which started a full-scale war. NSAs from the Kargil conflict of 1999 conducted covert operations throughout the LoC through paramilitary units which received backings from Pakistan and multiple militant organizations. New evidence indicates Kargil intruders received planning help from Pakistani intelligence officials who support state links with non-state actors in military operations (Secrecy and Democracy, p. 1).

The 2008 Mumbai attacks functioned as one of the most prominent cases of NSA participation during Indo-Pakistani conflicts. Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) successfully launched the terrorist attacks which demonstrated how transnational terrorist groups could manipulate interstate diplomatic relations. Extremely detailed planning of the assault followed the trail of militant networks from Pakistan to state-affiliated actors responsible for the civilian death toll. Both sides failed to prevent the attack because of intelligence shortcomings which revealed deficiencies in counter-terrorism procedures (Secrecy and Democracy, p. 5).

State-sponsored vs. independent NSAs

NSAs can generally fall under two distinct groups: state-sponsored entities and independent entities. State-sponsored NSAs receive complete backing from governments through combined financial resources along with logistical support as well as strategic guidance intended for geopolitical advancement (Verma, 2024). Independent NSAs work independently from state control for either ideological purposes or economic or political reasons while receiving external assistance through funding or sanctuary (Paul 2018).

Through NSA programs states exercise their foreign policies by achieving strategic objectives with alternative warfare methods instead of traditional armed force deployments. The

India-Pakistan relation includes state-constructed Non-State Actors such as Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT). According to Verma (2024), JeM received establishment from Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) to create the group which carried out significant

attacks against India beginning with the 2001 Parliament attack and leading to the 2019 Pulwama bombing. Hafiz Saeed established LeT in 1987 with funding from Osama bin Laden under Pakistan Inter-Services Intelligence support for conducting numerous terrorist operations (Fair, 2014). Through the backing of state-sponsored entities Pakistan challenges Indian military strength and remains able to deny involvement (Small, 2015).

The goals of independent NSAs frequently overlap with state actors but these groups function independently of state supervision. These groups create themselves thanks to local conflicts and both ideological goals and financial factors (Paul, 2018). NSAs that operate outside state control continually establish allied relationships with states whereby states provide alternative forms of aid from secure locations through knowledge exchanges to political backing. The transition from independent group status to state-sponsored entity happens when organizations achieve national strategic alignment (Verma, 2024). Certain Kashmiri insurgent groups which formed to assert local autonomy gradually became embroiled within international conflicts because of acquiring external support (Fair, 2014).

The difference between states that support NSAs and those that do not strongly impacts the stability of regional security together with their diplomatic relationships. The support of state powers behind NSAs leads to increased tension between India and Pakistan which results in failed diplomatic initiatives followed by violent reprisals (Small, 2015). Siches NSAs generate unpredictable outcomes that lead to unstable conditions because they produce security problems which surpass national boundaries. The region requires effective counterterrorism partnerships and conflict resolution systems because these entities continue their activities to worsen stability in the area (Paul, 2018).

Evolution of NSAs and their shifting alliances

Non-state actors (NSAs) have been involved in conflict scenarios through major evolutionary changes because of world politics and states' evolving strategies. At their origins NSAs began operating as revolutionary insurgent groups which fought to attain nationalist goals and address domestic disputes. Their operational goals now increasingly support national-level geopolitical goals which makes non-state actors vulnerable to state control in asymmetric warfare according to Khattak et al. (2019). Insurgent organizations in the India-Pakistan rivalry display clear signs of change from independent militant groups to become tools for state-level strategic objectives.

NSA evolution stands out because these groups have proven their ability to adapt and realign with new partners. Multiple former independent insurgent groups now maintain supportive partnerships with state actors who provide them with monetary aid as well as logistical support in return for advancing state geopolitical goals. Research indicates militant organizations based in Kashmir receive tacit support from Pakistan intelligence agencies as these organizations work toward goals that fulfill Islamabad's strategic agenda.

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The dynamic relationships and adjustments made by NSAs create multiple obstacles which hinder regional peace and cooperative interaction. India and Pakistan experience escalating challenges in solving conflicts because changing actions by NSA officials create unpredictability.

The necessary steps to tackle these groups demand collective action between states through shared intelligence susceptibilities and counter-radicalization protocols and multilateral approaches to break down the sustaining networks.

State Support for Non-State Actors and Its Impact on Rivalry

Historically both India and Pakistan have demonstrated different support patterns along with opposing strategies when dealing with NSAs.

The countries India and Pakistan have followed different strategies regarding non-state actors NSAs by aiding them for strategic functions yet challenging their activities to preserve their domestic security and satisfy international expectations.

As India has defended itself it works to prevent Pakistan from using NSAs along with fighting insurgencies inside its national territory. The Indian government continuously focuses on counterterrorism initiatives throughout Jammu and Kashmir region because militants receive backing from Pakistani elements. The Indian military developed new doctrines specifically aimed at resisting cross-border attacks during and after Kargil War and the 2001 Parliament attack which now involve proactive military actions through the Cold Start Doctrine (Monograph10, p. 1). 1) . The Indian government has deployed its intelligence capabilities to undermine militant operations which stem from Pakistani networks. Some Indian intelligence agencies reportedly supply support to Pakistan separatist movements as a strategy for creating counterbalancing (Monograph10 p. 14) even while upholding a counterterrorism position. 14) .

The state of Pakistan has received repeated charges of deploying NSAs as strategic tools aimed at Kashmir and Afghanistan. The Pakistani military together with its intelligence service ISI conducted active support for Indian insurgent groups through its "proxy warfare" protocol during the 1980s (Monograph10, p. 5) . Pakistan showed support for militant groups located in Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir primarily following the Soviet-Afghan War through exploiting its Mujahideen roles to create unrest against India (Monograph10, p. 13). 13) . The support Pakistan provided to NSAs resulted in internal security problems because it led to the emergence of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) group which launched attacks against Pakistan (Monograph10 p.19). 19) .

Both states persist in viewing each other's NSA activities as threats that hinder potential regional cooperation despite occasional diplomatic contact. The counter-NSA policy of India is gradually becoming more active through intelligence operations and military strikes designed by India to combat Pakistani interference. International pressure has prompted Pakistan to take certain actions (Monograph10, p. 2).

The Pakistani military has selected some militant groups for action but has maintained strategic bonds with different organizations (Monograph10, p. 2). 2). The ongoing practice of backing and resisting NSAs by both nations has expanded their persistent rivalry while blocking the development of lasting peace in the region.

Strategic use of NSAs in indirect warfare and cross-border terrorism

The India-Pakistan rivalry includes strategic use of non-state actors (NSAs) in both indirect warfare and cross-border terrorism as a main strategic element. Both countries throughout history have weaponized NSAs to attain tactical benefits while avoiding direct militarized engagements. Using NSAs as hybrid warfare instruments makes it complex for analysts to determine responsibility or find diplomatic solutions because they merge both conventional and unconventional methods (13_59_3_22, p. 104).

The international community has charged Pakistan with providing support to NSAs in India who operate to disturb Indian control across Kashmir. LeT together with JeM serve as NSAs that have conducted attacks across borders according to research (13_59_3_22, p. 105) which include events like the Indian Parliament assault of 2001 and Mumbai attacks of 2008. The Pakistani government maintains plausible deniability through its "proxy warfare" strategy by using such groups to pressure India according to authors (13_59_3_22 p. 106). Pakistan denies cross-border terrorism accusations by maintaining these resistance groups function independently from Pakistan or were instigated by Indian regional policies in Kashmir (13_59_3_22, p. 107).

The Indian government has faced accusations about using NSAs to conduct destabilizing acts against Pakistan. The government of India has used its intelligence agencies to aid Balochistan insurgent groups and conduct strikes against critical infrastructure such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) (13_59_3_22, p. 108). The arrest of Kulbhushan Jadhav in Balochistan serves as a proof of Indian covert operations in Pakistan according to reports (13_59_3_22, p. 109). Through the Cold Start Doctrine India utilizes NSA elements for speedy military actions that combine psychological warfare and cyber assaults against Pakistan (13_59_3_22, p. 110).

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consequences of NSA involvement on conflict escalation and duration

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The participation of NSA counteracts the ability of neighboring countries to develop mutual trust and cooperative alliances. Such terrorist activities between neighboring countries obstruct diplomatic efforts to build trust even at times of political engagement. Ongoing along with contradictory claims about NSA backing in Kashmir and Balochistan impede constructive dialogue and strengthen distrust between the two nations. The efforts from both nations to secure results through the Indus Waters Treaty and backchannel diplomacy face continuous failure due to sustaining hostilities by NSA activities (admin, Journal manager, 2, p. 9). 9).

The strategic deployment of NSAs by both India and Pakistan has developed their hostile relationship thus making conflict solutions harder to achieve. The strategic deployment of NSAs functions as a major factor that maintains prolonged regional instability because these forces continue both violent cycles and obstruct peace dialogues and drive military conflicts higher. The resolution of this phenomenon demands coordinated work for destroying terror organizations and implementing comprehensive counter-terrorism structures together with enhanced regional security cooperation (admin, Journal manager, 2, p. 10). 10).

Policy Recommendations and Future Prospects Strategies for India and Pakistan to Manage NSA Threats

Strategic solutions must be developed to reduce non-state actor contributions in India-Pakistan conflicts to stop further destabilization of the region. Their current operational countermeasures in the region display a reactive pattern instead of proactive measures thereby complicating security dynamics according to the research findings (189–208, p. 190).

Indian counterterrorism operations together with enhanced intelligence-sharing platforms have proven to be the most successful strategy for the country. The creation of multi-agency coordination centers along with rapid-response forces makes India more effective at countering NSA threats. Modern cyber warfare capabilities within India focus on countering hybrid warfare strategies through dealing with NSAs who spread propaganda and false information to create social unrest (189–208, p. 192). The Indian government now employs both the Cold Start

Doctrine together with surgical strikes against Pakistan to prevent NSA activities beyond state borders (189–208, p. 193) .

The Pakistani government focuses its efforts on domestic security reform to confront National Security Agents who function inside its territory. Pakistan realizes the adverse consequences of its previous militant group support policies so it launched the National Action Plan (NAP) to tear down terror organizations and fight extremism (189–208, p. 194) . International forces have pushed Pakistan to fight LeT and JeM which indicates a transformation in its counterterrorism strategy (189–208, p. 195) . Pakistan has increased border security and engaged diplomatically to confront the Indian use of NSAs in Balochistan together with other regions (189–208, p. 196).

The international community between Pakistan and India has tried to establish secret dialogues to resolve NSA challenges. Pakistan-India relations have faced obstacles to enduring collaboration because of continuing disagreement about trust levels and broken ceasefire promises across the Line of Control (LoC). Joint intelligence-sharing agreements along with combined anti-terrorism programs and cyber-security campaigns reduce NSA threats but face substantial political barriers (197) (189–208, p. 197).

The long-term strategy to manage NSAs depends on developing a security framework which involves both India and Pakistan together with all neighboring nations subject to cross-border terrorist threats. SAARC must strengthen its counterterrorism programs at the same time countries should implement combined techniques for border defense.

The preventive measure against NSA interference includes improved bilateral economic relationships and stronger border security practices and increased economic partnership between affected countries. India and Pakistan face prolonged instability because there are no persistent initiatives to stop NSA participation (p. 198, 189–208).

Enhancing intelligence-sharing and diplomatic engagement

The two countries Pakistan and India continuously fight against controlling dangerous non-state actors who endanger regional peace. Enhanced intelligence-sharing together with diplomatic engagement offers an effective solution to prevent security threats while promoting bilateral partnership between India and Pakistan (Monsur Ahmed, p. 59). 59) .

The implementation of intelligence-sharing platforms creates a fundamental asset for the two countries to deal with transnational terrorist groups and insurgent movements. The establishment of an organized data exchange protocol enables both sides to catch NSA threats early and eliminate them before they develop into extensive security conflicts. Previous mutual distrust has impeded intelligence-sharing attempts but a neutral platform established through organizations like SAARC and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) can develop trust and protect both countries from

security threats (Monsur Ahmed, p. 60). 60) .

High-level diplomatic exchanges between security agencies and foreign ministries should take place in a regular manner between the two nations. Backchannel diplomacy acts as a vital instrument for conflict de-escalation because it created short-lived truces and LoC calm-down agreements in previous negotiations according to Monsur Ahmed in p. 61. 61) . The

India-Pakistan Joint Anti-Terrorism Mechanism alongside similar platforms needs improvement to develop anti-terror collaboration and hinder the recurrence of attacks ordered by national security advisers (Monsur Ahmed, p. 62) .

Third-party mediation would help India and Pakistan to share intelligence while promoting diplomatic activities. China holds strategic interest in regional stability and economic development through its China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) thus it can serve as a constructive influence to spark security dialogues between India and Pakistan (Monsur Ahmed, p. 63). 63) . The United Nations along with the United States as well as other regional actors stand ready to facilitate trust-building efforts (Monsur Ahmed, p. 64) .

The future of NSA threat management depends on improved intelligence exchanges and diplomatic initiatives because these actions protect stability throughout the region and improve cross-border cooperation. Diplomatic actions combined with formal agreements about intelligence sharing should create the basis for enhancing security and stability throughout South Asia despite existing enduring hostility (Monsur Ahmed, p. 65) .

Strengthening regional institutions to counter NSAs

India-Pakistan rivalry and broader regional security benefits from the strategic move to strengthen regional institutions as a means to combat non-state actors (NSAs). Various regional organizations assist in fighting threats from NSAs through cooperative efforts that combine intelligence exchanges and legal mechanisms because terrorism and insurgency cross international borders. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation have both worked to develop counterterrorism collaboration in the region. SAARC promotes regional security by maintaining the Terrorist Offences Monitoring Desk (STOMD) and Drug Offences Monitoring Desk (SDOMD) to monitor cross-border terrorist groups. The SAARC members have established an agreement to exchange intelligence about fighting cross-border crimes yet political disputes particularly involving India and Pakistan frequently obstruct effective cooperation (strengthening_a_critical_partnership-1, p. 13). 13) .

Through a BIMSTEC convention BIMSTEC members are developing measures to combat terrorism and both domestic and cross-border organized crime and illicit drug trafficking based on the existing SAARC terror convention. Similar to SAARC the organization lacks enforcement capabilities regarding counterterrorism measures because it needs a permanent coordinating body and robust institutional structure to connect member state responses (strengthening_a_critical_partnership-1, page 2). 2) . The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) demonstrates outstanding regional counterterrorism engagement since it conducts successful monitoring missions and facilitates cooperation to address ethno-political separatist conflicts (strengthening_a_critical_partnership-1, p. 0) .

Successful application of regional institutions against NSAs by India and Pakistan necessitates both political barrier elimination and an improved institutional functionality. The development of bilateral treaties between both nations for judicial enforcement cooperation plays a crucial role in enhancing the extradition framework and maintaining faithful implementation of intelligence-

sharing agreements. The organizations need to establish programs dedicated to de-radicalization as well as encourage dialogue between religious and cultural groups for combating radicalization. South Asian regional institutions show potential to become important defenders against NSA influence by receiving increases in member state support together with United Nations international organizational backing (strengthening_a_critical_partnership-1, p. 3). 3) .

The future of NSAs in South Asia: Emerging trends and possible solutions

Non-state actors in South Asia currently operate through quickly developing systems that create both innovative safety concerns and fresh collaboration possibilities. The increasing adoption of cyber warfare along with AI and decentralized networks by NSAs results in weakened counterterrorism approaches because of evolving technology and geopolitical developments.

The transformation demands new examinations of national security frameworks together with enhanced cross-border intelligence networks and diplomatic international agreements to manage NSA security threats (Robertson & Komljenovic, 2016, p. 8). 8) .

The NSA has undergone a digital transformation which stands as one of the main operational developments of recent years. Extremist organizations together with insurgent groups utilize three digital platforms which include social media and encrypted messaging services and cryptocurrencies for operational coordination and member recruitment and financial operations. Traditional intelligence-gathering methods have become less productive because of which AI-driven surveillance together with digital forensics and cross-border cyber intelligence-sharing agreements have become essential tools for monitoring and breaking down such networks (Robertson & Komljenovic, 2016, p. 10). 10) .

NSAs have significantly expanded their involvement in support-related conflicts across the world. The strategic entities function as instruments of global power competition when China and the United States exhibit their influence in South Asia. Strategic purposes exploit operations in Kashmir as well as Balochistan and Afghanistan thereby making it harder for India and Pakistan to achieve peace. The resolution of this issue requires both nations to build up the capacity of SAARC and BIMSTEC institutions to intervene in conflicts and jointly implement NSA countermeasures (Robertson & Komljenovic, 2016, p. 12). 12) .

South Asia should address future NSA management through three essential measures which combine international anti-terrorism accords with enhanced financial oversight and increased military exercises between nations. Communities need to develop local de-radicalization programs which stop extremist ideas from growing in bottom-level population. In order to maintain compliance with counterterrorism financing regulations South Asian nations must enhance their cooperation with international bodies such as the United Nations and FATF (Financial Action Task Force) (Robertson & Komljenovic, 2016, p. 14). 14) .

NSAs in South Asia require updated countermeasures because they transform with technological advancements and changing political relationships. The realization of a secure and stable South Asia builds from strengthened regional cooperation together with state-of-the-art counterintelligence technology and effective legal structures that India, Pakistan, and their neighboring countries should deploy. The preparation of a proper response to these evolving NSA threats remains crucial because failure to do so will cause persistent instability which will work against regional economic growth and diplomatic advancement (Robertson & Komljenovic, 2016, p. 16). 16) .

CONCLUSION

Regional stability faces serious challenges because Pakistan and India maintain their rivalry and because non-state actors intensify tensions and impede possible cooperation between these two countries. Militant organizations LeT and JeM have escalated hostility through their anti-Indian attacks primarily targeting Jammu and Kashmir over multiple years. Military sponsorships from Pakistan's defense agencies make it challenging to achieve peace through diplomacy due to their support of these militant groups (Hussain, 2019). Non-state actors demonstrated their ability to raise conflicts and complicate diplomatic relations through the Kargil conflict of 1999 and the Mumbai attacks of 2008. India has taken a firm position through counterterrorism measures combined with strategic deterrence which resulted in South Asia experiencing a security dilemma. The government of Pakistan upholds that terrorism affects both countries similarly while advocating talks instead of military clashes as the solution for peace.

Non-state actors achieve political influence through their actions which also include shaping public perception beyond terrorism operations. Both countries experience increases in hostility because religious groups nationalist factions and media organization maintain their ability to present bilateral conflicts in an all-or-nothing manner. The extreme mistrust reduces all chances of collaboration on trade agreements and counterterrorism efforts and water resource sharing initiatives. India has started using the Indus Waters Treaty as a political weapon to threaten and coerce Pakistan (Haines, 2016) despite being one of the few surviving bilateral agreements. The international spread of Kashmir as an issue has been a Pakistani focus that utilizes both covert operations and formal diplomatic tone to enforce strength on India. Both Pakistan and India have fought a continuous competition in Afghanistan by backing and providing support to different factions that leads to further instability throughout the region.

Given the current challenges non-state actors present there exist ways to engage them which may reduce their negative influence. Strategic confidence-building steps involving information exchange between organizations and economic collaboration programs seem useful for reducing tensions. Moderate civil society voices need empowerment to fight extremist messaging while academic and cultural programs will support the development of peace-oriented social groups. Strategic thinking needs a fundamental change from state institutions and security agencies in both countries because economic development should replace perpetual hostility as the main priority to establish stable and cooperative South Asia relations (Carranza, 2016). Proper intervention to silence militant groups together with nationalist factions needs to happen for the India-Pakistan rivalry to stop endangering regional stability.

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