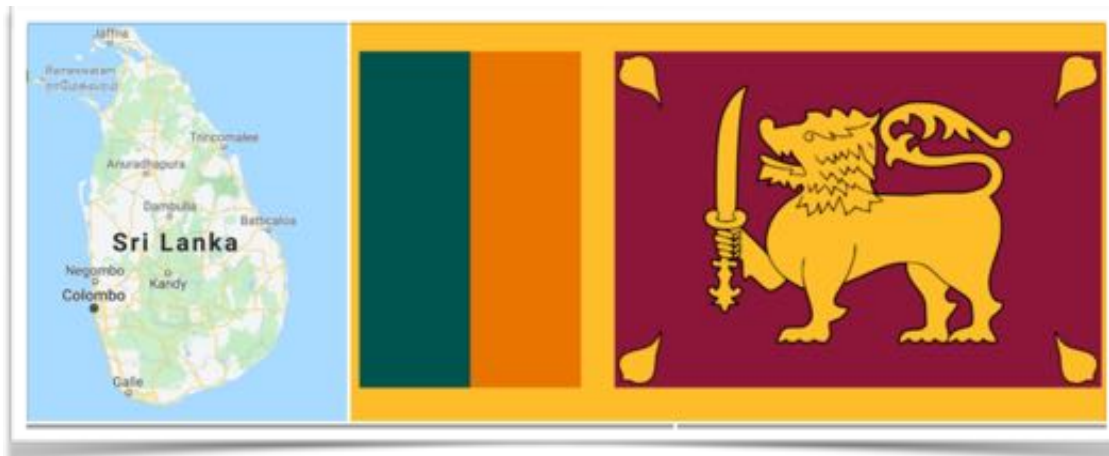


South Asia Conflict Monitor

monthly newsletter on terrorism, violence and armed conflict...



SRI LANKA: "Presidential elections: Will the minorities become King maker?"

As Sri Lanka is gearing towards the eighth presidential elections on November 16, national security, foreign policy and foreign investments in infrastructure projects and minority issues are once again dominating the political discourse in the country. Although a record 35 candidates have registered for this election, the electoral debate has been mostly dominated by the UNP candidate, Sajith Premadasa, and SLPP candidate, Gotabaya Rajapaksa (GR). The JVP and the NPM could be closer to these two parties. Other candidates are allegedly participating as proxy or dummy candidates fielded by the SLPP to share vote percentage of UNP candidate.

The table reflects that there will be strong contest between the UNP and the SLPP in this election. However, Sajith will have upper hand against GR because the former has strong grassroots support and is a good orator. Being a seasonal politician, who comes from a political family, he is generally considered as a better candidate than GR and others. Unlike GR, there are no serious allegations or corruption charges

against Sajith. Since both Sajith and GR are from Sinhala community and have almost flagged similar issues in their election manifestos, Sinhala vote could be equally divided between them. In that case, minority groups' support to anyone of them in the elections would be crucial. Most importantly, the minority groups like Tamils and Muslims feel comfortable with the UNP than the SLPP due to GR's association with radical Buddhist groups like Bodu Bala Sena (BBS). But GR could get slightly more votes given the global trend in favour of nationalists, and minority consolidation in favour of Sajith could put him as a net vote gainer.

Although the SLPP scored well in the local elections in 2018, voting pattern will be different this time around due to issues raised in the manifestos and personality of the candidates. Most importantly, the Sri Lanka Freedom Party

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(SLFP) was not divided in 2018. Just before this election, the SLFP has witnessed some serious intra-party divisions due to Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga's open support to the UNP candidate. Around 20-25 per cent SLFP party cadres and leaders are supporting Kumaratunga on this.

According to the 2012 census, there were 2,270,924 Sri Lankan Tamils in Sri Lanka. That is 11.2 per cent of the total population. Sri Lankan Tamils constitute an overwhelming majority in the Northern Province and are the largest ethnic group in the Eastern Province. They are in minority in other provinces.

Table 1: Strength and weakness of the political parties

Party	Candidate	Support Base	Strength	Weakness
United National Party (UNP)	Sajith Premadasa	Kandyan upper and lower caste Sinhalese, Tamils, majority Muslims, Christians	Non-controversial leadership, strong grassroots support, democratic values, minority support	Division within SLFP, pro-west image, anti-incumbency
Sri Lanka People's Party (SLPP)	Gotabhaya Rajapaksa (GR)	Buddhist rightist wing, Kandyan lower caste Sinhalese, some Muslims and Christians, two smaller Tamil groups, business community	Nationalist agenda, uncompromising national security, against UN mediation on HR issues	Not a popular leader like his brother, anti-minority, Pro-China, authoritarian image
Marxist JVP	Anura K. Dissanayake	Left cadres	Cadres based voting	Limited support base, cut UNP vote
National People's Movement (NPM)	Gen Mahesh Senanayake	Civil society, journalists, academia	Liberal and nationalist Sinhalese	Limited support base, cut UNP vote

Manifestos of Major Political Parties

As mentioned earlier, the issues flagged in the manifestos of UNP and SLPP are almost similar. Both the parties have given priority to national security. The difference is that while GR manifesto starts with national security, Sajith has emphasised on human development and strengthening social infrastructure. Both the manifestos have strongly expressed zero tolerance towards religious extremism, terrorism, corruption and drug trafficking. Interestingly, while the SLPP gives second priority to foreign policy, the UNP has not discussed that in detail. In that case, the UNP manifesto appears more inward oriented and perhaps indicates continuation of the current foreign policy. Surprisingly though, both the parties are silent on Tamil demands. However, the UNP manifesto indirectly covers some of the social and economic demands of the Tamils. On the other hand, the SLPP has remained ambiguous about making an inclusive

constitution by accommodating minority rights.

Minority Demands and Sentiments

Tamils: While minorities in the country feel that it is the most appropriate time to bring their concerns to the notice of the political parties, the latter have attempted to appease the minorities only for electoral support. Both Muslim and Tamil communities are anxiously monitoring the political developments in the island country, including keeping a close watch on Gotabaya Rajapaksa due to his association with the Bodu Bala Sena (BBS).

Gotabaya on his part has tried to reach out to the two out of the three major minority groups. In his first electoral camping in Jaffna on October 28, GR appealed to have faith on him for better future. He promised to rehabilitate more than 250 former LTTE cadres and reintegrate them into society if he is voted to power. He in fact claimed that 13,000 former LTTE cadres were successfully rehabilitated and a large scale development was carried out in the North by 2015 during his brother Mahinda Rajapaksa's rule. GR also stated that his manifesto has outlined the steps that would be taken to resolve the problems of the Northern people. He pledged to strengthen the predominant fisheries sector by providing fishermen with boats and assisting them with latest technology. The SLPP candidate drew special emphasis on empowering the youth, especially through education, promising that he would provide university level education for all those who have passed the GCE Advanced Level examination.

Earlier, on October 15 a group of Tamil political parties signed a memorandum highlighting the key demands of the Tamils. The memorandum was prepared by Tamil university students of the Jaffna and Eastern universities after talks with the Tamil political parties. Illangai Thamil Arasu Katchi (ITAK), People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE), Eelam People's Revolutionary

Liberation Front (EPRLF), Tamil People's Council (TPC) and Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO) signed the memorandum. It contains 13 demands, including a demand for a political solution and abolishing the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA). The memorandum was presented to the two main presidential candidates.

Interestingly, responding to the memorandum, SLPP leader Weerawansa said that the Tamil parties are attempting to merge the North and East and push for self-determination. "Our Presidential candidate will not even look at the conditions in the memorandum." There are visible contradictions in the internal views of SLPP on the Tamil issues and GR's statements at the Jaffna public rally.

The SLPP in fact tried to consolidate the Sinhala vote by accusing Sajith of supporting Tamil cause. The accusation came when the ITAK declared its support to the NDF presidential candidate Sajith Premadasa on November 4.

Despite SLPP's contradictory views on the demands, the party could manage to seek support of some Tamil groups. In the northern Sri Lanaks, the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP) led by Douglas Devananda and the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) headed by Varadaraja Perumal will support GR. Similarly, in the eastern and central Sri Lanka, the Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal (TMVP) led by Karuna and Ceylon Workers' Congress party could extend support to GR.

In central Sri Lanka, Up Country Tamils will play crucial role. Historically, this community migrated from India and worked in the plantations. Earlier, they were associated with the Ceylon Workers Congress party. Since the Up Country People's Front has joined the 50-party Democratic Nationalist Front (DNF), which will support the UNP candidate, Up Country Tamils will vote for Sajith, but provided they go for voting.

Muslims : The Muslim population of Sri Lanka is roughly 9.7 per cent of the total population. They are the third largest group in the country and mostly concentrated in north-eastern part. Traditionally, the Muslim community has supported the SLPP. However, the scenario has changed in post Easter Church attacks period. Sinhala nationalists led by monks, who generally sympathise with the SLPP, consider Muslims as anti-nationals. Immediately after the ghastly incident in April this year, Buddhist monks targeted the Muslims. Rajapaksa brothers were accused in the past of instigating attacks on Muslims. As a result, the All Ceylon Makkal Congress (ACMC) and Sri Lanka Muslim party, headed by Minister Rishad Bathiudeen, have openly supported UNP candidate Sajith Premadasa. The Muslims feel that if GR returns to power they will be harassed through all means. In 2015, both Tamils and Muslims supported the then presidential candidate and sitting President, Maithripala Sirisena.

Sensing poor support from the third largest group, GR has assured Muslims in the country and have stated that their businesses will be given full security under his government. Despite all this, the petrified Muslim community perhaps could feel more comfortable and expect peace under Sajith's leadership.

Like other minority groups, Muslim community in Sri Lanka is not monolithic. A small Muslim party called the National Muslim Collective (NMC), led by Ali Sabry PC, expressed its support to the SLPP. Speaking at the event titled 'The Turning Point' organised by the NMC in Colombo, Ali said, "The UNP or the West would never look after Muslims and that the Sri Lankan Muslims expected stability, national security, communal harmony, progress and prosperity in the country."

Final Observations

As stated above, the Sri Lankan minorities are not monolithic. Therefore, they may not vote in support of one political party. The intra-

community differences could be due to personality, ideological and social factors. Those small minority groups who have gone against their community sentiments could be due to political and opportunistic factors. Given the Tamils' fresh 13-point demands and Muslim sentiments against the SLPP in general and Rajapaksa brothers in particular, the UNP could be the beneficiary for the time being. While the Sinhala votes will be divided between the two large political parties, a consolidated minority will certainly vote for the candidate whom they consider will restore peace and stability. In this scenario, the SLPP could try to seek more Sinhala votes by linking UNP's open support to the 13-point demands of the Tamil parties and divide the minorities by offering incentives.

Whoever wins the elections should not ignore the long pending demands of the Tamils and insecurity amongst the Muslims. If the winning

party fails to accommodate the moderate Tamil groups' demands, then the dormant radical Tamil groups with the support of diaspora could take to violent line. The recent arrests of some LTTE sympathisers in Malaysia and again in Sri Lanka indicates that some radical cadres must be supporting the early revival of the outfit since the moderate views are mostly unheard by Colombo. However, the ground reality is that a large number of ex-LTTE sympathisers and ordinary Tamils want special rehabilitation package to live peacefully. Any blanket suspicion towards the intentions of the Tamils, as mostly seen among the SLPP and some Buddhist groups, could widen the trust deficit further between the Tamils and Colombo.



Naxal Movement in India: A Historical Anthology

Dr Rajat Kujur

To understand the genesis of the Naxal movement, also known as Maoist/left-wing extremism, one needs to locate it within the framework of the Communist movement in India. More specifically, any study on the Maoist movement cannot overlook the importance of the rise and fall of Telangana Movement (1946-51). Because for the Indian Communists, Telangana would always remain the glorious chapter in the history of peasant struggles. In fact, it was the first serious effort by sections of the Communist Party leadership to learn from the experiences of the Chinese revolution and to develop a class based comprehensive line for India's democratic revolution. On the other hand, the experience in Telangana also facilitated the growth of three distinct lines in the Indian communist movement. The line promoted by Bhalchandra Trimbak Ranadive and his followers who rejected the significance of the Chinese revolution and advocated simultaneous accomplishments of the democratic and the socialist revolutions based on city-based working-class insurrections. Ranadive, popularly known as BTR, was an influential communist and trade union leader who was elected as the Secretary of the Communist Party of India during its Second Party Congress held in Calcutta (Kolkata) in 1948. The line adopted at the Second Party Congress became popularly known as the 'Ranadive line'. The group drew inspiration from Stalin and fiercely attacked Mao as another Tito, the Yugoslav communist leader.

The second line mainly professed and propagated by the Andhra Secretariat drew heavily from the Chinese experiences and the teachings of Mao in building up the struggle for Telangana.

The Andhra leadership successfully spearheaded the movement against the Nizam. However, it failed to tackle the complex question of meeting the challenge of the Government of India. The Nehru government embarked on the road to parliamentary democracy, conditioning it with reforms like the 'abolition of Zamindari system'. All these objective conditions facilitated the dominance of a centrist line put forward by Ajay Ghosh and Dange. This line characteristically pointed out the differences between Chinese and Indian conditions and pushed the Party along the parliamentary road.

In 1957 the communists succeeded in forming a government in Kerala, which, however, was soon overthrown and following the India-China war, the Party split into two during 1964, viz. Communist Party of India (CPI) and Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M). While the CPI preached the theory of 'peaceful road to non-capitalist development', the CPI (M) took the centrist line. Though there were serious differences on ideological and tactical lines, both the Parties participated in the parliamentary exercises and also formed the United Front government in West Bengal in 1967. Charu Mazumdar, another senior leader, had lost in this election. Later, he spearheaded a peasant movement in Naxalbari.



In the backdrop of such organisational upheavals within the Indian Communist Movement, one particular incident that took place in an unknown location involving some unknown people hugely transformed the history of Left-Wing Extremism in India. In a remote village called Naxalbari in West Bengal one tribal youth named Bimal Kissan, having obtained a judicial order, went to plough his land on March 2, 1967. The local landlords attacked him through their goons. Tribal people of the area retaliated and started forcefully capturing back their lands. What followed was a rebellion which left one police sub-inspector and nine tribal people dead. [1] From March to May 1967, tension escalated in many areas of West Bengal on questions of tribal access to land. However, the United Front Government headed by CPI (M) managed to contain the rebellion soon but faced severe allegations of use of brutal force and human rights violations. The communist revolutionaries belonging to the state units of the CPI (M) in West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir extended their open support to the rebels and had a formal meeting in November 1967.

As the outcome of the meeting, one All India Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries (AICCCR) was formed in May 1968. 'Allegiance to the armed struggle and non-participation in the elections' were the two cardinal principles that the AICCCR adopted for its operations. [2] However, differences cropped up over how armed struggle should be advanced and this led to the exclusion of a section of activists from Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal, led respectively by T. Nagi Reddy and Kanhai Chatterjee.

On the issue of annihilation of class enemy, the Kanhai Chatterjee group had serious objections as they were of the view that the annihilation of the class enemy should only be taken up after building up mass agitations. However, majority in the AICCCR rejected this and it went ahead with the formation of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) in May 1969.[3] The declaration of the party formation was made by Comrade Kanu Sanyal at a massive meeting at Shahid Minar ground, Calcutta. This led Chatterjee to form the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC). The CPI (M-L) held its first congress in 1970 in Calcutta and Charu Mazumdar was formally elected its general secretary. [4]

Since then both the CPI (M-L) and the MCC continued with their respective forms of armed struggle for the next couple of years. During this time Charu Mazumdar became the undisputed *Naxalite guru* and with the organisational skills of Kanu Sanyal and Jaghal Santhal, the movement spread to different corners of the country. While Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha and Madhya Pradesh soon became the fertile ground of Naxal Movements, parts of Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Kerala too became affected by the tides of Naxalism. However, it was far short lived than expected. What was generally perceived by the Indians as well as the Chinese Communist Revolutionaries as the final enactment of revolution, in reality proved to be no more than a dress rehearsal. As hundreds of CPI (M-L) cadres lost their lives, and thousands were put behind the bar, the movement witnessed confusion, splits and disintegration.



The history of the Naxal Movement in post Charu Mazumdar period is characterised by a number of splits brought about by personalised and narrow perceptions about the Maoist revolutionary line and attempts at course correction by some of the major groups. Even Kanu Sanyal, one of the founders of the movement, was not free from this trend. He gave up the path of "dedicated armed struggle" by 1977 and accepted parliamentary practice as one of the forms of revolutionary activity. [5]

It was during 1974 that one influential group of CPI (M-L) led by Jauhar (Subrata Dutt), Nagbhushan Pattnaik and Vinod Mishra launched one of major initiatives termed as 'course correction'. This group renamed itself as CPI (M-L) Liberation in 1974, and in 1976, during the Emergency, it adopted a new line that called for the continuation of armed guerrilla struggles along with efforts to form a broad anti-Congress democratic front, consisting even of non-communist parties. The group also suggested that pure military armed struggle should be limited and that there should be greater emphasis on mass peasant struggles in an attempt to provide an Indianised version of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism.

However, during the next three years the movement suffered further splits with leaders such as Kondapalli Seetharamaiah (Andhra Pradesh) and N. Prasad (Bihar) dissociating themselves

from the activities of the party. This led to Prasad forming the CPI (M-L) (Unity Organization) and Seetharamaiah started the People's War Group (PWG) in 1980.[6] Seetharamaiah's line also sought to restrict "annihilation of class enemies" but the emphasis was on building up mass organisations, not on developing a broad democratic front. To note, within the PWG there were also moderates and hardliners. Hardliners always argued that Indian society is ready for violent mass movement. The moderates argued that they need to work on enhancing political consciousness of the masses or prepare them for revolution.

Since then, the principal division in the Naxalite movement has been between the two lines of thought and action, as advanced by the CPI (ML) Liberation and the PWG. While Liberation branded PWG a group of "left adventurists", the PWG, which was a pan-India group with major operational area in the Telangana region, castigated the Liberation group as one of the "revisionists" imitating the CPI (M). On the other hand, the growth of MCC as a major armed group in the same areas and beyond, such as in northern Indian states of Bihar, Jharkhand, eastern UP and parts of north Chhatisgarh, Odisha and West Bengal, created the scope of multifarious organisational conflict among the Naxal groups. Liberation took a theoretical stand of correcting the past mistakes of 'completely rejecting parliamentary politics.' On the other hand, PWG and MCC completely rejected the parliamentary democratic system of governance and vowed to wage 'people's war for people's government. Broadly speaking, the party programs of CPI (ML) Liberation were mostly focused on the cause of peasants, while the group led by K. Seetharamaiah wanted the party to be a platform for peasants, workers, tribal and other weaker sections of the society. It was the prime agenda of Liberation to build up a political front focusing on peasant struggles, where as PWG was more interested in the formation of mass organizations instead of any democratic front.

One of the renowned guerrilla leaders of the erstwhile PWG summarises the essence of conflict between CPI (ML) Liberation and CPI (ML) People's War: "In the *Liberation* group, which at one time was one of the strong groups defending Charu Mazumdar's revolutionary line, after the martyrdom of Com. Johar, with the leadership falling into the hands of Vinod Mishra, they began betraying the Indian revolution. As part of a conspiratorial plan, a once revolutionary party was gradually changed into a revisionist party, like the CPI and CPM. The armed resistance struggles against the state's attacks, taking place under the then leadership of *Liberation*, was ended. The armed struggle to crush the feudal private armies was made a secondary task. In this way, they diverted the entire group away from the basic path outlined by the unified CPI (ML), and particularly of its founder, Charu Mazumdar — that of protracted people's war — into becoming agents of the ruling classes, by surrendering them to the parliamentary path. They converted the Johar-led *Liberation*, from being a revolutionary movement into a legalist, reformist and parliamentary movement; and changed the underground organization into an open opportunist and revisionist organization." [7] In the process while the Liberation group registered its first electoral victory in Bihar in 1989, more Naxalite factions such as the CPI (M-L) New Democracy, the CPI (ML) S.R. Bhajjee Group and the CPI (M-L) Unity Initiative were formed in that State.

Following years witnessed some distinct phenomena in the history of the Naxal movement. First, the intra organisational conflict and rivalry among different groups touched several high points resulting in the loss of considerable number of cadres of rival groups. Secondly, despite the large-scale inner conflicts there was always an exercise to unite going on at various levels. Thirdly, from 1990 onwards the affected state registered a considerable growth in violent incidents and at the same a visible change in policy approach at the government level was witnessed. If Naxal Movement is mostly characterised by fragmented groups and innumerable splits; successive governments at the national and state levels could never follow a uniform

approach to deal with the problem of Naxalism. All this have had a marked impact in the growth of Naxal movement.

The characteristic feature of the Naxal movement lies with its disorganized state of being as it led to some interesting formulations that are quite uncommon in the study of movement organizations. The fragmented character of the movement gave rise to all possible trends and groupings and thereby paved the way for new avenues of organisational conflicts. Due to its fragmented character the movement witnessed many past leaders and cadres making a comeback as though from oblivion. This aspect of Naxal organisational politics is important to understand as it enabled the reemergence of a whole range of questions that were supposed to have been already resolved.

Naxal Movement in India entered into yet another phase of organisational transformation with the merger of two of the principal armed organizations, viz. People's War (PW) and the Maoist Communist Centre of India (MCC-I), which resulted in the formation of the Communist Party of India (Maoist) in September 2004. On the occasion of its formation, its first Secretary Ganapathy stated, "The formation of the unified Communist Party of India (Maoist) is a new milestone in the history of the revolutionary communist movement of India. A unified Maoist party based on Marxism-Leninism-Maoism is a long delayed and highly cherished need of the revolutionary minded and oppressed people of the country, including all our ranks, and also all the Maoist forces of South Asia and internationally. Now, this long-aspired desire and dream has been transformed into a reality."

What followed next are written in bold letters with red coloured ink in the records of contemporary Indian politics.

The Author teaches Political Science in Sambalpur University, Odisha. He may be reached at rajatkujur@gmail.com

NOTES:

[1] Bibek Debroy, "The Last of the Three", *Indian Express*, March 25, 2010.

[2] "30 years of Naxalbari, CPI (ML) Liberation Party Document", April 11, 2015.

[3] "History of Naxalism", *Hindustan Times*, December 15, 2005.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] Suhrid Shankar Chattopadhyay, "End of a Revolution", *Frontline*, Vol. 27, Issue 08, April 10 – 23, 2010.

[6] Maoist Influenced Revolutionary Organizations in India, source: http://www.massline.info/India/Indian_Groups.htm

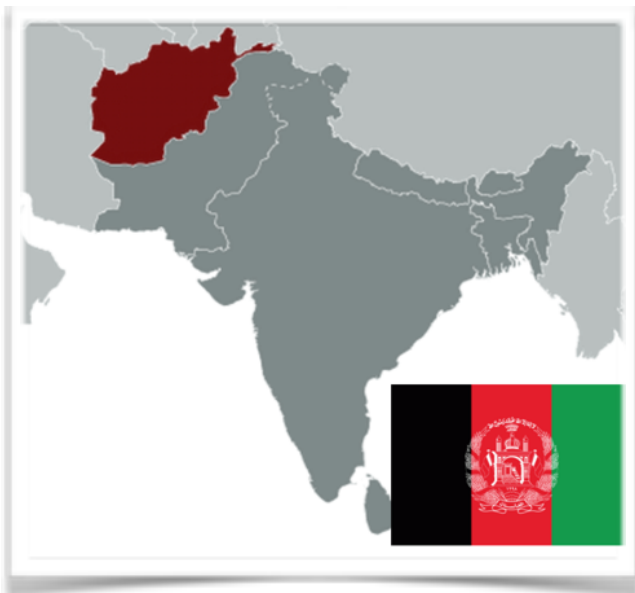
[7] Sharvan, the then Secretary Bihar State Committee of CPI (ML) Peoples War, in an interview given to *People's March*, Volume 2, No. 3, March 2001.



SOUTH ASIA NEWS ROUNDUP: OCTOBER 2019



AFGHANISTAN



After the failure of peace talks in September, the State security forces together with NATO continued their attacks on Taliban and Islamic State militants across the country in October. Both land and air forces carried out joint operations mainly in the south-east and north-east provinces of Afghanistan. Provinces like Baghlan, Nangrahar, Kandahar, Paktika, and Ghazni witnessed maximum casualties on the rebel side. The rise in the number of fatalities on the Taliban side indicates that Afghan Special Forces have now increased the number of ground operations in comparison to the previous month. Surprisingly, in the post talk failure period, number of attacks from the Taliban side on Afghan security forces has come down. Perhaps, the Taliban does not have any military arrangement to counter airstrikes. In fact, barring accidental IED explosions, the number of civilian casualties also went down in comparison to the previous month.

While the state forces maintained the upper hand against the Taliban in the review period, the latter attempted to revive the stalled peace process with the support of Pakistan, China, and Russia. Taliban representatives, in fact, visited Islamabad in this regard. The US envoy for the Afghan peace process Zalmay Khalilzad and Taliban leader Baradar discussed with Islamabad as well. It is to be noted that a scheduled intra-Afghanistan meeting in Beijing was cancelled for unknown reasons. Separately, the Afghanistan government repeatedly demanded immediate ceasefire before re-starting the peace talks and for its participation in that.

However, the role of the Afghanistan government in the peace talks appears uncertain now as the result of the recently held Presidential elections has been delayed till mid-November. The postponement of results could further undermine the role of the Afghanistan government's participation in the peace process. Since both the Presidential candidates have claimed to win the elections, it seems clear that Afghanistan could witness a fresh round of political instability soon. In that case, the Taliban could consolidate further. At this juncture, the Taliban's tactics could be to have an early settlement of contentious issues with the US and claim its stake in the national polity.

MAJOR EVENTS:

October 01: Afghan security forces (SFs) killed at least 44 Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) militants and injured 12 others in joint operations in Achin district of Nangrahar province. The SFs seized and destroyed several weapons, munitions and explosives during the operations ([Khaama Press](#)).

October 02: Afghan security forces claimed that at least 18 Taliban militants were killed and destroyed a stolen Humvee Armoured Personnel Carrier in series of airstrikes. The security forces conducted the airstrikes in Kandahar, Helmand, Zabul, Farah, Logar and Ghazni provinces ([Khaama Press](#)).

October 03: The NDS Special Forces killed 4 Pakistani militants who tried to cross the Durand Line and engaged the security forces in Tanai district of Khost province. The NDS Special Forces also confiscated a vehicle, some Ak-47 rifles, hand grenades and a radio sets following the clash. Separately, A 10 member Taliban Delegation reached Islamabad to discuss about peace process ([Daily Outlook Afghanistan/ Dawn](#)).

October 04: Media reports indicated that US envoy for Afghan peace, Zalmay Khalilzad and Taliban representatives in Pakistan discussed about the resumption of peace talks. Khalilzad met Baradar and his companions in Islamabad, where he asked for the release of two lecturers of the American University in Afghanistan, who are in Taliban custody for more than two years. Separately, the Afghanistan government emphasised on an immediate ceasefire before the restart of peace talks with Taliban. ([Afghanistan Times](#))

October 06: The U.S. forces claimed that more than 70 Taliban militants killed in the airstrikes in support of the Afghan forces in Badghis province. ([Khaama Press](#)) Separately, the Afghan Special Forces killed 18 Taliban militants during operations in Ghazni province on October 7. Separately, 203rd Thunder Corps said the Afghan army conducted artillery strikes in Qayaq Valley of Jaghatoo district, killing 4 Taliban militants and destroying 3 motorcycles. Security forces also defused 5 improvised explosive devices during the operations in Ghazni and Paktika provinces. ([Khaama Press](#))

October 08: Security officials claimed that around 90 militants killed and 36 others wounded in multiple military operations carried out by the Afghan security forces across the country. Ministry of Defense in a statement said the Afghan National Army (ANA) in collaboration with Afghan National Police (ANP) and National Directorate of Security (NDS) personal conducted joint operations against insurgents in different areas of Ghazni, Zabul, Takhar, Helmand, Nangrahar, Farah, Jawzjan and Parwan provinces. ([Afghanistan Times](#)).

October 9: Media reports citing Afghanistan's National Directorate of Security sources informed that Maulana Asim Umar, the chief of al-Qaida in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) was reportedly killed in US air strikes in Afghanistan on September 23, 2019. According to information Umar along with six other al-Qaida operatives were killed in a Taliban compound in Musa Qala district of Helmand province. However, Taliban Spokesman Qari Muhammad Yousuf Ahmadi has refuted the news saying it "as a part of enemy fabricated propaganda." Asim Umar was a resident of Sambhal, Uttar Pradesh in India. His original name was Sanaul Haq who had fled to Pakistan in the late 1990s. In July last year (2018), Umar was designated a 'global terrorist' by the US State department. ([Khaama Press/ Hindustan Times/ Voice of Jihad](#)).

October 15: The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) announced that the Taliban attacks during election process across Afghanistan killed or wounded 458 civilians. The report further clarified that the attacks by Taliban group killed 85 civilians and injured at least 373 others. ([Khaama Press](#))

October 22: At least 15 policemen were killed while Taliban stormed a checkpoint in Kunduz in northern Afghanistan. The Taliban have a strong presence in several of the province's districts. The provincial capital, the city of Kunduz, briefly fell to the Taliban in 2015, before the insurgents withdrew in the face of a NATO-backed Afghan offensive. (AP News) Separately, US, European Union and the UN urged the Afghan government to focus on preparations for formal intra-Afghan dialogue with the Taliban group. ([Khaama Press](#)).

October 24: Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid claimed couple of attacks in Lashkargah city, the capital of southern Helmand province and in the Bagram district of eastern Parwan province. He claimed that nearly 65 missiles were fired against the US base inside Zone 505 in Lashkargah city ([Twitter](#)).

October 29: US Peace envoy, Zalmay Khalilzad held discussions with Afghan leaders and politicians to find a way to resume the peace talks with the Taliban during his visit to Kabul. He was reportedly proposed to release Taliban prisoners, including Anas Haqqani and Hafiz Rashid in exchange for two professors of American University of

Afghanistan (Kevin King, an American, and Timothy Weeks, an Australian) who were abducted by the militant group in Kabul in 2016. Anas is a younger brother of Sirajuddin Haqqani - the Taliban's second-in-command and the head of the militant group's affiliate wing Haqqani Network. He is in the custody of the Afghan authorities since 2014, and has been sentenced to death by an Afghan court ([Tolo News](#)).

BANGLADESH



Barring a few low-intensity explosions and a protest rally, Bangladesh was relatively peaceful in the review period. The state security forces were largely busy in neutralising the revival of several Islamist radical groups with the support of external forces. Security forces arrested some key operators of Harkat-ul-Jihad-al Islami Bangladesh (HuJI-B), an old Al Qaeda linked group, from different parts of the country. Besides, Bangladesh's anti-terrorism police were busy in arresting and monitoring Ansar al-Islam, the Bangladesh wing of Al Qaeda's South Asian branch (AQIS) which has been planning to merge their operation with another banned organisation, Neo-Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (Neo-JMB).

Besides, around four persons were killed and several others including policemen and civilians injured in Borhanuddin town of Bhola District over a hate conversation spread through Facebook. The Bhola

incident could allow radical groups to resurge in Bangladesh to counter anti-Islam forces. The Islamist group Hefazat-e-Islam Bangladesh (HeI-B) could plan some attacks against Hindu minorities to garner public support.

MAJOR EVENTS:

October 02: Three Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami Bangladesh (HuJI-B) senior militant operatives were arrested from Khilgaon area of Dhaka city. They were identified as Mohammad Atikullah who is in charge of international relations of HuJI-B, Nazim Uddin, secretary HuJI's Dhaka unit and Mohammad Borhan Uddin, in charge of the outfit's Feni unit. Among them, Mohammad Atikullah is Afghan war veteran and he returned to Bangladesh in March 2019 and attempting to reorganise HuJI-B. The Investigating agency officials informed that the leaders were trying to bring their absconding operatives back to the Islamist outfit and was in touch with family members of imprisoned HuJI-B leaders. Also revealed that Atikullah had multiple meetings Al Qaeda and Taliban leaders in Afghanistan in the past ([Daily Star](#)).

October 04: The Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit of Bangladesh Police initiated a countrywide search operation for over 30 Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islam-Bangladesh (HuJI-B) operatives who were in touch with the Afghan-war returnee Atikullah. The officers investigating the case said that these suspects had been trying to establish a network in Rohingya camps using two NGOs as fronts ([Daily Star](#)).

October 05: Seven political leaders affiliated with the ruling Awami League (AL) were injured in crude bomb blasts in Bahadurpur (Bheramara, Kushtia district). Nearly 10 cocktail bombs exploded on the ground of Bahadurpur High School in the evening when the local unit of Awami League was electing its new committee leaders. Initial investigation suggested at political rivalries within AL and probe is on to fathom the conspiracy ([Daily Star](#)).

October 10: Four Ansar Al-Islam operatives were arrested from Jatrabari area of the Capital city Dhaka. They were identified as Shahin alias Omar, Saiful Islam, Hanifuzzaman alias Biplob and Al Mamun. According to the police chief (counter terrorism and transnational crimes) Monirul Islam Ansar al-Islam (which is historically Al Qaeda inspired group) is planning to merge their operation with Neo-Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (Neo-JMB). Neo-JMB is an Islamic State (IS) affiliated group. Shahin is the leader of the Unit, who is a second-year aviation engineering student at a university in South Korea. He recently came back to Dhaka, with the goal of trying to unify Ansar al-Islam, and the New

Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB). According to police, the members of the unit used to communicate between each other through the Facebook Messenger app ([Dhaka Tribune](#)).

October 13: Fourteen female operatives of Islami Chhatri Sangstha (ICS) were arrested in Pabna's Mansurabad residential area. ICS is a female student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI). Police have also recovered numerous jihadi books and literatures from the house. Separately, Six (06) Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) member (the male student wing of JeI) were arrested Namajgar Madrasapara in Naogaon when holding a secret meeting. Crude bombs and jihadi literatures were recovered from their possession ([Dhaka Tribune/ Dhaka Tribune](#)).

October 13: Eight Ansar al Islam members were charged over murder of publisher Faisal Arefin Dipan that took place in in Shahbagh area of Dhaka on October 31, 2015. Six of the accused are presently in jail while two are still at large and declared fugitives ([Daily Star](#)).

October 13: Bangladesh police have apprehended seven Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT) operatives from different places in the country: Five operatives were captured from Bera area of Pabna (Rajshahi) and another two ABT members were arrested from a madrasa (Islamic Seminary) in Fatullah (Narayanganj). NOTE: ABT morphed into Ansar Al Islam after pledging support for Al Qaeda ideals in Bangladesh ([Daily Sun/ Dhaka Tribune](#)).

October 16: Six Neo-JMB militants were arrested in the last few days. The Bangladesh police arrested one Neo- JMB militant Salauddin Kawsar from Dakkhin Kazir Char area in Barisal on October 11. Salahuddin has been engaged in propaganda and recruitment of the organisation. On October 13, two more Neo-JMB militant were arrested from Mohammadpur area of Dhaka. Police suspects that these two militants (Md Mehedi Hasan Tanim and Md Abdullah) who were involved or have knowledge of couple of recent bomb attacks on police (claimed by the Islamic State) at Gulistan and Science Lab area in Dhaka. Again, on October 16, three Neo-JMB militants were arrested in Dhaka. These three militants identified as Mohammad Abdullah, Shafiqul Islam and Mosatafa Hosen Arif, all of them were recruited by the Holey Artisan terror attack accused Sohel Mahfuz ([Dhaka Tribune / BDNews24.com/ Daily Star](#)).

October 19: Bangladesh's top police official Monirul Islam (CTTC) informed media that militants in the country are using online platforms to recruit fresh members by offering lucrative packages, and the recruiters are targeting youths. He was addressing a press conference arranged to mark the inauguration of "Dhaka Peace Talk" in the media and public relations centre of Dhaka Metropolitan Police ([SaraBangla](#) (Bengali Language portal)/ [Bangla Tribune](#) (Bengali Language)).

October 20: Widespread street violence erupted in Borhanuddin town of Bhola district (Barisal) over hate conversation on Facebook. At least four people died in scores of others were injured during clashes with security personnel. Protesters belonging to Muslims community demanded punishment of a Hindu youth they claimed was responsible for the anti-Islam conversation on Facebook ([Daily Star](#)).

October 22: Islamist party Hefazat-e-Islam (HeI) held a rally in front of famous Baitul Mukarram Mosque in Dhaka city to protest against Oct 20 violence that left four people dead and scores of protesters injured. Nur Hossain Kashemi, chief of HeI, Dhaka chapter urged the gathered crowd that no one should keep ties with those who do not respect Islam's holy Prophet Muhammad. Among many of its demands, HeI leadership in attendance made series of demands including the ban of ISKCON (Hindu religious sect) in Bangladesh. Similar HeI rallies were undertaken in the port city of Chittagong as part of a nationwide protest program. HeI Secretary General Juanyed Babunagari demanded the punishment of Biplob Chandra Shuvo whose Facebook messages (hacked and compromised) containing derogatory remarks about 'Allah' and the Prophet Muhammad were allegedly sent and further circulated. To note, HeI members and followers are mostly from Quami madrasa teachers and students ([Dhaka Tribune](#)).

October 21: Senior official of Rapid Action Battalion-4 informed media that the Al Qaeda linked Harkat ul Jihad Islami-Bangladesh (HuJI-B) operatives are joining Ansar al Islam group in the country. Ansar is responsible for killing bloggers, writers and free thinkers, in the country in last several years. According to the RAB official, few of the arrested Ansar al Islam members such as Saiful and Zunayed (arrested on Oct 20) were once affiliated with HuJI-B but are now holding important posts in Ansar al Islam. The arrestees in preliminary interrogation said they hate the existing Government system and want to establish Sharia based caliphate through armed Jihad ([Daily Star](#)).

October 30: The elite police force (Rapid Action Battalion) of Dhaka Police arrested two JMB militants from Rupnagar area of Dhaka city. They were identified as Shahjalal and Shamim (28). Police recovered arms and ammunitions, extremist literatures and leaflets from their possession ([Dhaka Tribune](#)).

INDIA



The three major conflict theatres in India witnessed three completely different types of developments in the review period. The security forces remained under high alert in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and a curfew was imposed in several places after militants attacked migrant laborers and truck drivers. The militant groups had attempted to attack outsiders and security forces. They also tried to provoke locals against security forces during curfew relaxation time. Targeting outsiders could affect the inflow of tourists into Kashmir and other commercial activities. The revival of militant groups could force the state administration to impose curfews and prohibitory orders in sensitive areas. Besides, the border districts (especially Baramulla, in Kathua, Poonch and Rajouri districts) of the Jammu and Kashmir region witnessed heavy firings from Pakistan Army as well.

While the newly formed union territory, J&K, witnessed high-intensity conflict, the central, south and eastern parts of India witnessed a mix of arrests and killings of some leftwing extremist cadres in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Kerala. For the first time, five Maoist cadres were killed in anti-Maoist operations by the state forces in an encounter. The incidents indicate that the banned CPI-Maoist has been trying to revive its presence in the southern parts of India to avoid ongoing operation 'green hunt' in the central and eastern Indian provinces. The Maoists also tried to disturb Assembly elections in the eastern parts of Maharashtra. Acting on the intelligence input, security forces foiled Maoist attacks during the elections by ceasing a large number of weapons in the dense jungles of Pendri in Gadchiroli district. Meanwhile, Indian intelligence agencies found that the CPI-Maoists has been attempting to revive the movements by generating extra funds and weapons from both internal and external sources. The outfit also extended its support to the separatist movement in Kashmir by criticising the government of India for scrapping Article 370 and 35A.

In the north-east, barring substantial progress in the peace negotiations between the central government and NSCN-IM, other insurgent outfits continued their violent activities. However, the number of incidents and casualties remained low due to regular counter-insurgency operation in the worst affected areas. Manipur especially witnessed a large number of violent incidents. Police Security Forces (SFs) recovered a large number of arms and ammunition suspected to belong to Zeliangrong United Front (ZUF) in a counter-insurgency operation at Chaiba village in Bishnupur district of Manipur.

The J&K will continue to remain the biggest challenge before the SF in the coming months with the onset of winter in the region. The revival of Khalistan based militant groups with their involvement in drug peddling and smuggling of arms could create serious law and order problem in Punjab. Similarly, Manipur could witness an increase in violence against developments in the post-Naga peace talks.

MAJOR EVENTS:

October 05: Three Indian engineers who were abducted by the Taliban militants in 2018 were released in prisoner exchange deal for securing the release of 11 of its members, including some high-ranking Taliban officials include Sheikh Abdur Rahim and Mawlawi Abdur Rashid (served as governors of Kunar and Nimroz provinces during Taliban rule). To note, seven Indian engineers working for a power plant in Afghanistan's northern Baghlan Province were kidnapped in May 2018 ([Telegraph India](#)/Press Trust of India).

October 06: Jammu and Kashmir's top Police official Dilbag Singh said that between '200 to 300' terrorists are active in the State and Pakistan has intensified cross-border firing to push in as many of them as possible before the onset of winter. He said that several Ceasefire Agreement (CFA) violations (by Pakistan) are taking place in both Kashmir and Jammu regions. The CFA violations have been taking place in Kanachak, R S Pura and Hira Nagar, Poonch, Rajouri, Uri, Nambla, Karnah and Keran ([Times of India](#)).

October 07: The Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM) operational commander Riyaz Naikoo has been instigating people to continue with their resistance and not to open business establishments in Srinagar and beyond. Meanwhile, Dr Saifullah (Abu Musaib a resident of Malangpora, Pulwama) another HM commander is touted to be the next Operational commander of the militant group in Kashmir, replacing Riyaz Naikoo ([Times of India](#) October 7).

October 09: India's security officials informed that Pakistan has activated 20 militant training camps and as many launch pads along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir. The militant activities at the Pakistan side of the Kashmir (PAK) have been increased to ensure safe infiltration into J&K before the onset of winter. These terror training camps and launch pads were temporarily shut down following the February 2019 Pulwama suicide attack on the Paramilitary convoy. The suicide attack triggered retaliatory Indian Air Force bombing in Pakistan's Balakot area ([Daily Excelsior](#), October 9).

October 12: Al-Qaeda In Indian Subcontinent in its latest propaganda video wanted to expand its appeal in South Asia with renewed calls for Kashmir jihad. The 23 odd minute long video titled "Kashmir: The lion will wake up now" was released via al-Qaeda's official media arm al-Sahab on its website and its channel on the messaging service Telegram. AQIS used India's ongoing clampdown in Kashmir to call for jihad and attacks against Indian military and government personnel. In the latest video (by As Sahab), AQIS's spokesman and now perhaps heading the group, following the reported death of Asim Umar, Usamah Mahmud appealed to Kashmir Muslims to take up jihad as was the only way to solve the problems of the Kashmiri people. The message described Pakistan government as "traitors" and accused them of preventing jihadists from entering Kashmir. Usamah Mahmud's message was in tandem with al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahri's July 2019 speech titled "Don't Forget Kashmir" in which he also called for attacks against India and blamed Pakistan for the "plight" of Kashmiris. Usamah Mahmud urged all Muslims to support the Kashmir jihad "with lives and wealth" and appealed them to participate in spreading jihadist propaganda by "pens and tongues" (Telegram Channel/[Al Sahab](#) web portal, October 12)

October 12: One member of now defunct 'Jamiyyathul Ihsania' (a.k.a. Sunni Tiger Force) arrested in Kerala's Malappuram area. He was arrested in connection with the case related to the murder of right wing RSS worker Sunil Kumar in Kunnamkulam two decades ago. Sunni Tiger Force extremist organisation was active in Thrissur, Malappuram and Palakkad districts of Kerala in 1990s. ([The Hindu](#)).

October 14: According to Y C Modi, chief of National Investigation Agency (NIA) the Bangladesh based JMB has been trying to spread its operations across India. Modi said the JMB has spread its activities in states like Jharkhand, Bihar, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Kerala in the guise of Bangladeshi immigrants. Another senior NIA official Alok Mittal informed that 'from 2014 to 2018, JMB has set up 20-22 hideouts in Bangalore and tried to spread its bases in south India. According to him JMB was keen to attack Buddhists temples to take revenge for the plight of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar ([India Today](#)).

October 14: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) registered 28 cases related to terror activities of Islamic State (IS) across India since November 2014. Around 127 people have been arrested from 14 states so far. Tamil Nadu tops the list with 33 people having been arrested in this connection. During investigation of the different modules, the NIA found that local recruits are connected with Syria or Iraq. Several arrested persons during questioning confessed that they were radicalised with hate speech of Zakir Naik, who is currently taking asylum in Malaysia. Separately, the NIA revealed that Left-wing extremist groups, who are active in almost 10 states in India are attempting to organise funding to facilitate training and purchase arms and ammunition for their cadres and to carry out attacks on security forces. The NIA also disclosed that Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) is expanding its footprints in Odisha, Jharkhand and Assam. They earlier spread their networks under the guise of Bangladeshi immigrants in some states like Bihar, Karnataka, Kerala and Maharashtra ([The Times of India](#)/[The Times of India](#)/[India Today](#)).

October 28: Kerala police killed four Maoists, including a women cadre, inside the forest areas of Attapadi Hills of Palakkad district of the province. Police sources said the Maoists were part of the Kabani *Dalam* (squad). The police recovered unspecified number of arms and ammunitions, including AK-47 rifles and communication devices from the incident site. Separately, the Ministry of Home Affairs, India, annual report said for 2018-19 said, as many as 3,749 people lost their lives in 10,660 incidents of Maoist violence in 10 states since 2010 ([India Today](#)/[The Economic Times](#)).

October 29: Two dissident leaders from Manipur claiming to represent King Leishemba Sanajaoba announced the launch of the "Manipur Government in exile" in London in the UK. Addressing a press conference, Yamben Biren, claimed to be the "Chief Minister of Manipur State Council" and Narengbam Samarjit, claimed as the "Minister of External Affairs and Defence of Manipur State Council". They said they were speaking on behalf of the 'Maharaja of Manipur' to formally launch the government-in-exile -- "The Manipur State Council". They claimed that after getting their asylum status in the UK, "the de jure government is shifted from Manipur to London". ([Hindustan Times](#))

October 29: The death of Abdul Hameed Lelhari, chief of Ansar Ghazwat ul-Hind was confirmed on the messaging app Telegram on 29 October by AL-HURR media, the official media unit of AGH. Lelhari died in a gun battle with the Indian army on October 22. The Al Hurr statement also announced that Ghazi Khalid Ibrahim would act as interim

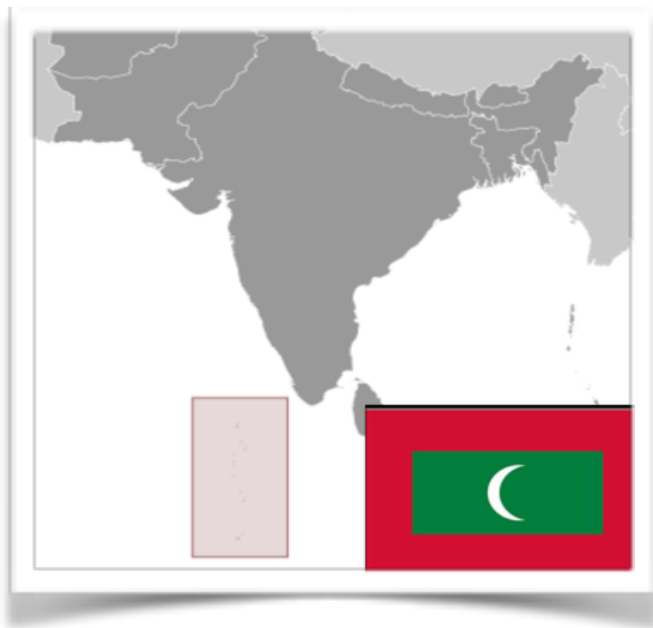
leader while Abu Bakr Shopiani and Umar Mansour would serve as deputies. It said AGH's Shura Council would later decide on a permanent leader for the group. AQIS affiliate in Kashmir AGH lost two of its founding leaders and Zakir Musa (death in May 2019) and Hameed Lelhari (Oct 2019) and both these successive deaths this year have certainly dent AGH presence and capability in Kashmir. In October, beside Lelhari, four AGH/AQIS militants were also killed in separate encounters in the State. (TELEGRAM MESSAGING, OCT 29, 2019).

October 30: Total SIX migrant workers were shot dead (one died later) by terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir's Kulgam region. One person has been critically injured in the attack. The labourers hailed from Murshidabad in West Bengal. With this incident a total eleven civilians, including four truck drivers, were killed by the militants since August 5, 2019 in Kashmir ([India Today](#)).

October 31: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) raided six locations in Tamil Nadu state to arrest suspected Islamic State affiliated group which is planning Hindu leaders murder in the country. Locations were Kovai (Coimbatore District), Elayangudi (Sivaganga District), Trichy (Tiruchirappalli District), Kayalpattinam (Thoothukudi District) and Nagapattinam (Nagapattinam District). NIA was probing into the alleged conspiracy to kill Hindu Makkal Katchi leader Arjun Sampath and his son Omkar by the IS-inspired groups. In September, 2018 a Special Investigation Unit of the Coimbatore Police had foiled a plot by seven members of an IS-inspired Islamic group in Tamil Nadu to murder Sampath, Hindu Munnani leader Mookambikai Mani and Sakthi Sena leader Anbu Mari ([FreePress Journal](#)).

October 31: At least two Islamic State suspects Mohammed Azaruddin and Sheikh Hidayathullah, with alleged links to Sri Lanka Easter Sunday blasts were taken into custody in Kochi, Kerala. Both suspects were arrested in June 2019 from Coimbatore district. Sheikh Hidayathullah was arrested for his alleged association with Student Islamic Movement of India (SIMI). Mohammed Azaruddin was arrested for running a Facebook page called 'KhilafahGFX' through which he had allegedly been propagating Islamic State (IS) ideology ([New India Express](#)).

MALDIVES



In the Maldives, the issue of 'Islamic radicalisation' is back again thereby dominating the national discourse in October 2019. While the government is stringently enacting a anti-terrorism law in the country by proscribing jihadi groups operating in the region, restricting movements of radicals to join civil war in Syria, and arresting active extremist elements in the country, at the same time, it succumbed to pressure from pro-Islamist lobbies and suspended a human rights NGO Maldives Democracy Network (MDN) for exposing the growing radicalisation in the country in a 2015 report titled 'Preliminary Assessment of Radicalisation in Maldives'. Popular protests backed by opposition political parties started again in the name of 'defending Islam' or against the 'liberal tendency' and rallies against the government were organised for not criticising or acting against the MDN office bearers and the report that allegedly insulted Islam and Prophet Muhammad. The pro-

Islamic lobbies have also found that the report ridiculed the Muslim faith and practices of the Maldivians. While the ban and dissolution of MDN is awaiting government nod following an inquiry till late October, Male administration has taken a noteworthy step by arresting Muhammed Ameen, the militant recruiter for Islamic State (IS) who was freely roaming in the country until now. With proper interrogations, more skeletons will be coming out of the closet soon. The month ended, however, with a couple of negative developments: the Turkish government deported more than 25 Maldivians for attempting to enter the Syrian war zone and a suspected Maldivian IS-aligned group issued threat to "Slaughter" at least 10 secular and progressive personalities.

MAJOR EVENTS

October 12: One terrorist sympathiser was arrested for inciting violence, posting slogans and writings of terrorist organisations on social media. The suspect “called for endangering people’s lives and carrying out acts of violence in a manner that creates fear in the society,” according to Maldivian police. The arrest came two days after President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih ratified amendments to the anti-terrorism law that criminalised promoting or supporting extremist groups ([Maldivian Police Source](#)).

October 17: Islamist religious organisation Jamiyyathul Salaf (Chief, Abdulla Bin Mohamed Ibrahim) filed a complaint against Speaker Mohamed Nasheed at the Home Ministry and the Islamic Ministry for defending the contentious report on radicalisation in Maldives prepared by non-partisan NGO Maldivian Democracy Network (MDN) ([AVAS](#)).

October 22: The Speaker of Maldivian Parliament and former president Mohamed Nasheed said that those who were speaking out against a report published by the Maldivian Democracy Network (MDN) allegedly mocking Islam and the Prophet Muhammad were the same people who had been accused in the report of recruiting Maldivians for jihad in Syria. Nasheed made these claims in response to the Member of Parliament for Naifaru constituency Ahmed Shiyam criticising delays in government action against the MDN. Nasheed noted that the government as well as all political parties in the Maldives had condemned the report and that the report was being used as a weapon to attack the government to deter investigations into those implicated in the report as recruiters. ([AVAS](#)).

October 23: Muhammed Ameen, the suspected militant recruiter for Islami State (IS) was arrested. According to the information shared by Maldives Police, Ameen was suspected of “spreading extremist ideology widely in the Maldives, sending Maldivians to wars outside the country, and leading efforts to recruit people for militant group.” Last month in September 2019, Ameen was figured on U.S. Department of the Treasuries Office of Foreign Affairs Control (OFAC)’s publicised list of terrorists. He is allegedly known to have materially assisted, sponsored, or provided financial, material, or technological support for IS-Khorasan (IS-K) in Afghanistan. Ameen was suspected to be involved in 2007 Sultan Park bombing in Maldives capital Male that injured dozens of tourists ([The Edition](#)).

October 27: The opposition political party in Maldives warned of a popular uprising in the country as protests continued across the country calling on the government to ban NGO Maldivian Democracy Network over the alleged slander of Islam in a 2016 report on radicalisation. Religious scholars launched the campaign to ban MDN earlier this month after screenshots of offensive sections in the report were widely shared on social media ([Maldives Independent](#)).

October 28: Maldivian IS-Aligned Group Calls To “Slaughter” Activists. More info on this to be confirmed (*Telegram/SITE Intel*).

October 31: According to documentary aired on 31 October (Al-Jazeera, Doha) on the extent of religious extremism in the Maldives claimed that the Turkish government has deported more than 25 Maldivian and backlisted 134 ([Al-Jazeera](#)).



NEPAL



After a long gap, Nepal witnessed a violent conflict between Muslim and Hindu communities in the Kapilavastu district. The district witnessed violence during late October when a Muslim mob allegedly attacked a group of Hindus while they were taking part in a religious procession around the Krishnanagar Bazaar area in the city. One person was killed as police fired to disperse the crowd following the violence. After the incident, the district administration imposed an indefinite curfew around the Krishnanagar area. The incident had occurred after the Hindu group was attacked with stones and bricks from nearby rooftops by another group, probably Muslims while taking part

in a procession around the Krishnanagar Bazaar area.

This is not the first incident in that district of its kind. It witnessed a similar kind of incident in 2007. Over six persons were killed in the sectarian violence between Muslims and Hindus when a Muslim political leader and former head of an anti-Maoist group was killed by suspected former enemies, local Maoists. When the news became public, the Muslims suspected that as an act of the Hindus and in response they attacked vehicles and torched the homes of more than 200 Hindus. The Hindus retaliated by attacking and beating Muslims. Two mosques were destroyed and the fire was set on houses owned by Muslims. An intervention from the district administration had brought the situation under control.

In a separate development, in a major blow to the outlawed Chand-led Nepal Communist Party (NCP), the security forces arrested several leaders including six central committee members. Based on the information from these arrested Maoists, the Nepal Police arrested another eight cadres of the NCP from different parts of Nepal. In a separate event, the Netra Bikram Chand-led Communist Party of Nepal (CPN-Maoist-Chand) cadres attacked two central members of the ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP), Niraj Acharya and Dambar Bahadur Singh, at Barekot Rural Municipality in Jajarkot district of Province six. Despite the arrest of so many cadres, the outfit continued its regular political and violent activities like extortion, land grabbing, and planting pressure-cooker bombs in the remote areas of Nepal. The outfit has rejected the offer of peace talks extended by the government on several occasions.

MAJOR EVENTS

October 17: Police arrested 21 leaders, including six central committee members, of the outlawed Nepal Communist Party (NCP) from Rajpur rural municipality during their politburo meeting in the Dang district. Those arrested include Chandra Bahadur Chand, the brother of NCP chairman, Netra Bikram Chand. Chandra was the chief of NCP's western command. ([My Republica](#))

October 18: China pledged military assistance worth NPRs 2.4 billion (US\$22 million) to the Nepali Army for humanitarian and disaster relief purposes. Defense Minister Ishwar Pokharel signed the agreement on the assistance in Beijing. Earlier, "The cabinet (Nepal) entrusted the defense minister to sign the agreement on China's Provision of Military Assistance Gratis to Nepal. China had also provided an assistance worth the same amount to the Nepal Army in 2018. ([My Republica](#))

October 31: The Holy city of Kapilvastu in Nepal witnessed a communal (Hindu-Muslim) violence. One person died in police firing ([Patrika News](#)).

PAKISTAN



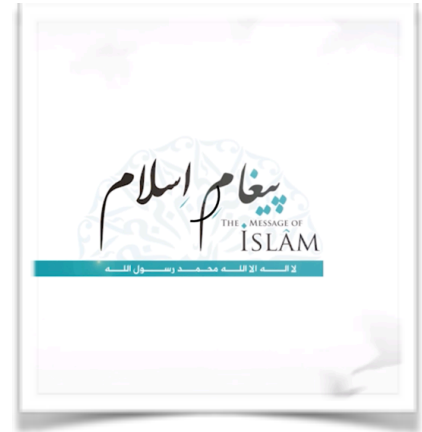
In October, Pakistan witnessed simmering political tensions with growing clamor for Prime Minister Imran Khan's resignation for concerns over the state of poor economic condition, corruption, terrorism financing and against the government's backing for crackdown on the opposition political parties in the country. Massive anti-government protest marches were organised across the country that was started by Maulana Fazlur Rahman, the chief of the right-wing Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazl (JUI-F).

This protest snowballed into countrywide rallies joined by opposition parties, including Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan People's Party (PPP), and Awami National Party (ANP). Much before the Maulana Fazlur Rehman-led party's anti-government 'Freedom (Azadi) March', the government banned its military wing Ansar-ul-Islam to receive criticisms from religious and political groups.

While the trouble for Imran Khan's government is not yet over and the coming months would be challenging as oppositions' unity is gathering more strengths for obvious reasons (e.g. poor Kashmir and Afghan postures), Pakistan however, witnessed a relatively calm month as far as militant violence is concerned.

MAJOR EVENTS

October 01: Al-Qaeda' in Indian Subcontinent (AQ South Asia branch) has called for violent jihad to establish Sharia rule, in the latest video instalment of a four-part documentary titled "the Message of Islam". The group released the video via its media arm As-Sahab (Subcontinent) on the messaging app Telegram. The episode, which is the final in the series, is titled "Is peaceful struggle the path to the establishment of the Sharia?" The 35-minute final episode is the longest in the series and focused on explaining the role of violent jihad in achieving religious dominance for Islam. It discussed the concept of non-violence propagated by India's freedom fighter Mahatma Gandhi as well as Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, who founded the Islamic Ahmadi movement in what was then British-controlled northern India. ([As Sahab Media Foundation](#)).



October 03: The Afghan government has criticised the Pakistani government for officially receiving a Taliban delegation headed by Mullah Ghani Baradar in Islamabad. The Taliban delegation has travelled from Doha (Qatar) to Islamabad (Pakistan) and was welcomed by Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi and the head of the ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence). Reacting to the developments, Afghan presidential spokesman Sediq Sediqqi said: "We do not want that the terrorist groups who do not believe in peace should be received in a manner that could encourage them to claim strong position in the Afghan war." ([Times of India](#)/[Tolo News](#))

October 16: The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) meeting in Paris decided in principle that Pakistan will remain on its grey list till February 2020 and directed Islamabad to take 'extra measures' for 'complete' elimination of terror financing and money laundering ([Dawn](#)).

October 24: The Interior Ministry of Pakistan issued a notification announcing a ban on the "militant wing" of the Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F). The proscription of Ansar-ul-Islam, which the ministry referred to as a "private militia/Razakar Force" of the JUI-F, happened days before the Maulana Fazlur Rehman-led party announced to lead an anti-government 'Azadi March'. According to the notification, the federal government had "reasons to believe that Ansar-ul-Islam has capable of functioning as a military organisation, in violation of the prohibition contained in Article 256 of the Constitution" ([Pakistan Today](#)).

October 24: At least eighteen members of the Islamic State (IS) group, including Pakistani and Jordanian nationals, have surrendered to the government in eastern Nangarhar province in Afghanistan. According to the the provincial governor, Shah Mahmud Miakhel total 18 armed members of the IS group have surrendered to the government. They were accompanied by 19 women and 25 children ([Afghan Islamic Press](#)).

October 29: Six soldiers and five civilians were injured during an exchange of fire at the Pakistan-Afghanistan border between security forces of both sides in Chitral District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa of Pakistan. ([Dawn](#))

SRI LANKA



Since Sri Lanka is going to hold its eighth Presidential elections on November 16, the review period witnessed intense debate on internal and external policy matters between the candidates. National security, foreign investments in infrastructure, growing incidents of drug peddling and foreign policy dominated the political debates and the political parties' manifestos. Major political parties have vowed to act against religious extremism, terrorism, and separatist movements. The state security forces remained watchful over groups and individuals involved in the revival of separatist movement.

Sri Lankan minority groups, especially the Tamils and

Muslims, are wary of those political parties who are closely associated with Buddhist radical groups like Bodu Bala Sena (BBS). The BBS has openly supported the SLPP candidate Gotabaya Rajapaksa. The minority groups feel insecure over BBS's ultra-nationalism positions. The minorities hope that justice could be done (for their rights and demands) if UNP candidate Sajith Premadasa becomes the President. Therefore, the results of the forthcoming Presidential elections would determine peace and stability in Sri Lanka in the future.

MAJOR EVENTS

October 08: UK's Counter-Terror Police arrested four Sri Lankan nationals after they arrived at Luton Airport on suspicion of being members of a banned organisation. The Metropolitan Police said the group were stopped under the Terrorism Act 2000 and arrested under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. ([Colombo Page](#)/[BBC News](#)).

October 13: Malaysian police disclosed financial transactions involving a huge sum of money had been carried out, believed to reactivate the banned Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in the country. Bukit Aman's Special Branch Counter-Terrorism Division (E8) Principal Assistant Director Datuk Ayob Khan Mydin Pitchay said the financial transactions were detected in the accounts of individuals detained in the operations carried out on October 10 and 12 over their alleged involvement in LTTE. The LTTE has been listed as a terrorist group in Malaysia since 2014 ([Daily Mirror](#)).

October 15: A group of Tamil political parties signed a memorandum highlighting the key demands of the Tamils. The memorandum was prepared by Tamil university students of the Jaffna and Eastern universities, after talks with the Tamil political parties. Illangai Thamil Arasu Katchi (ITAK), People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE), Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF), Tamil People's Council (TPC) and Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO) signed the memorandum. The memorandum contains 13 demands including a demand for a political solution and abolishing the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA). The memorandum was presented to the two main Presidential candidates contesting the election in November. ([MENAFN-Colombo Gazette](#)).

October 23: The final report of the Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC) on Easter Sunday Attack was presented in the Parliament in three languages – Sinhala, Tamil and English. The report highlighted Intelligence failure and named the President, the Prime Minister and the State Minister of Defence as 'culpable' persons who can be blamed for the tragedy to some extent. The committee has, however, found no evidence linking local jihadist group National Thowheeth Jama'ath (NTJ) with the Islamic State group despite a claim of responsibility after the bombing. ([Colombo Page](#), October 23/ Complete Report is in English available [HERE](#)).

October 24: Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) leader and Minister Rauff Hakeem rejected allegations of links with militants involved in the Easter Sunday attack as reported in media. He said it was a mud-sling campaign launched by political opponents ahead of the presidential election. Clarifying the photos being shared on media which shows Hakeem with a terrorist of the Easter Sunday attack in a hospital, he said he only bumped into him when he visited another patient in the hospital. Last week, the Organisation for the Protection of Muslim Rights' lodged a complaint with the Police Headquarters calling for the arrest of Hakeem Rauff Hakeem, over his alleged ties to the ringleader of Easter Sunday terror attacks Zahran Hashim. The group claims that Hakeem had met with the leader of the now-banned National Thowheed Jamaath (NTJ) organization, Zahran Hashim, who has been identified as the alleged ringleader behind the Easter Sunday bomb attacks, at the NTJ's office in Kattankudy during the 2015 general election period ([Adaderana](#), Oct 24; [Adederana](#), Oct 18).

October 29: President Maithripala Sirisena asked the cabinet that he would not accept the report compiled by the Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC) that probed the Easter Sunday carnage. The President asked the cabinet not to record it as approved by the cabinet whatsoever and instead asked the government to look into areas where security lapses had been highlighted. Earlier, in its findings, the PSC blamed the incident mainly on the lapses on the part of the State Intelligence Service and government leaders for failing to take action to prevent the attack that killed more than 250 people ([Daily mirror online](#)).



The South Asia Conflict Monitor (SACM) aims to provide in-depth analyses, country briefs, summary sketches of important players and a timeline of major events on issues relating to armed conflicts, insurgencies and terrorism. It also aims to cover the government's strategies on conflict resolution and related policies to tackle these risks and crises.

The South Asia Conflict Monitor is a monthly bulletin designed to provide quality information and actionable intelligence for the policy and research communities, the media, business houses, law enforcement agencies and the general reader by filtering relevant open source information and intelligence gathered from the ground contacts and sources.

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Editor: Animesh Roul (Executive Director, Society for the Study of Peace and Conflict, New Delhi)

Editorial Advisor: Nihar R. Nayak (Research Fellow, Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi)

Consulting Editor: Akanshya Shah

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