

South Asia Conflict Monitor

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



India-China Border Dispute: De-escalation will Depend on Geopolitical Dynamics

SACM Assessment

While the entire world has been reeling under the COVID-19 crisis since the beginning of this year, South Asia has witnessed a spike in border disputes, besides facing the rapid spread of the pandemic itself. Although many of these disputes existed before the COVID period, the Chinese claims of territories in India and Bhutan and Nepal's claim of three disputed territories which India has traditionally claimed to be its own has brought a new dimension to the security discourse in the sub-continent. In an incident that claimed heavy casualties in the Indian side, around 20 Indian Army personnel were killed in a surprise attack by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) personnel while crossing the Line of Actual Control (LAC) into Indian side on June 15 in the Galwan Valley.

History of dispute

China-India border dispute is one of the oldest border disputes in the Himalayan region dating back to the 1950s when China occupied Tibet, which was long considered a geographical and cultural buffer between India and China. This sudden geopolitical change in the Himalayan region dragged India into a border dispute with China,

which was not a signatory to the McMahon Line as per the 1914 Simla Convention between British India and Tibet. While the Republic India inherited British India land and accepted the McMahon Line as the legal border, the same was rejected by China stating that Tibet was never independent. This has resulted in frequent crossing and transgression of the LAC by the PLA into the Indian side. The other factor that weighs heavily on the Chinese aggression time and again towards India has been the presence of Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government in exile in India. Off late, the growing cooperation between India-USA and construction of border infrastructure by India are the primary concerns of China.

Complete disengagement

The May 2020 transgression by the PLA in the Ladakh region came as a surprise to India because the PLA violated the existing bilaterally agreed border patrolling protocols. The PLA prevented border infrastructure projects in Ladakh sector of

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the border by crossing the LAC. The PLA also wanted to change the status quo in the region unilaterally. The situation in the area deteriorated after around 250 Chinese and Indian soldiers engaged in a violent face-off on May 5 and 6. A similar incident followed the incident in Pangong Tso, this time in North Sikkim on May 9. Both the sides agreed to deescalate the tension after holding talks at the Major General level as per the existing bilateral mechanisms the first Major General level talks happened on June 6, and both sides agreed to disengage from their actual positions.

Despite that, the Chinese did not implement the June 6 decision and continued its troop presence in the Galwan Valley, which was a strategically vital point to neutralise Indian dominance in that region. In a surprise attack by the PLA, 20 Indian Army personnel, including a colonel, were killed in the Galwan Valley in eastern Ladakh on the night of June 15. However, China has been silent on the casualties suffered by the PLA in that incident.

Following the standoff in eastern Ladakh, official sources have claimed that the two sides have deployed additional troops along the LAC, the de-facto Sino-India border, in North Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Arunachal Pradesh in the last few days. After the standoff in early June, the Indian military leadership decided that Indian troops will adopt a firm approach in dealing with the aggressive posturing by the Chinese forces in all the disputed areas of Pangong Tso, Galwan Valley, Demchok and Daulat Beg Oldie.

Despite four rounds of Major General rank officers' level talks since June 6 and one round of telephonic conversation at the NSA (National Security Advisor) level in July, the tension at the border continues. The Indian side has been asking for the restoration of status quo ante and immediate withdrawal of thousands of those Chinese troops from the areas that India considers presently on its side of the LAC. In the last meeting on June 30, both sides reportedly agreed to mutually move back their troops in flash-points by up to 2 km in the Ladakh sector to bring down chances of a confrontation. However, the Chinese Army has been gradually ramping up its strategic reserves in its rear bases near the LAC by rushing in artillery guns, infantry combat vehicles and heavy military equipment ([India Today](#), June 17, 2020). In Pangong Tso, the Chinese are still holding the ridges in finger 4. Also, the Chinese troop is yet to vacate areas between Finger 5 and Finger 8, which India claims is its territory ([Deccan Chronicle](#), July 17, 2020).

New Delhi appears concerned that the second phase of disengagement between India and China is going to be tough and will need more negotiations. In this regard, the China Study Group (CSG) headed by NSA Ajit Doval met on July 15 to review the emerging situation in Ladakh and how to proceed ahead with China. The CSG, which is the apex policy advisor to the government on China, discussed the outcome of the 4th Corps Commanders meeting between India and China. The meeting was followed by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's visit to the forward areas in LAC and LoC in the Ladakh region on July 17. Earlier, on July 3, PM Modi visited Ladakh to review the ground situation.

Assessments

Other than the military aggressions, China has also used India's smaller neighbours to put pressure on India not to alter the status quo in the Ladakh region. The Global Times on June 18 said, "India could face military pressure from China, Pakistan or even Nepal if tension along the border [India-China] continues to escalate". Moreover, the Chinese tactics to build pressure against those countries with which it has territorial disputes is quite well known. It tries to put pressure on Indian leaders during negotiations while being fully aware that the elected government would come under pressure at home from media on the border issues.

While India wants China to completely disengage from Pangong Tso and Depsang plains besides reducing its troop's strength from LAC where China has amassed tanks, artilleries, radars and jammers, China seems unwilling to compromise. It has taken a rigid position mainly due to three emerging situations. First, China wants to send a message to India to distance itself from the US led Indo-Pacific Strategy and the US' demand for sending the WHO medical team to investigate the source of coronavirus to Wuhan province. Second, China feels that India's border infrastructure development in the Ladakh region could pose a risk to the CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor) project. Third, there is a Chinese perception that the depending bilateral relationship between India and the US could be used against it. In that case, India-China border dispute escalation and de-escalation would be determined more by the future global and regional politics rather than being settled by the existing bilateral mechanisms.





AFGHANISTAN



Despite a repeated appeal to restrain from violence by the international community, Afghanistan witnessed an escalation of violent activities in the review period. Despite the Taliban's stated commitment to maintaining peace with the US, there were continued attacks on the Afghan security forces and civilians. The trust deficit and mutual suspicion between the Taliban and Afghanistan government intensified the conflict. Even after a month of the formation of the High Council for National Reconciliation under the leadership of Abdullah Abdullah, there is no sign of the beginning of intra-Afghanistan talks any time soon. The increase of violence, just before the onset of the intra-Afghanistan discussions, indicated that both the sides want to mark their geographical dominance by carrying out attacks on each other. The mutual suspicion between Abdullah and President Ghani could be another reason for this rise of violence.

Moreover, the review period witnessed intense high-level visits from Pakistan to Afghanistan and improvement in bilateral relations between the two countries. The US used Pakistan's contacts with the Taliban to restore peace in Afghanistan just before the peace talks.

MAJOR EVENTS:

June 01: The IS-Khorasan claimed responsibility for Kabul bombing which killed two employees of Khurshid TV station and seven others were wounded in the evening rush-hour attack on May 30. The explosion wounded at least six others including one of the employees of the TV channel. The Taliban group had earlier rejected the militants of the group were involved in the bombing. ([Khaama News](#))

June 02: An explosion at Kabul's Wazir Akbar Khan Mosque killed two people including the Imam of the mosque, Mohammad Ayaz Niazi. Several others were wounded in the explosion. ([Tolo News](#))

June 04: The Afghan government sources said the Taliban initiated on average 30 attacks on the Afghan security forces each day after the Eid-ul-Fitr ceasefire. Initially, there was hope that the Eid ceasefire would be extended to help facilitate the intra-Afghan talks. The Afghan forces also suffered casualties as a result of these attacks. ([Tolo News](#))

June 12: An explosion at the Sher Shah Suri Mosque in the Kart-e-Char, Kabul killed four people including mosque Imam Maulavi Azizullah Mufleh. The blast occurred during the Friday prayer. Mofleh was also serving as a member of the Afghanistan Ulema Council and a popular moderate scholar. ([Tolo News](#))

June 15: President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani ordered to the security institutions to ensure the security of religious scholars following a series of deadly mosque bombings. Two religious scholars Mohammad Ayaz Niazi and Maulavi Azizullah Mufleh were killed in deadly bombings recently in Kabul. ([Khaama News](#))

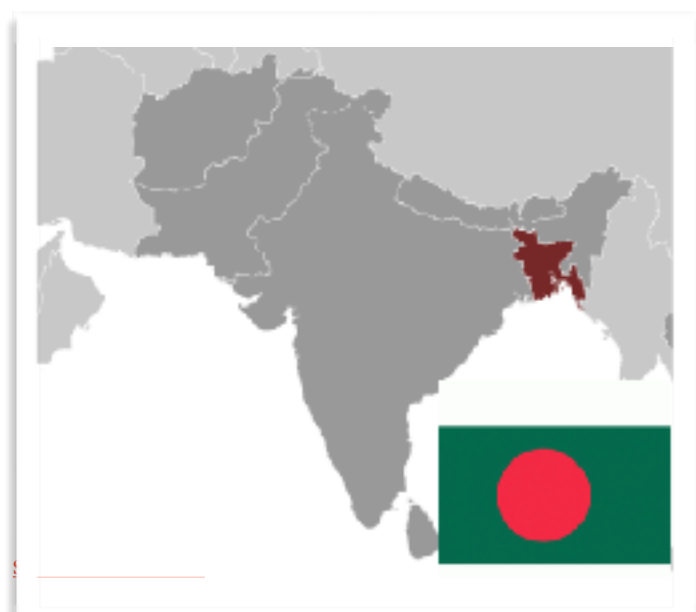
June 22: Afghanistan National Security Council confirmed that the Taliban militants carried out 422 attacks in 32 provinces since June 15 by killing 291 Afghan National Security Forces (ANDSF) members and wounding 550 others. The level of violence has increased while efforts are also underway to start intra-Afghan talks aimed at ending the ongoing violence in the country. ([Khaama New](#))

June 24: Abdullah Abdullah, head of Afghanistan's High Council for National Reconciliation, said the proposed dialogue has created a rare opportunity and both sides must be ready to make compromises to help end decades of hostilities. This remarks, however, are contrary to Afghan President Ashraf Ghani's recent statement in which he rejected the possibility of stepping down from his office in favour of an interim government in the event of a potential peace deal with the Taliban. ([Voanews](#))

June 25: The World Drug Report released by the United Nations Drugs and Crime Office's (UNODC) shows a decrease in opium cultivation in the country in 2019 in which Afghan farmers planted opium poppy on 163,000 hectares of land. The opium cultivation is, according to the report, is 38 per cent less than in 2018 when 263,000 hectares were planted. The report also says that all the main opium poppy-growing provinces saw significant decreases in the amount of land growing poppy in 2019. ([Tolo News](#))

June 29: Afghanistan interior ministry said more than 80 per cent of the poppy is cultivated in the areas controlled by Taliban militants, who gained plenty of incomes from drug product and trade. Police have launched 4,833 operations against drug traffickers since the beginning of 2019, during which, 5,620 smugglers including 89 government employees, had been arrested. The interior ministry data shows that 27 counter-narcotics police have been killed in a confrontation with drug smugglers since the beginning of last year and another 70 officers have been wounded. ([Afghanistan Times](#))

BANGLADESH



In the review period, Bangladeshi security agencies' actions against the radical groups continued. During the operations, the Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) exposed covert activities of the Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and the Ansar al-Islam (AI). Despite arrests of its several top leaders over the last six months, the JMB and the AI continued to propagate extremist ideology through social networking sites and recruited like-minded people.

Bangladesh's consistent and continuous action against the radical Islamic groups has brought

down the number of terrorist activities in the country drastically. The same policy will continue in future too. Moreover, counter-insurgency cooperation between India and Bangladesh will further curtail the free movement of the radical groups in the bordering regions.

On the political front, the main opposition party, the BNP, accused the Awami League, the ruling party, for alleged 'suppressing' of opposition leaders and their activists through various repressive acts to continue its 'corruption and plundering'. The BNP, earlier, had decided not to participate in the by-elections of the Bogura-1 and Jashore 6 constituencies. The BNP boycotted the elections as its demand for the postponement of polls was rejected by the Election Commission. The EC however, defended its decision to hold the election as a constitutional obligation.

MAJOR EVENTS:

June 01: Bangladesh police (Rapid Action Battalion-RAB) arrested five Jamaatul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) militants from Nalikhali area in Mymensingh district. The militants were identified as Monwar Hossain Majon, Sanwar Hossain Sajon, Shafiqul Islam, Mustafa, and Abdus Samad. They have possessed Jihadi literatures (books, leaflets, audio visual files among other things ([Daily Star](#)).

June 08: Bangladesh Police have launched a crackdown on people trafficking after the killings of 26 migrant workers in Libya on May 28. The Bangladeshis were killed in what the Libyan authorities said was a revenge attack by relatives of a human trafficker who was killed during an altercation with the migrants. Several people have been arrested in this connection. The accused also face charges under the Anti-Terrorism Act. ([UNB News](#))

June 10: The Al Qaeda in Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) released online contents to instigate people to launch 'lone wolf' attacks against Indian Government. The AQIS has recruited a huge team of Islamic scholars and clerics based out of Bangladesh to create content for broadcasting using similarly-named profiles on websites and digital platforms, intelligence inputs have claimed. The terrorist organisation has released a cache of provocative content online in order to launch propaganda attacks against India, its security agencies, Hindutva leaders, businesses and a "certain category of persons". The Bangladesh unit of AQIS has apparently also uploaded a series of videos on a website, intelligence inputs shared with security agencies stated ([Times Now](#)).

June 14: The Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) of Bangladesh police have arrested a cadre of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) from Rajoir area in Madaripur District. He was identified as Khokon Miah and found to be with several Jihadi literature (books and leaflets). Earlier on June 09, RAB arrested two other JMB operative from Ruhul Amin Mallik and Mostafizur Rahman from Mohakhali area of Dhaka city. ([Dhaka Tribune/ Dhaka Tribune](#))

June 14: RAB of Bangladesh arrested four suspected cadres of Ansar al-Islam (Al Qaeda linked banned group) from Kazipara area in Rajshahi District of Rajshahi Division while they were holding an 'anti-state meeting'. The arrested are Abdur Rahman, Ali Sumon, Hridoy Khan Parvez, and Ashraful Islam. Abdur Rahman is Rajshahi University (RU) student. ([Dhaka Tribune](#))

June 15: The RAB has detained a suspected member of the banned militant outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) in Rajoir of Madaripur. The detainee, Khokon Miah, has confessed to being an active member of the militant group and was involved in the recruitment of members for the banned militant outfit. ([Dhaka Tribune](#))

June 18: Islamic militant groups are engaged in spreading their violent ideology online during the coronavirus pandemic, according to the Bangladesh officials. The Ansar Al Islam group in particular, an affiliate of al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), is using COVID-19 to its advantage through activities over the internet. ([BenarNews](#))

June 19: British citizen Shamima Begum, who left the United Kingdom at the age of 15 to join the Islamic State (IS), will not be allowed to enter Bangladesh as She was never a Bangladeshi citizen, according to the Foreign Ministry sources. In February 2015, Shamima, aged 15, left her home with two other teenagers, Kadiza Sultana,

then 16, and Amira Abase, then 15, and travelled to Syria to join IS. She was found, nine months pregnant, in a Syrian refugee camp in February 2019. In February 2019, the then British home secretary Sajid Javid revoked her citizenship for her action. He used a clause in the related law that empowers the home secretary to cancel the citizenship of a British national if he or she does not become stateless. ([Dhaka Tribune](#))



INDIA



Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and Maoist affected regions of India witnessed a spike in violent activities in comparison to previous months. However, the same became slower in the North East (NE) region due to the continuation of COVID-19 related restrictions. The number of arrests and surrenders in the NE region increased perhaps because the rebel groups are finding it hard to operate under a lockdown. However, as the lockdown was relaxed by the last week of May, the Maoists attempted to regroup in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Maharashtra. Given the increase of violence and continuation of local protests against the killing of some militants, the ban on high-speed internet in J&K remained till the last week of June. The locals have complained to the authorities regarding the slow internet speed. The high-speed internet service in this region has been cut off since August 2019 after amendments in Article 370.

In the rest of India, as the lockdown was relaxed and inter-state transportation was restored, the stranded migrant labourers returned to their native places. A large number of them have faced hardships not only on their way home but also rising social discrimination after reaching their destinations. The local people are apprehensive of migrants returning home for fear of transmission of COVID infection. As the government of India has been planning to ease the lockdown in the coming months, the operations of the rebel groups in their respective areas will increase.

MAJOR EVENTS:



June 04: Pro-Islamic State jihadi media Al Tijara, released several graphic posters one of them featuring Bangladesh IS-Neo-JMB militants who had stormed the Holy artisan Bakery on July 2016. One of the posters with messages such as “The Kafir’s Blood is Hallal for You , So shed it”. Another poster, ‘Mujahid Diary’ calls for Muslims of India and Kashmir to wage jihad / war for the cause of Allah. It says, “ the war is not of Islamic State’s but War of people of faith against the people of disbelief. And it is the war to establish Khalifa in the light of Quran and Sunnah.” ([Telegram](#))

June 08: Police sources said nine terrorists, including three commanders of the Hizbul Mujahideen (HM), are eliminated in two separate encounters in Jammu and Kashmir's Shopian district. Around 88 terrorists have been killed this year (2020) in approximately 36 operations. ([NDTV](#))

June 08: The Special Task Force (STF) of the Kolkata (West Bengal, India) Police have arrested Sk. Rezaul alias Kiron, an operative of Jamaat-ul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), from West Bengal's Hooghly district. The arrest comes within 10 days of the STF arresting an alleged JMB operative, Abdul Karim, from Murshidabad district. Rezaul was a key person of JMB who is supposed to have worked in close liaison with Salahuddin Salehin and served as a leading fund collector of JMB in India. Abdul Karim, a senior commander of Bangladesh based terror group is also a close aide of JMB 'chief', Salauddin and leader of the Dhulijan module (Jangipur subdivision of Murshidabad. ([Mumbai Mirror](#); [Hindustan Times](#)).

June 12: Pro-Al Qaeda jihadist media group Global Islamic Media Front (GIMF) announced that it will be the "exclusive publisher" for the Kashmir-based jihadist group Ansar Ghazwat ul-Hind (AGH). GIMF statement on its channel on the messaging platform RocketChat said that in agreement with al-Hurr and al-Sindh, the media arms of AGH, GIMF will disseminate the group's releases. In the statement titled "important announcement", GIMF said "together we seek to strengthen the edifice of jihadi media in the Subcontinent, India and Kashmir in particular".



GIMF has been in operation since at least 2004, and disseminates propaganda for a range of established jihadist groups, such as the Somali al-Shabab and the Uighur Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP). AGH emerged in July 2017 and has since struggled to make inroads in Indian-administered Kashmir. ([Telegram](#))

June 18: Muhammad Inamul, a suspected Al Qaeda recruiter was arrested in Uttar Pradesh for trying to convince youth to join terror organisation. Inamul, a resident of Bareilly was using social media such as Facebook, WhatsApp and Telegram accounts to lure youths to wage jihad. ([Times of India](#))



June 18: The Islamic State Khorasan group has eulogised the Indian origin militant who played a central role in Kabul Sikh Gurudwar attack that killed at least 25 worshippers. The new details were published in a biography and tribute to the gunman, who had been previously identified by IS as Abu-Khalid al-Hindi. The article featured in the latest edition of IS's weekly newspaper al-Naba, released on 18 June. IS originally claimed the Kabul attack on the day it was conducted, saying it was carried out to avenge the oppression of Muslims in Indian-administered Kashmir. (Al Naba, Arabic, No.239)

June 19: Eight unidentified militants have been killed in two overnight encounters in Jammu and Kashmir in Shopian and Pulwama Districts of J&K. The slain militants have been identified HM and LeT cadres. To note, on June 10, Five Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM) and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) militants killed in an encounter with a joint team of security forces at Sugoo Handamah area in Shopian district (J&K) Incriminating material including arms and ammunition were recovered from the site of encounter ([Daily Excelsior](#), June 19; [Kashmir Press](#), June 10).

June 22: The fifth edition of pro-IS magazine "The Voice of Hind" was published via the magazine's dedicated Telegram channel. The magazine praised all pro-IS media groups including al-Rasiyat, al-Murhafat, Quraysh Media, the tech-focused Afaq (Electronic Horizons Foundation), Abu Hatun al-Janabi Media Production, Musammimi al-Khilafah and Fursan al-Raf (Knights of Upload). The mag criticised groups like al-Qaeda, the Taliban and the Kashmir-based Ansar Ghazwat ul-Hind (AGH) and appealed to AGH members to defect to IS. The major highlights of this magazine issue is their translations of excerpts from the recent message by IS spokesman Abu Hamza al-Qurashi, with embedded clickable links in the pdf version of the magazine directing

to transcripts of the speech in 14 languages including Dhivehi, Urdu, Hindi, Bengali, and Pashto. (**Voice of Hind/Telegram**)



June 23: Al Qaeda suspect Salman Wani was arrested from Ramban area of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) on June 21 by Uttar Pradesh (UP) Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS). His interrogation revealed explosive details about a sleeper cell network straddling west Uttar Pradesh and Kashmir. Wani's ideological mentor Inamul Haq, was arrested from Bareilly, UP on June 18. Both were engaged radicalising jobless youths in J&K and Western UP to create a jihadist outfit and fill the vacuum of Zakir Musa, slain 'founder' and 'commander' of the Indian wing of the Al Qaeda. ([Amar Ujala](#) (Hindi).

June 24: Pro-IS Kashmir group Jundul Khilafah (also ISJK) urged local pro-al-Qaeda militants of Ansar Ghazwat al-Hind (AGH) to defect and join the group. In its latest magazine Voice of Hind, Jundul Khilafah made the appeal to AGH, as it has failed to establish a foothold in Indian side of Kashmir since its foundation in July 2017. The four page article the pro-IS Kashmir group attacked al-Qaeda's ideology as soft and no longer hardline and criticised its relationship with the Afghan Taliban. "Leave all these false methodologies and return to the straight path... join the brothers of Islamic State... for they are steadfast and uncompromising in their call towards tawheed (monotheism)." ([Sawt al Hind, No 5](#))

Jun 26: Maoists have reportedly organised a programme in the Bastar region in Chhattisgarh where top Maoist leaders including new general secretary of CPI (Maoist) Nambala Keshav Rao, alias Basavaraju, head of battalion number of 1, Mandavi Hidma, Kosa, Devji and Sujata attended the meeting. The objectives behind the meeting to emphasise that Maoists would still rule the jungles of Bastar despite the death of Ramanna and would carry forward his legacy, to show of strength that villagers are with them and to discuss over the successor of Ramanna. ([Hindustan Times](#))

June 26: Dantewada district police Force prepares a Naxal 'Dossier' not for the internal consumption but to be distributed amongst Villagers and common people. This is a unique and first initiative take by the district police force to provide details of Naxals, their area committees, frontal organisations working in the area, area of operations, weapons used by them and entire profiles available with police have been made public for a common villager. The 'Dossier' consists of full details with photographs of 400 possible active Naxals and 600 members of six frontal organisations working in the district and nearby districts. ([Times now](#))



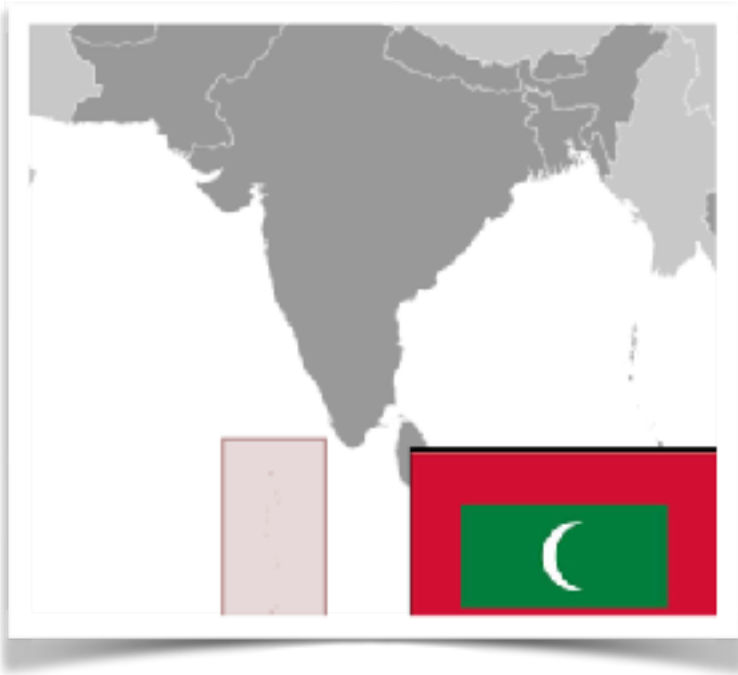
June 28: India wanted extradition of suspected 26/11 'mastermind' Sajid Mir from Pakistan, following recent United States report about his movement in Pakistan. India and US have both indicted Sajid Mir of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) group for the attacks. While Pakistan took action against LeT 'founder' Hafiz Saeed last year (2019), it continued to provide safe harbour to other top militant leaders, the US State Department's 2019 country report on terrorism said. One of them was Sajid, the "project manager" of the Mumbai attack,

believed to remain free in Pakistan, the US report said. ([FBI](#); [Hindustan Times](#))

June 30: Kashmiri separatist leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani resigned from his post as chief of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference. Geelani has named Abdullah Geelani as his successor. The exact reason for this development is yet to known to the public. ([Dawn](#))

MALDIVES

MAJOR EVENTS:



June 13: A prominent Salafist group in Maldives renewed calls to prosecute a Social sector NGO for blasphemy. Islamist hardliners in the country also applying the same tactics to a Maldivian women's rights organization, Uthema, calling for their immediate banning over their shadow report to a UN human rights mechanism. ([Avas, Dhivehi](#))

June 22: The Presidential Commission Investigation of Murders and Enforced Disappearances issued a statement denied that they have discontinued any investigations due to obstructions faced in carrying out the investigations. In their statement, the commission further assured that its work is ongoing. According to Majlis (Parliament) Speaker Mohamed Nasheed cited the Commission's letter and said the commission has only been able to investigate

cases and gather evidence that can only incriminate those physically involved in carrying out the murders. However, there is not enough evidence to press charges against those who funded the hits, said Nasheed. ([Avas News](#)).

June 23: The Maldives Police Service (MPS) arrested five suspects and taken another in custody, in an operation, in R. Maduvvari, Raa Atoll. The MPS launched the operation in connection to a group of separatists in an uninhabited island in the atoll engaged in crimes including organised robberies and damage to properties in residential and resort islands. A similar operation was conducted in late 2019. Hussain Siyad, an individual accused of spreading extremist ideologies, is believed to reside in this house ([Raajje](#))



June 23: Local NGO Uthema Maldives released a statement concerning serious misinterpretations of their work circulating on social media. The statement was released in response to criticisms regarding the NGO's comprehensive shadow report on Maldivian commitments to uphold the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Uthema publicized the report on 20 April 2020 with support from the Canadian Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI) after the Maldivian government submitted the sixth Periodic State Report to the United Nations regulatory body on CEDAW in April 2019. ([Edition](#))

June 26: The US annual terrorism report, (2019) underscored positive progress in counterterrorism efforts in Maldives under the present Solih administration. It noted July 2019 announcement Maldives' intent to facilitate the return and prosecution of Maldivian FTFs and families in Syria. Also mentioned about the amendment strengthening its 2015 Anti-Terrorism Act and subsequent designation of 17 terrorist organizations in September last year. ([US State Department](#))

NEPAL



Amidst the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, Nepal witnessed major political turbulence as senior ruling party-Nepal Communist Party (NCP)-leaders demanded the resignation of Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli. The NCP standing committee (SC) meeting started on May 24. Initially, in the SC meeting, the NCP leaders were only critical of PM Oli for his failure to deliver on governance, corruption and the government's inability to control the COVID-19 infections. However, the infighting in the party deepened. At the same time, senior leaders demanded that Oli must resign as the party chair and prime minister for his failure to run the government and the party effectively. He was also blamed for making nationalist rhetoric by accusing Delhi and the Pushpa Kamal Dahal faction for hatching conspiracies to unseat him. These

leaders claimed that Oli had lost the moral ground to lead the government and the party after the statement.

The failure of the government was reflected when hundreds of thousands of youths took to the streets in Nepal protesting against the government since June 9 by chanting the slogan "Enough is Enough". The youths are on the streets, demanding a better response from the government in handling the COVID-19 crisis. So far, more than 15,000 people have been infected, and over 40 people have died due to the COVID-19 infection.

In Nepal, a large number of ethnic and minority groups have been protesting against the Oli government from June 23 for bringing out a new citizenship bill, which imposes a seven-year threshold for foreign women marrying Nepali citizens to obtain naturalised citizenship. These protests have been going on regularly in the cities located in the Terai region and also in the capital Kathmandu.

Nepal may not face any serious political instability in the near future, except conflicts within the ruling political party due to intense factionalism. However, the failure of Oli government to offer good governance and to manage the COVID-19 crisis could lead to more political tension in Nepal.

MAJOR EVENTS:

June 09: The House of Representatives unanimously endorsed a proposal to consider the constitution amendment bill to pave way for replacing Nepal's map in the national emblem with the country's new political and administrative map which includes Kalapani, Lipu Lekh and Limpiyadhura. Apart from the ruling Nepal Communist Party, the main opposition party Nepali Congress and Madhes-based parties also backed the proposal to consider the constitution amendment bill. ([Myrepublica](#))

June 11: Around 500 demonstrators gathered at Bhatbhateni to demand the government improve quarantine conditions, make wider use of Polymerase Chain Reaction tests and make public the Covid-19 expenditure report. Police employed a water cannon and lobbed teargas at a peaceful protest organised in the Capital against the government's lacklustre response to the Covid-19 pandemic. ([Kathmandu Post](#))

PAKISTAN



The domination of Pakistan Army, especially Pakistani Chief of Army Staff, General Qamar Javed Bajwa, in domestic and foreign policy issues of Pakistan continued in the review period. The Imran Khan government and the Army deliberately instigated Baloch rebels to indulge in violence by undertaking extra-judicial killings and abductions of some youths in the previous months. The objective of this tactic was to link India with the Baloch rebels' retaliatory activities and divert the attention of the opposition leaders and the people from the failure of the government to manage the COVID-19 situation and the deepening economic crisis. For example, the Pakistan government claimed that it had prior information about the Baloch plan on attacking Karachi stock exchange. The way the attackers were neutralised indicated that security forces were prepared for the handle the situation. Despite having previous knowledge, Pakistan government allowed the incident to go unabated. Moreover, for all practical

purposes, the BLA (Balochistan Liberation Army) claimed the attack, which turned out to be a failure.

Politically, Imran Khan's offences against the main opposition party, the PML-N, and some media houses continued through the use of anti-corruption agencies. The Islamabad accountability court issued bailable arrest warrants against former President and PPP co-chair Asif Ali Zardari and former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Yusuf Raja Gilani in corruption charges.

The joint-venture of Pakistan Army and the PTI will continue to hound the opposition leaders, civil society groups and some selective media personnel in different corruption and criminal charges before the forthcoming parliamentary elections. It serves the interests of General Bajwa, who wants to continue to remain as an influential stakeholder in the State affairs and amid the radical religious clerics.

MAJOR EVENTS

June 05: The Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD), in a joint operation with other intelligence agencies, has arrested one of the 'most wanted terrorists' of an outlawed organisation, identified as Jan Alam, in Karachi. With his training in Afghanistan, the accused is an expert in making pressure bombs, tennis ball bombs, and motorcycle bombs. ([The News.com](#))

June 08: Pakistan People's Party chief Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said he was concerned over the law and order situation in Balochistan. He said in these extraordinary times when the whole country was falling victim to a disastrous immunity policy, the least that a provincial government can do is to keep law and order under control and not make itself controversial on that front. ([The Nation](#))

June 09: Pakistan's Army Chief of Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa held talks with President Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah, head of the High Council for National Reconciliation, and discussed peace efforts and Pakistan's role in Kabul. A statement by the Presidential Palace said that President Ghani and Gen. Bajwa discussed Pakistan's support for the peace process, and also discussed how the soil of either country should not be used against the other. ([Tolo News](#))

June 11: IS-Khorasan province reportedly received USD 200 million annually from Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), according to a documentary titled "Daesh in Afghanistan". ([Outlook India](#)).

June 13: Pakistan condemned attacks on Wazir Akbar Khan and Sher Shah Suri mosques in Kabul. A statement by the Foreign Office said these heinous acts resulted in the martyrdom of renowned religious scholars Dr Ayaz Niazi and Maulvi Azizullah Mofleh, and claimed the lives of other innocent worshippers. Pakistan also reaffirmed its solidarity with the people of Afghanistan and offered condolences to the families of those

affected by the terrorist attack. No group immediately claimed responsibility for the blast and the insurgent Taliban group condemned the attack. Zabihullah Mujahid, a Taliban spokesperson said that such systematic killings have begun taking place as the Afghan people have started taking steps towards peace. ([Express Tribune/MOFA](#)).

June 18: Islamabad-based Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) ruled that founder of Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) Altaf Hussain ordered the killing of fellow party leader Dr. Imran Farooq in the UK in 2010. Farooq was found dead outside his Green Lane house in north London in September 2010, a month after another senior MQM leader, Raza Haidar, was assassinated in Karachi. The court declared Altaf Hussain, Iftikhar Hussain, Mohammad Anwar, and Kashif Kamran as absconders for not appearing during the trial. ([The Indian Express](#))

June 25: PML-N senior leader Khawaja Asif criticised Prime Minister Imran Khan over his speech in the National Assembly in which the premier referred to slain Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden as "martyred". "Imran Khan called Osama bin Laden shaheed." ([Dawn](#))

June 25: Five Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) militants have been convicted for terror financing, keeping explosives and for running a media cell of jihadist group in Gujranwala (Punjab). They were arrested in a joint operation under the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) of Punjab in December 2019. The court found Abdullah Umair, Ahmadur Rehman, Asim Akbar Saeed, Muhammad Yaqoob and Muhammad Yousaf guilty of the offences. Each convict was handed down five years in prison for terrorism financing, seven years for keeping explosives, three years for supporting proscribed AQIS and one-year imprisonment for keeping literature of AQIS. The personal properties of convicts were confiscated and fines were also imposed on them ([Dawn](#), June 26, 2020; [Dawn](#), December 27, 2019).

HIZB UT-TAHRIR

— [Wilayah Pakistan] —

to liberate the Muslim lands of occupied [Indian-run] Kashmir... We are in desperate need of an Islamic leadership that ensures unity of Muslims and securing oppressed Muslims with military force. We need a leadership that rejects secularism, the nation state theory, the United Nations, democracy, the IMF and the colonialist laws and values. This will only occur when we are ruled by all that Allah [god] has revealed, with no compromise. It is binding on all to re-establish the Khilafah [caliphate] on the method of Prophet [Muhammad], so that our noble armed forces can earn the pleasure of Allah in the battlefield." The group recently stepped up its propaganda through its portals against regional governments , especially Pakistan. On June 17, a HuT commentary on its website in English- and Urdu-language on the recent China-India clashes in the Galwan Valley. The commentary said it is an ideal opportunity to establish "khilafah [caliphate]" in Pakistan, liberate Kashmir and Masjid al-Aqsa [the grand mosque in Jerusalem], as the kuffars [non-believers] have "weakened themselves" in the conflict. ([HuT, Pakistan](#); [HuT Info](#))

June 26: The United States (US) annual terrorism report, 'Country Report on Terrorism 2019', said Pakistan was doing too little to counter terrorist groups, particularly those taking aim at rival India and the dreaded Haqqani Network operating in Afghanistan. The report said Pakistan continued to serve as a safe haven for certain

regionally focused terrorist groups. It allowed groups targeting Afghanistan, including the Afghan Taliban and affiliated Haqqani Network, as well as groups targeting India, including Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and its affiliated front organisations, and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), to operate from its territory. Islamabad has yet to take decisive actions against Indian and Afghanistan-focused militants who would undermine their operational capability. ([CRT 2019, US State Department](#))



June 29: The Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) has claimed the responsibility the attack on Pakistan's Karachi Stock Exchange building. Four BLA militants killed along with four other security officials in the gunfight. The paramilitary Sindh Rangers later confirmed that all terror suspects involved in the attack have been killed. ([Express Tribune](#)/ ([Dawn](#)))

SRI LANKA



The ruling and the opposition parties in Sri Lanka are now busy preparing for the upcoming parliamentary elections scheduled to be held on August 5, 2020. However, the minority groups are increasingly worried about the repetition of the Gotabaya government's policies of ultra-nationalism, thereby harassing minorities' and the increase in militarisation of society to secure a majority in the Parliament. He had adopted the same tactics during the 2019-Presidential polls. The review month witnessed a spike in the number of arrests of members of the minority groups - Tamil and Muslim communities – from different parts of the country. It shows that the minority communities have lost their faith in the Gotabaya government. They are urgently looking for international communities' intervention to save their plight from a repressive government. If this trend continues, the Island country could witness a relapse of communal and ethnic tensions in the near future.

MAJOR EVENTS

June 20: Sri Lanka's probe into the April 2019 Easter Sunday terror bombings reached its final stages. The Colombo Crime Division, Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and the Terrorism Investigation Department (TID), who are investigating the attacks have arrested over 200 suspects so far. The inquiry into the deadly Easter Sunday bombings in Sri Lanka is now focusing on financial networks connecting suicide bombers and role of foreign groups suspected in the case. ([The Hindu](#))

June 21: Insaf Ahamed, the suicide bomber who blew himself up at the Cinnamon Grand Hotel on the Easter Sunday in April 2019), had spent nearly SLR 45 million within the first four months of 2019 for National Thowheed Jamath (NTJ) to conduct extremist activities in the country. According to Raveendra Wimalasiri of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) Insaf Ahamed owned several companies and always maintained a record on what purpose he was using funds. "However, in the first four months of 2019 he had used SLR 45 million but there was no record of the purpose. During investigations it was revealed that money had been used to conduct extremist activities within the country," he informed the Presidential Commission. ([Daily Mirror](#))

June 25: The UN Human Rights Council has called for an investigation on former LTTE deputy leader Karuna Amman over the "wholesale recruitment" of child soldiers for the Tamil separatist group. The UN body's demand came as Karuna was being probed over his recent claims glorifying the killing of Sri Lankan soldiers during the brutal civil war. Karuna alias Vinatagamurthi Muralitharan was questioned for over seven hours by the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) over his remarks that he killed over 2,000 Sri Lankan soldiers in the island's north during the LTTE's separatist war which lasted for over three decades. ([Indian Express](#))

June 29: Sri Lanka's Former Deputy Inspector General (DIG), Keerthi Gajanayake said before the Presidential Commission of Inquiry that IGP Pujith Jayasundara, who was sent on compulsory leave, should have act

immediately to prevent Easter Sunday attacks after receiving information about possible terrorist attacks. Testifying before the Commission, Gajanayake said that on April 09, 2019, State Intelligence Services (SIS) had sent a warning to the IGP about a possible terror attack which mentioned that Leader of National Thauheed Jamaat (NTJ) Zahran and his associates planning a terror attack within the country. The IGP had sent copies of these warnings to several SDIGs under him indicating a note 'For Necessary Action' (FNA). Daily Mirror



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.

The South Asia Conflict Monitor is scheduled to be published at the beginning of each calendar month, assessing events and developments of the previous month.

Editor: Animesh Roul (Executive Director, Society for the Study of Peace and Conflict, New Delhi) EMAIL: ANIMESHROUL [at] SSPCONLINE [dot] ORG

Editorial Advisor: Nihar R. Nayak (Research Fellow, Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (MP-IDSA), New Delhi)

Consulting Editor: Akanshya Shah

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The Society for the Study of Peace and Conflict (SSPC) is an independent, non-profit, non-partisan research organization based in New Delhi, dedicated to conduct rigorous and comprehensive research, and work towards disseminating information through commentaries and analyses on a broad spectrum of issues relating to peace, conflict and human development. SSPC has been registered under the Societies Registration Act (XXI) of 1860. The SSPC came into being as a platform to exchange ideas, to undertake quality research, and to ensure a fruitful dialogue.

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