Terrorism and Inter-State Relations in South Asia:
Analyzing the Enlightenments of the Bargaining Theories of War and Peace

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Abstract:

Terrorism has become more troublesome and challenging for the South Asian states as it threatens the security as well as the inter-state relations particularly of India, Pakistan and Afghanistan. The study aims to explore the reasons as to why the existing counter-terrorism policies of these states and the in-practice conflict management initiatives to curb terrorism have not been successful. It attempts to offer a broader perspective of the relationship of terrorism and inter-state relations in part explaining the ineffectiveness of these states against terrorism by utilizing the insights of the bargaining theories of war and peace. This study employs the qualitative method and relies on secondary data. The study finds that the influence of private information and the discrepancies about the actual power status of opponent relative to one's own capabilities makes the states more vulnerable against terrorism. The incorrect estimation of an adversary's inclination to fight and the inducements to misrepresent the private data on the bargaining table to get maximum benefit creates complications in state's commitment to resolve the issue.

Keywords: South Asia, terrorism, conflict management, bargaining, war, peace, regional security

INTRODUCTION

South Asia like many other regions of the world confronts a promptly transforming terrorism threat landscape. This threat is ever more transnational in nature though local grievances and sociopolitical dynamics have played important role in shaping the foreign policies of the terrorism affected states. The situation has been ill-used by different militant groups like Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) including sub-national and ethnic groups in almost all South Asian countries (SACs) and interconnected to a globally dominant narrative of conflict.

The new wave of terrorism that stemmed out of the incident of 9/11 altered the security and threat perceptions of the states (Khatri, & Kueck, 2003). Now the states have not only reformed their domestic and foreign policies according to their changing threat perceptions stemming out of terrorism rather the very definitions of national security, threat, peace and conflict has also changed. Most if not all states agreed at the United Nations that unless there is a clear understanding of the mutual threats, there could not be any concept of the collective security. For this purpose, a new orientation of the understanding of the threats is required among the states to appreciate this concept of collective security. It is pertinent to note that unless there is a consensus about these security threats where a threat to one must be considered as a threat to all and to be dealt accordingly, there could be no security for any single state.

It is true of South Asia where states not only share geographical proximity but historic experiences, ethnic ties and government structures as well. Due to this interconnectivity of experiences and traditional and non-traditional security threats, incidents occurring in a particular state of the

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region often have transnational and trans-regional ramifications in the entire region. While dealing with these transnational and non-traditional security threats SACs need to address a number of concerns related to historical background, local pressures, national security concepts, their perceptions of the neighbours' actions and apprehension about their intended or hidden objectives, and uncertainties as means for cohesiveness and confidence building in order to achieve the shared goals of national security and survival along with well-being. Although SACs are trying to manage the problems of terrorism at state level but what is lacking is co-ordinated and collective response at the regional level (Rosand, Fink, & Ipe, 2009). This weakness of states is benefiting the terrorist groups in the region that are becoming more networked and active to disturb the security and interstate relations in the region.

In order to find a resolve to the issue, terrorism has been dealt variously as a tactic, strategy, conflict, war etc. by scholars or policy makers (Sandler, 2014; Merari, 1993; Stepanova, 2008; Schmid, 2004). Caleb Carr (1996) defines terrorism as "...warfare deliberately waged" targeting the civilians in order to destroy their "will to support" both their "leaders and policies" so that the means of such violence find objectionable. As a new form of warfare, it requires new strategies to be dealt with (Shor, 2010). This study aims at looking the various conflict management strategies available and utilized by the three states of the region including India, Pakistan and Afghanistan in the wake of different terrorist incidents and how has it impacted the inter-state relations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Terrorism in South Asia must be studied with reference to not only its causes but also to the impact it has on the state relations alongside varied impressions it has on states and societies (Özdamar, 2008). Where there is a need to study the socio-economic causes along with the psycho-political ones and the role of societies as their psychological response in helping the states to devise a response towards terrorism and the terrorist, focus should also be directed towards various other aspects of this violent act (Krieger & Meierrieks, 2011). Terrorism has always dealt with under various frameworks such as conflict, disaster, asymmetric warfare or a tool of opponent in any war or conflict (Schmid, 2004; Waugh, 2007). States have been working to discover the solution of this grave problem under various umbrellas of strategies such as conflict resolution, conflict management, counter insurgency, socio-economic and political development focusing on the factors at play ranging from terrorist behavior to states' reactions to these violent acts of terrorism (Özdamar, 2008). One important aspect not to miss in this regard is the debate and the blame game of SACs of the other states sponsoring of terrorism.

There have been some studies that suggested a pattern to deal with the issue of terrorism that requires cooperative inter-state relations among SACs for a few reasons that include the transnational nature of terrorist groups, collaborative anti-terrorism efforts by the governments to deal with the terrorists and their handlers, intelligence gathering and cutting terrorists' finances among many (Schmid, 2011; Cragin & Chalk, 2003; Intriligator, 2010). Researchers investigated as how people view terrorism and how much approval exists for various terrorist activities in these states (Kaltenthaler, Miller, Ceccoli, & Gelleny, 2010), psychology of suicide terrorism in Pakistan (Lanche, 2009) and the social, political, geopolitical and geo-strategic impacts of participating in global war on terror for Pakistan. Origins of terrorism in SACs including Pakistan, India and Afghanistan have been traced to devise a conflict management strategy. In Pakistan, for instance, it

is found that the roots lie not in religion but in the societal and political decay, state totalitarianism, tyranny, oppression and financial fallout during the era of the US supported Afghan War. All these elements were engaged in recreation and escalation of fervent and obstinate groups involve in bloodshed (Murphy & Malik, 2009). Similarly, history of terrorism in India is also studied (Saraka, 2016) starting from the very independence of the state. Researchers rather included the events started from independence movement in 1940 to this account. Saraka, for instance, included all the separatist movements active in India. The tendency of occurrences of terrorist incidents has increased manifold. The research is an account of the secessionist and ideological terrorism in India. Terrorism in India is explained mainly in five broad categories: Khalistani terrorism, Kashmiri militancy, insurgency in North-East, the Naxalism, and the international terrorism.

Scholars pay attention to the inter-connectedness of terrorism occur in these three states of South Asia including the various forms of terrorist incidents, terrorist organizations, their targets, the response of all these three states to the terrorist incidents within their states as well as in other states, impact of their conflict management strategies and finally the shortcomings in their response. As terrorism does not fit into the traditional concept of war and also not fully explained by the traditional theories of war and peace so is the varied forms and manifestations of it. As for example Maley (2003) discussed the varied forms of terrorism in Afghanistan, Pakistan and India and talked about the similarities and connections of terrorist groups in these states and suggested confidence building measures are urgently required along with the support of major powers to assuage the possibility of any terrorist attack in any of these states that could harm the relationship of these states. Naazer (2018) discussed the religious, ethnic and cultural diversity as reason to intrastate conflicts and tensions in South Asia and the Indian strategy and use support of terrorism as a tool of its foreign policy to advance its interests in the region.

Meanwhile, some studies strove to find out the root causes of terrorism in South Asia using panel technique to show that an increased population, unemployment, inflation, poverty, inequality and political instability are some of the economic indicators that exhibit the positive association with the terrorism. Any such strategies that improve these economic and political conditions could better be utilized to the conflict management of terrorism (Akhmat, Zaman, Shukui, & Sajjad, 2014). War on Terror which was launched in the geographical theatre of South Asia was examined and the possibility of success in targeting the terrorist groups in the region is also investigated (Schmid & Hindle, 2009). However, such studies found that the traditional conflict management efforts of the states have somehow failed and what is needed now is a radically new approach to deal with international terrorism. The existing anti-terrorism policies of states are mainly derived from the traditional approaches to war and peace and these approaches not fully explain the reasons of the existence of terrorism. Therefore, instead of focusing on the traditional approaches of war, peace and conflict resolution, focus must be diverted towards conflict management of terrorism.

To find help towards this new approach of conflict management in dealing with terrorism, it is important to look at this changed form of conflict from the perspective of the individuals or groups that practice terrorist activity as they do so for a variety of reasons. Paul Pillar (2001) listed these reasons as leverage for bargaining, political or diplomatic disruption, influencing the behavior of a fearful population, provoking a government into reacting harshly and indiscriminately, showing the

flag, revenge, simple hatred, and the carrying out of a divine mandate. In order to overcome these obstacles, agents of change required to negotiate the conflict.

When it comes to negotiation, in most of the conflicts bargaining and negotiations are the default option available although the forms and manifestations may differ in different conflicts. This is the reason that much of the work of conflict resolution scholars centered on understanding the processes of negotiated interactions both when they succeed and fail. More recently, scholars have tried to better understand the negotiations and dispute resolution diminuendos in civil and regional conflict situations where parties turned to negotiated methodologies to resolve their differences even after pro-longed fighting. Unlike those in the past, the majority of conflicts during the last decade of the 20th century ended in negotiated settlements. Another important feature is the assistance of a third-party conflict. Where earlier approaches attempted to identify only the attributes of individuals, states, and systems that produced conflict, the bargaining theory of war now explains violence as the product of private information with incentives to misrepresent, problems of credible commitment, and issue indivisibilities (Fearon, 1995).

Bargaining theories can be found throughout the literature of multiple disciplines, other than political science and economics, dating back to Morrow (1989), Wagner (2000), Filson and Werner (2002; 2007), Reiter (2003), Tarar (2006), Powell (2002), McDonald (2011), and Ponsati and Sanchez-Pages (2012). Their focus on the crisis bargaining framework draws on a common story to characterize the process by which political disputes between states can escalate to war. Majority of the work in this realm focused on the bargaining, its nature, and prospects (Smith & Stam, 2004; Jackson & Morelli 2011) alongside the aspect of completely informed states (Slantchev, 2003).

METHODS AND MATERIALS

This study involves a qualitative analysis of the available and relevant data on the issue. A core of terrorism in SACs has been dealt with reference to the bargaining theories of war and peace. First section gives an introduction and orientation to the connection of terrorism with the bargaining theories of war and peace. Existing literature is discussed in the second section. The fourth section elaborates the impact of terrorism on the interstate relations in South Asia and highlights the ineffective conflict management strategies of SACs in the wake of various terrorist incidents. This section also elaborates the scholarship of bargaining theories and its various enlightenments to deal with the issue of terrorism and interstate relations. Almost all the bargaining theories hypothesized that the conflict occurs due to the information asymmetries or the inability to commit to any bargained outcome between the states. The terrorist incidents and the conflict management strategies of these states from the standpoint of the influences of private information, incorrect estimation of an adversary's inclination to fight, inducements to misrepresent the private data to get a better deal in bargaining and complications in commitments. Finally, key findings and recommendations for effective conflict management of terrorism and to reach ex-ante bargain or at least ex-post bargain for the inter-state relations are presented in the concluding section.

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Terrorism and Conflict Management in South Asia

In South Asia, terrorism has been a regular feature of states of Afghanistan, India and Pakistan as the statistics suggests that from 2002 to 2015, the region suffered from more than 25,000 incidents

of terrorism. According to the 2016 Global Terrorism Index, South Asia is the second-most affected region with three countries, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India, in the region ranking among those with the highest impact of terrorism (Procasky, & Ujah, 2016). It has, therefore, challenged the states' security and influenced their interstate relationship many a times to the extent that to keep the peace among these states becomes really hard. Tracing the reasons and factors that contributed influencing the relationship of terrorism, conflict management and interstate relationship in this region suggest that these factors are of different nature. Some of the factors could be divided into permanent, structural and organizational factors and others into situational factors. These factors have been studied in various forms and manifestations after every single terrorist incident but instead of leading towards some kind of resolve to the conflict, these investigations actually worsened the security situation in the region and resulted in more disturbed inter-state relations.

It is, however, important to note that all these states have been taking the threat of terrorism really seriously and trying hard to curb this menace and it is evident from the national threat perceptions and their domestic and international security policies as well. SACs try hard at national level as well as engaged themselves in regional and international commitments to stop terrorism but practically could not stop militants. The root of a failing war against terrorism is that it is being done by non-state actors. The governments are evidencing their incompetency in fighting the war against terrorism though they have been determined that they should not allow terrorist groups to be active within their states but somehow the political governments could not find success to enjoy over terrorism despite their every conflict management strategy.

Towards a better understanding of the present situation of terrorism as well as the state of inter-state relationship in South Asia needs to reconnoitered from a different lens of conflict management especially from one of its latest scholarship of bargaining theories that explain the reason of the ineffective conflict management by the political governments of these three states. Of all the bargaining models and theories, conceptual and theoretical framework, things generally fall into some of the categories that are not generally discussed especially with reference to these states.

These categories include firstly the influences by private information and the discrepancies about the actual power status of opponent relative to one's own capabilities. Secondly, terrorism as a new form of conflict resulted from the incorrect estimation of an adversary's inclination to fight. Another category of deliberations from the bargaining theories represents the inducements to misrepresent the private data to get a better deal in bargaining. Lastly, this theoretical tradition deals terrorism as an outcome of complications in commitments of these states.

Influences by Private Information
Apart from the general understanding and the narrative built by the governments of these states as why they fail to find a solution to terrorism, an important aspect to investigate is the presence of private information to the political governments before or after any terrorist incident. The private information seems to have strong influence on the decision makers to the extent that they fail to see things otherwise. The private information could also refer to the actual power status of the opponent or one's own capabilities relative to opponent and the discrepancies about them. These opponents could not only be the other states but also the terrorist groups as well.
There have been times in the history of these states' 'relations when the various terrorist incidents have altered the relationship of these states to the extent that these states resort their military

forces to the borders to demonstrate their power to each other in case the opponent failed to meet their demands of non-involvement into the territorial matters of that state especially in case of India and Pakistan. It all happened when the terrorists attacked the Indian Parliament back in 2001 for which India blamed Pakistan and the situation escalated to the extent that both the states called their armed forces on the borders. Same was the case with the Mumbai attacks in 2008. India believed that Pakistan had planned the Mumbai attacks. Pakistan denied all the claims of its alleged involvement in planning any terrorist attack against India. Pakistan on the other hand is convinced that Baloch separatism is flamed by the Indian agencies and has found a handful of evidences into it by capturing Kulbhushan Jadhav, an Indian national arrested in Balochistan, Pakistan, over charges of terrorism and spying for the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), India. Evidence also suggests that the India RAW funded and nurtured Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan activists against Pakistan (Naazer, 2019). The Afghan factor is also critical in their bilateral relations especially after 9/11. Same is true of Afghanistan as any terrorist incident in Afghanistan is to be blamed on Pakistan not only by the Afghan government but also by the US forces present in Afghanistan.

When it comes to the terrorism, security and inter-state relations, every single high-profile terrorist incident has its impact that is generally negative on the relations of these states. This negative impact resulted not only due to the incident or the target state's reaction but because of the private information and the influence it has on the states involved. As for instance, the immediate impact of Mumbai attacks in 2008 was felt on the ongoing peace process between the two countries. The end to the military standoff did not mean that the conflict has ended and normalcy re-established between the two states. Many sources cited casualties and the cost of the attacks but contrary to them**,** major victim was the peace process between the two nuclear powers that had just reached the point where both the sides were claiming to reach a momentous time of a historic resolution that would cater the unsettled disputes of the two states. Their claims became the victims of the terrorist attacks in Mumbai and witnessed the wisdom of the organizers and planners of such attacks that had achieved their objectives of generating fear and augmenting hatred between India and Pakistan afresh.

The world witnessed South Asia, more deepened in hatred, more divided and at risk of nuclear confrontation between the two major actors of the region in the coming years. India later cancelled its cricket team's tour of Pakistan that had been scheduled for January–February 2009. As the blame for the attacks was put on Pakistan by India and it was claimed that the handlers of the attacks were in Pakistan, India wanted Pakistan to take immediate measures and that are of India's choice related to the terrorists. Any delay by the Pakistani authorities in dealing with the alleged terrorist elements was strongly criticized by India. India's Minister for External Affairs, Pranab Mukherjee said about Pakistan that "if they don't act, then it will not be business as usual" (D'Souza, 2009). All these demands were made based on the private information about the attack and those involved in attack but India never shared that private information with Pakistan in the form of evidence as claimed by Pakistani authorities contrary to Indian claims.

An important point to note here is to know who is the actual opponent in this case as seeing it from one perspective and from the logic of all what happened, the enemy is the group of terrorists who conducted the Mumbai attacks as well as those who were responsible for organizing and planning the incident. There were two kinds of private information available in this whole crisis between the two states, one is that even before the Mumbai attacks, Indian officials had private information

about the possible planning of an attack of similar kind by the terrorists using the same route i.e. from sea to enter Mumbai to hit the targets in South Mumbai like Taj Mahal Hotel, and Oberoi Hotel etc. This private information was neglected by the Indian officials and they had not taken any serious notice of it. They expected that what so ever suggested otherwise by the intelligence report would not happen and the terrorists would not come and strike. If at all they would have taken it seriously, this attack would have been stopped. They underestimated the commitment of the terrorists by expecting that they would not attack as well as overestimated their own capabilities that they were capable of doing anything that was required to stop the terrorists on the spot. Secondly, terrorist attacks and the terrorists' identity increased tensions between India and Pakistan to the extent that the possibility of war was openly discussed in the serious policy-making circles on both sides of border.

The private information about the identity of the terrorists caused great trouble for the two states The attacks increased tensions between India and Pakistan, which could have been a long term strategic objective of the terrorists as they wanted to stay away from the eyes of Pakistan's military and for that reason they might have planned these incidents in order to instigate new tensions and provoke for another armed confrontation between the two states. Once this happened, the attention of the Pakistani military forces would definitely be diverted towards the border and away from the terrorists and the ongoing military operations against terrorism.

Same happened afterword, every single terrorist incident happened in India, Pakistan as well as in Afghanistan. The governments and security agencies in these states were unable to handle the private information resulting in more strained inter-state relations and security concerns. Terrorist incidents such as attack on Indian Embassy in Kabul in 2008, Afghanistan, Pathan Kot in 2016 and more recently Pulwama attack in Indian occupied Kashmir (IOK) in 2019, all could serve as relevant examples to this argument.

A detailed analysis of the bilateral relations of these states as well as the practical implementation of their conflict management strategies based on the questions and arguments representing the actual situation of states that face terrorist incidents and still unable to find a solution. A major possibility is that the national leaders of these states may be unable to locate a mutually preferable negotiated settlement due to the fact that these leaders possess classified information about comparative capabilities or resolve of their own state or the other in comparison to each other. These leaders are determined not to show all the cards to misrepresent that classified information to achieve maximum benefit in case any bargaining situation arises. As leaders are the ones who possess the classified information about the capabilities, morale, readiness and compliance of their military forces to fight and not anyone else, so these leaders can have the spur to pull the wool over others' eyes to achieve maximum while dealing with any resolve. Such are the times when these national leaders act irrationally given the incentives and probability of maximum gains that stop them from communication to clarify the misrepresentation of classified or private information about the actual power capabilities thus leaving space for generating a real risk of war. This is rationally not a mistake of miscalculation due to private information but rather of specific strategic dynamics that result from the combination of asymmetric information and incentives to dissemble.

War as a Result of Incorrect Estimation of an Adversary's Inclination to Fight

With regard to most of the terrorist incidents, these states have an incorrect estimation about each other that these incidents happened because their opponent state is not willing to fight terrorism

on the one hand and on the other hand all these states fail to see the inclinations of the terrorist groups to fight against these states. The first perception stemmed from these states' belief that the other was actually sponsoring terrorism against them.

Before Mumbai attacks, India always estimated Pakistan's willingness to fight terrorism incorrectly very low on every scale. This was clearly indicated by the statements of public office holders after terrorist attacks such as those on Indian parliament and Indian Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan. This long term incorrect estimation of Pakistan's willingness to fight terrorism has been a cause of the worsening of the relationship between India and Pakistan after Mumbai attacks. Whether it was terrorists or someone with Pakistani nationality, they also incorrectly estimated the reaction of the Indian government that takes no time to react in the strongest possible measures.

Considering terrorists as adversary, like many other terrorist incidents, in Mumbai attacks as well, it was a mistake by the Indian security officials to ignore the intelligences received from various sources about a possible attack on Taj Mahal Hotel as possible target. Indian authorities reported that a year before Mumbai attacks, they asserted two militants that disclosed their association with banned organization Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT). They explained that they had sailed from Karachi to Mumabi (Tankel, 2009) and actually showed a possible route used by the terrorists and that there was a possibility that LeT could use this route again. If New Delhi was clear about the intentions of LeT against India and that the leader of LeT Hafiz Muhammad Saeed was continuously provoking his followers against India, then India must have taken steps to curtail this route or at least the route had been monitored vigilantly so that it might not be used by LeT operative. How Indian security strategists could incorrectly estimate the inclination of these terrorists to fight India?

This incorrect estimation of terrorists as adversaries have led to more heightened terrorist activities in these states as every time a high profile terrorist incident occur, the authorities appeared to have the early warning in the form of private information but they failed to act accordingly, believing somehow that they as a state are more powerful than terrorists to make them stop their activities or at worse could fight them. Attack on Indian embassy in Kabul depicts the same story. Although the authorities had this information beforehand that there would be an attack but somehow failed to act on time ("Indian Embassy attack," 2010). Most importantly, soon after the attack, Afghan authorities said that the attack was coordinated with foreign agents in the region, a likely reference to Pakistan. "The Interior Ministry believes this attack was carried out in coordination and consultation with an active intelligence service in the region," the Afghan Interior Minister said (Siddiqui, 2008). There have been many more incidents and terrorist activities that explain the same story of the incorrect estimation of an adversary's inclination to fight.

Inducements to Misrepresent the Private Data to Get a Better deal in Bargaining
In order to convince the domestic audience as well as foreign elites that they are willing to fight terrorism and the other state is inclined towards using terrorism; all these states tempted to misrepresent the data and private information that was available to make their case stronger for further bargaining. Whatever the data is available, facts were combined with opinions and perceptions in this whole scenario. This tendency has been observed in the wake of every terrorist incident in the region be it Mumbai attacks, Pathan Kot attack, Army Public School (APS) attack or any other. Every single state wanted to present its strong case to the domestic and international

audiences and thus misrepresented the data about the terrorist incident as well as the private information about terrorist incident or terrorists to rescue a better position during bargaining.

Taking the advantage of the situation to get more on the negotiation table, Indian government used Mumbai attacks as an incentive to misrepresent the private information. The officials made every effort to get a better deal in terms of a severe decision against its long term enemy Hafiz Saeed. There has been misrepresentation of information at various levels during the crisis after Mumbai attacks such as blaming Hafiz Saeed for the attacks, government of Pakistan's involvement in these attacks etc. that caused backlash but also disturbed the inter-state relations. People started questioning the rationality of the leaders who take these decisions and the fact that these individual leaders are responsible for the future relationship of these states. The US government announce bounty of Hafiz Saeed for Mumbai attacks that he himself mocked at a very public press conference in Rawalpindi, pointing out that he lived in Lahore and asking whether he could claim the cash ("With $10 mln bounty," 2012).

Alongside this scenario of misrepresenting the existing data, there is yet another dimension of the problem, of not revealing the private information required to take action against those responsible. This has been observable in every single terrorist incident in the region. This tendency has long been observed in case of Afghanistan even before the involvement of the US forces in the region. Misrepresentation of data or not revealing private information has affected the bilateral relations of these states many a times especially with reference to the existing militant groups in the region that have their roots in Pakistan and Afghanistan border regions.

Terrorism as an Outcome of Complications in Commitments

Today's terrorism is a highly diffused with hidden motives, targets and highly evolved communicating and operating styles (Brunst 2010). To fight this type of enemy with a fragmented structure is a recipe for disaster. As such, there has to be an agency which has complete jurisdiction over the entire activity spectrum, from intelligence gathering to investigate cases and from arresting suspects to carry out targeted killing of terrorist leaders. There would always be a grey area between normal law and order maintenance and fighting terrorism and states need to cede that much power to centre as is necessary to deal with terror threats.

Terrorism in the region continues as there have been commitment problems of these states to stop it. At most, every single state is not satisfied with the commitment level of the other state whereas the terrorists seem to be fully committed to achieve their objective. One of the most critical problems is the credibility and the commitments of the political governments in India, Afghanistan and Pakistan alike. If at all, Mumbai attacks were designed to achieve some political objectives related to the relationship of the two nuclear powers of South Asia, the attacks well served. If the hidden objectives of the terrorists were to stir up tensions between India and Pakistan, the attacks well served the objectives. Not only the tensions between these states reached at its peak (Menon, 2019) but also another dimension added to it was the Hindu Muslim rivalry in India.

Mumbai attacks for instance, raised serious questions on Indian commitment to counter terrorism and their exercise in conflict management. In his highly acclaimed book, *The Politics of Counterterrorism in India: Strategic Intelligence and National Security in South Asia*, Prem Mahadevan, a senior researcher at the Center for Security Studies (CSS), Zurich, presented a four constraints paradigm in India, which consisted of lack of political consistency, lack of political

consensus, lack of operational capacity, and lack of operational coordination. While the initial two are exercises in creating political constituency, the latter two are elements of hardcore capacity building, both at manpower and institutional levels (Ogden, 2014). Mistakes if repeated again and again could be a risk for the national security, and raise questions to the loyalty, credibility and commitment of the political governments in all these states.

CONCLUSION

The use of the word "terrorism" has been critical as a concept relevant to conflict is the employment of methods and not actually the motives but it is being used and understood in South Asia in both the contexts. As a method it is evident in each and every kind of conflict used by the state as well in order to convey the political messages which they do not convey otherwise designed to achieve political advantages aimed at getting some advantage over the opponent in the realm of tactical or strategic military domain. Since 2001, Taliban fought a long insurgency what they called a movement against foreign occupation. The longest war of US history in Afghanistan reached a stalemate due to which resentment grew in the US. Responding to these sentiments, US President Trump pledged to end this war and decided to find a political solution of the Afghan quagmire. Subsequently, talks between Taliban and the US administration started once Taliban realized that winning the war through military means might not be possible and hence Taliban opted for negotiations. Resultantly, US-Taliban agreement was signed on January 29, 2020, thus paving the way for an intra-Afghan dialogue, negotiations and bargaining process. Bargaining will remain an important determinant of possible peace and stability in not only Afghanistan but also in the whole region. In South Asia, states seem deliberate and persistent in achieving their military, strategic and foreign policy advantages by means of appreciating and using one or other form of force. Because of the failure of bargaining resulted from indivisibilities, problems of credible commitment between India, Pakistan and Afghanistan, the incomplete information, the political governments of regional states failed to resolve their conflicts. It requires a strong commitment whereas today the situation is that instead of bargaining with the next-door neighbour, India, Afghanistan and Pakistan are tilted more towards international powers rather they need to adapt the same bottom up approach towards each other which they are expecting for themselves. These states must explore the options of economic bargaining as well to avoid further conflicts. Same is true for Afghanistan and Pakistan where the longest history of warlike situation and the role of Pakistan as an ally to the US actually made things more critical for Pakistan than to be supportive at all. Both the states are facing terrorism by the similar militant groups stationed in the adjacent areas of these two states and therefore, making the reaction of these states more precarious and dangerous for each other.

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