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Preface

India and Pakistan have fought three times since 1947 which has left behind hundreds of thousands of casualties. Recently, the Indo-Pak relations turned hostile again after a vehicle-borne suicide attack on the Indian army in India-controlled Kashmir. India launched an airstrike on the Balakot region of Pakistan. Later, both countries exchanged gunfire on the frontier and shot down each other's aircraft.

The United States, European Union, Russia, and China have expressed their concerns regarding the hostility between India and Pakistan. They have said that the bellicosity might get out of control and it is crucial for both countries to have patience and prevent military actions.

The first part of CSRS weekly analysis discusses the antagonistic Indo-Pak relations, the recent hostilities between both countries, and their effect on the region.

The second part discusses the rise of airstrikes and bombardment on houses, mosques and religious schools in Afghanistan. Despite significant progress in the US-Taliban peace talks, the Afghan and foreign forces have intensified airstrikes and night raids in rural Afghanistan.

The Indo-Pak Bellicosity and its Impact on the Region



On 14th February 2019, around 45 Indian soldiers were killed in a vehicle-borne explosion in India-administered Kashmir. India blamed the Pakistani intelligence for the attack and threatened to attack Pakistan.

Although Pakistan requested the U.N. to play a role in reducing the hostility between both countries, the Indian air force bombarded Balakot region of Pukhtunkhwa on 26th February 2019. India claimed that they had targeted the camps Jaish Mohammad group¹.

A day before the Balakot attack, both countries confronted each other in the air. Pakistan claimed to have shot down two Indian aircraft and captured an Indian pilot. However, India says that Pakistan one Indian and one from their aircrafts were downed.

Here, we discuss the hostile Indo-Pak relations and the impact of the recent antagonism between the two countries in the region.

¹ Jaish-e-Mohammad is an armed extremist group who inceptioned under the leadership of Mawlana Masood Azhar in 2000. The group claimed the attack on Indian parliament in 2001. Although India, the UK and the US called it a terrorist group after the inception and the president Parwiz Musharraf also announced the group as illegal, but the leader of JeM still operates as the leader of Khadem-ul-Islam group.

The Indo-Pak Antagonistic Relations

After the division of India and Pakistan in 1947, both countries have gone into horrific conflicts three times in last 72 years.

First Conflict of Kashmir: Pakistan was recognized as a separate country after 1947. After the separation in 1947, Pakistan attempted to bring Jammu and Kashmir under their control. Thus, Pakistan attacked the region. However, the leader of Jammu and Kashmir (Hari Singh) requested India for help and promised to sign the annexation of the area. India accepted Hari Singh's request, and thus, the conflict between both countries began.

Second Conflict of Kashmir: The second conflict began in 1965. The cause of the second conflict was as same as the first one. The battle started with the announcement of Jabalul Tariq operations in April 1965 and ended in September 1965.

The second conflict was between infantries over the international frontier between the two countries. The dispute continued for five months and bore heavy losses for both countries. The battle finally ended with the imposed ceasefire of the U.N. and the Tashkand proclamation.

Third Conflict of Kashmir: After the second conflict, the people of Bengal (East Pakistan) who were thousands of Kilometers away from current Pakistan, felt a need for separation from Pakistan. The thoughts of separation spread and Bengalis consequently Chanted for Independence.

In March 1971, prime minister Yahya Khan decided to take military actions against the East Pakistan movement. The conflicts heated with the interference and support of Indian forces from Bengalis. India and Pakistan fought for 14 days, and the battle ended with the defeat of Pakistani troops. Followed by Pakistan, India was first to officially recognize Bangladesh as an independent country.

The Recent Indo-Pak Hostility

Pakistan and India never had friendly relations in the past seven decades. Recently, the hostility among the countries has increased, and their soldiers have exchanged gunfire near the Kashmir frontier.

Indian officials on Tuesday stated that they had targeted the biggest camp of Jaish e Mohammad group and have killed many militants in the attack. Although the spokesperson of Pakistani army falsified the statement and said that the Indian aircraft had bombarded a mountainous area near Kashmir, but the residents of Balakot region have told the news reporters that they have the voices of aircraft and explosions

After India's attack, prime minister Imran Khan and the national security council conducted an emergency meeting and said that they would respond to India's attack in a suitable time. Later, the reports of shooting down of jets were published. Pakistan claimed to have shot down two Indian aircraft and captured an Indian pilot. On the other hand, India claims that among the fallen aircraft, one was a Pakistani jet.

Regarding the increase belligerence between India and Pakistan, Imran Khan has recently said that Pakistan and India need to use their intellect and wisdom because war is in favor of none. He gave a message to India that they need to resolve their disagreements through talks and Pakistan is ready to discuss issues including the Kashmir incident.

Besides, Pakistan has requested the U.N. to play a role in reducing the hostility between the countries. Also, Pakistan released the Indian pilot. From all these, it seems like Pakistan strives not to let the recent hostility become a big issue. It is assumed that Islamabad's stand is due to International community's pressure for their support of terrorism. Additionally, despite internal disagreements, Pakistan is facing a financial crisis. Therefore, Pakistan tries not to let the bellicosity turn into a war.

On the other hand, the grating behavior of Dehli and their airstrike in Pakistan is a political game. By doing so, Modi is trying to obtain the support of people and win the Parliamentary elections.

Impact on the region

India and Pakistan are vast and important countries. If the hostility between them converts into war, it will undoubtedly have an impact on the security, politics, and economy of the region. As the past experiences of conflicts have not only harmed both sides, but also influenced the region. Also, both countries have strategic partners, and the rise of belligerence among them will raise conflicts and competitions among countries.

With the increase in hostility among the countries, Pakistan recently suspended flights over Pak airspace until an unspecified date. This decision from Pakistan has not only caused financial losses to airline companies and business people but also caused problems for people due to delays in their travels.

The Indo-Pak hostility rises in a period when the U.S. and the Taliban are negotiating for peace in Afghanistan. Although the Pakistani officials have said that the bellicosity between India and Pakistan will affect the Afghan peace process, but the Afghan government refused these claims and said that the Indo-Pak relations could not affect the peace process.

Currently, due to the pressures of the United States, Pakistan appears to be ready to help the Afghan peace process. The release of Mulla Abdulghani Baradar and his arrival to Qatar is a gesture of cooperation. However, the statement of ruining the Afghan peace process is Pakistan's attempt to reduce the pressures of India and the International community and resolve the issue through talks. The peace process will continue according to the plan of the United States.

To conclude, it is to be said the conflict between Pakistan and India is neither in favor of the two countries nor region. It is important for both countries to have patience. Also, it is the responsibility of the international community to play a role in reducing the hostility between the countries and resolve the issue through talks.

Increasing Casualties of Afghan Civilians in The Air Strikes



Last week, hundreds of Wardak residents protested in Kabul in condemnation of joint Afghan and foreign forces airstrikes and night raids on Jalga district of this province. Protesters condemned joint forces' recent airstrikes and warned that they will block the Kabul-Kandahar highway if these blind strikes don't end.

More than 20 civilians, including women and children, were killed and wounded in the Afghan and foreign forces' operations and bombings in Dorani, Babak, Shtortughi, and Chotouy villages of Jalga districts of Wardak Province. In addition to residential houses, a mosque and a Madrasa (religious school) were targeted.

Air strikes and overnight operations of Afghan and foreign forces have recently caused a large part of civilian casualties. In its recent report on civilian casualties in Afghanistan, the UN Office in Afghanistan reports a remarkable increase in civilian casualties 2018 compared to 2017, due to these air strikes.

This weekly analysis focuses on these airstrikes and their consequences.

The Rise of Civilian Casualties in Airstrikes

The war expanded and became more severe with the establishment of the National Unity government. With the intensity of conflict and increase in attacks by Militants, the bombardments of Afghan and foreign forces have also increased which has often led to civilian casualties.

Based on the annual report of UNAMA published last week, the civilian casualties due to airstrikes and night raids increased remarkably in 2018. The casualties increased by 61% compared to 2017, and the death toll has risen by 82%.

According to UNAMA's recent report, around 10993 civilians were killed and wounded (around 3804 dead and 7189 injured) during the Afghan war in 2018. The casualties have increased by 5% compared to 2017. The victims of 2017 were 10453 people.

The report states that 63% of civilian casualties are caused by the Militants (37% by the Taliban, 20% by the ISIS, 6% by other groups). The remaining 24% of casualties are caused by forces on the government's side (14% by Afghan forces, 6% by foreign troops, 4% by others).

Airstrikes on residential and religious places

Airstrikes of Afghan and foreign forces increased remarkably after the announcement of the new strategy of the United States for Afghanistan and South Asia. However, these strikes have led to civilian casualties and destruction of residential and religious places, instead of the elimination of Militants.

The airstrike on a religious school occurred when children and civilians were celebrating a graduation ceremony. Around a hundred civilians, including children, were killed in the bombardment of Afghan forces. Although the Afghan government claimed that some important members of the Taliban participated in the ceremony, the Taliban and some analysts falsified these claims.

Based on reports released on 19 February 2019, the US forces in a night raid burned a historical religious school "Hamidul Madaris" and destroyed two houses with explosives in Kapisa province. Similarly, a day before the Kapisa raid, another religious school was destroyed using bombs by the Afghan and foreign forces.

In addition to demolitions in Kapisa and Logar, the Afghan and foreign forces bombarded a house, a mosque and a religious school in Jalga of Wardak a few days ago. The bombardment also killed and wounded 20 civilians which included women and children.

Overall, the night raids and airstrikes of joint forces on houses of civilians, religious schools and mosques have dramatically increased recently. Although some politicians and members of the parliament requested discontinuation of night raids and airstrikes, no reduction in attacks has been witnessed yet.

Consequences of Blind Airstrikes

During the 18 years of war in Afghanistan, many civilians including women and children were killed and wounded, mosques and religious schools were destroyed in the so-called “counter-terrorism.” These attacks are called “mistakes,” and forgotten, and the perpetrators of these attacks are never punished. However, these attacks certainly have consequences:

First: the repetition and continuity of such attacks on civilians increase the distance between people and government. Thus, people become apathetic regarding the decisions and actions of the government. To seek safety from oppression, people search for other ways and solutions.

Second: Killing civilians and bombarding residential places increase hatred of people towards the perpetrators which can play a role in the continuity of war in the country.

Third: as the hopes for peace in Afghanistan have increased more than ever before, the destruction of Mosques and religious school at this period will have an impact on the peace process. Such bombardments and destructions will provoke the sense of seeking vengeance, harden the conditions for peace and turn mentalities inimical.

Conclusion

The Taliban and the U.S. are negotiating face to face for a few months, and last week, they had their fifth meeting in Qatar. It is expected that the current war in Afghanistan will come to an end.

As the Afghan government is not invited to participate in the peace negotiations and the Taliban deny talking with the government, the Afghan government strives to pressure the Taliban to negotiate through airstrikes and nightly raids. However, the past 18 years' experience indicates that the use of military pressure is a failed experience and the government cannot bring success to the government.

Overall, the civilian casualties are caused by the lack of attention of combatants to the rules of war. Killing children and women in war or targeting civilians is against all laws of humanity and Islam. Thousands of civilians are killed each year since the past 18 years, and the government and international community have remained silent about it.

Regarding the recent incidents, it is necessary for the government to take actions and punish the perpetrators, rather than remaining silent about it or denying it. Otherwise, these incidents will only lead to the empowerment of the militants.

End

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