

A Radiography of the Security Problems in the Indian Subcontinent, from the Perspective of the Recent History

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Abstract. *The authors approach the security issue in the Indian Subcontinent from the perspective of developments and mutations caused by separatist tendencies in various regions, many of them having ethnic or religious causality, which mainly emerged after the end of British colonialism.*

The different mindsets, cultures and beliefs that characterize the population of the subcontinent have been perpetual sources of tensions that have often degenerated into major conflicts, if we refer only to the old and eternal rivalries in the regions of Jammu, Punjab or Kashmir (on the border between India and Pakistan), the conflict in Assam (on the other side of India, on the border with Bangladesh and Myanmar), tensions in the Pakistani provinces of Sindh and Balochistan, or insurgent movements in the Chittagong region of Bangladesh (on the border with Myanmar and India).

Thus, all of these elements created a favorable framework for the emergence and manifestation of terrorist groups, indigenous or based in neighboring states, which manifested themselves virulently, through bloody terrorist attacks, against state authorities, invoking the legitimate representation of the great mass of the population and also the process of establishing the perceptions of the Islamic State and Sharia law in the subcontinent.

The countries of the Indian Subcontinent are still facing a particular security issue, which makes the region a source of instability with potential for diffusion in the vicinity.

Keywords: terrorism, separatism, ethnic, religious, globalization, crime, migration, threat, security.

1. General considerations

The article develops some of the issues of interest related¹ to the issue of security equation in the Indian Subcontinent, analyzing, first of all, from the perspective of ethnic and religious causation, as well as separatist conflicts that affected regional security as a whole, but also the security of state entities that conventionally compose the subcontinent, namely India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

After being under Turkish rule for seven centuries, the Indian Subcontinent came under British rule in 1857, forming for almost a century, or rather until 1947, British India or British Raj. The end of British colonialism in the Indian subcontinent in August 1947 led to the formation of two independent states²,

¹ Security issues in mainland Asia are an older concern of the first author, his research on the evolution of the terrorist phenomenon on mainland Asia can be found in scientific articles or in the volume “*Terrorism. Manifestations and evolutions in the hot areas of the world. Middle East. Asia. Africa*”, published by „Academica Brâncuși” Publishing House, in Târgu Jiu in 2019, partially taken over in this article.

² Steps in this direction were taken in 1940, with the adoption of the Lahore Resolution, when Muslim leaders in British India called for the creation of a separate state for Muslims based on the principle of self-determination. See 1971 Liberation War, birth of Bangladesh and comparison with

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India, mostly Hindu, and Islamic Pakistan³, but „left behind state borders at odds with ethnic divisions”,⁴ if we refer only to the Jammu, Punjab or Kashmir regions, which have been perpetual sources of tension between the newly formed states and which continue to manifest themselves today. On the other hand, the differences between the two Pakistani provinces⁵, mainly of an ethnic and religious nature, fueled the contradictions between them, which led to the separation of East Pakistan and the establishment in 1972 of the new state of Bangladesh, thus completing the landscape of the tense security equation of the subcontinent.

If we add to the above issues that the proximity of the Indian Subcontinent is unstable from a security point of view, with latent or manifest conflicts caused by authoritarian political systems, different mentalities, cultures and beliefs, whether we refer to Iran, Afghanistan or China, we can conclude that it has a high potential for instability, the evolution of the parameters of the security equation being unpredictable.

2. Considerations on security issues in India

Considered the „pearl” of the British colonial empire, India gained full sovereignty in 1950, when it came out of British rule. In second place in the world in terms of population⁶, India is considered the most populous democratic state⁷, with a „strong religious, ethnic and linguistic pluralism”⁸, where traditional religions such as Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism and Jainism have coexisted with Islam and Christianity for centuries, between all of these existing, however, multisectional misunderstandings⁹, manifest or latent, in varying degrees of intensity. Ethnic and religious diversity, however, has been the source of major conflicts, if we refer only to the old and eternal rivalry between Hindus and Muslims in the Jammu, Punjab or Kashmir regions, on the border between India and Pakistan, or to the conflict in Assam, on the other part of India, on the border with Bangladesh and Myanmar.

present day Pakistan, EFSAS, 2017, pp. 1-2, available at <https://www.efsas.org/Bangladesh%20Research%20Dossier-%20Final.pdf>, accessed 15.4.2020.

³ Rodney Castleden, *Conflictele care au schimbat lumea (Vol 2)*, București, Editura Meteor Publishing, 2015, p. 163.

⁴ Joshua, S. Goldstein, Jon, C., Pevehouse, *Relații internaționale*, Iași, Editura Polirom, 2008, p. 632. Cf. Vitaly V. Popov, Oksana A. Muzika, Vladimir V. Podberezny, Aleksander M. Chervony, Margarita V., Krevcun Oksana A. Holina, Social Transformation in the Context of Temporal References,” in *Astra Salvensis*, VII (2019), no. 13, p. 516.

⁵ West Pakistan, predominantly Islamic (about 96%) and East Pakistan predominantly Islamic, but with important communities of Hindus, Christians and Buddhists.

⁶ India's current population is 1.35 billion, of which about two-thirds are in rural areas. From a religious point of view, about 80% of the population is Hindu, 15% is Islamic, about 2% is Christian and 1.8% belong to Sikhism.

⁷ Flavius Cristian Mărcău. "Dynamics of Deconsolidating Democracies of Poland, Hungary and Romania" în *Astra Salvensis*, VII (2019), no. 14, p. 293-305

⁸ Andreea, Riccardi, *Despre civilizația comiecturii*, București, Editura Humanitas, 2008, p. 49.

⁹ Sorin, Mitu, *Istoria Asiei Moderne*, București, Editura Corint, 2003, pp. 115-116.

India's security equation has been marked primarily by historical differences with neighboring Pakistan¹⁰ over the status of the Kashmir region, amplified by two armed conflicts that are still unresolved by a variant accepted by both state entities in question or by the people of Kashmir. If the first Indo-Pakistani war, from 1947-1949, ended with UN mediation and the agreement to hold a referendum to determine the future of the region, which practically led to the annexation by India of the territories under its control, under the name of Jammu Kashmir, and to Pakistan granting the status of autonomy to the controlled areas, under the name of Azad Kashmir¹¹, neither the second war between the two states, since 1965, finalized by the peace agreement initialed by the Taksht Declaration, did not de-escalate the situation in the region.

The popular uprisings in Kashmir in the 1990s, which resulted in tens of thousands of casualties, the military conflict in the Kargil region, initiated by India in response to guerrilla actions by Pakistani-backed indigenous fighters¹², or the brief border conflict in February 2019, caused by the Pulwama terrorist attack, shows that Emperor Nur-ud-din Muhammad Salim was wrong when he stated, referring to the Kashmir region, „if there is a paradise on earth, it is here, here, here ... ”, even more as it is currently divided between the three Asian states with nuclear capabilities, India, Pakistan and China¹³, so that its fate no longer depends exclusively on the choices of the leaders of local Muslim communities, Hindu or Buddhist. The revocation by the New Delhi authorities in 2019 of the privileged status enjoyed by the state of Jammu - Kashmir, amplifies the historical rivalry between India and Pakistan, thus intensifying violence especially in the border area between the two states.

The second half of the last century was also marked by the exacerbation of separatist tendencies in the Punjab region – known also as India's „hot spot”, with a majority Sikh population but also a significant Hindu minority - with the majority launching the movement „Punjabi Suba”¹⁴, through which they demanded autonomy, the climax of this movement taking place in the 1980s, when the large-scale "Khalistan" movements aimed at creating an independent state¹⁵. The movement exacerbated the conflict between Sikh militants and Indian government authorities, which was amplified by the insurgents' support from the Pakistani circles of interest. The actions of the Indian authorities to eliminate the Sikh

¹⁰ Michel, Bovin, *Istoria Indiei*, București, Editura Corint, 2003, pp. 108, 121,123.

¹¹ <https://www.trt.net.tr/romana/programe/2019/03/05/kashmir-durerea-neincetata-1157574/> accessed 15.04.2020.

¹² <https://www.risap.ro/70-de-ani-de-la-obtinerea-independentei-indiei-si-pakistanului/> accessed 15.04.2020. Gulmira Urankhaeva, Gulnar Baypeisova, Samat Smoilov, Aliya Tolysbaeva, Aizat Mukataeva, Assiya Kenzhebulatova, „Some Aspects Of Ethno-Gender Realization: Historical-Political Analysis,” in *Astra Salvensis*, VI (2018), no. 2, p. 85.

¹³ Following the Sino-Indian War of 1962, China occupied about 20% of Kashmir's territory, 45% belonging to India and 35% to Pakistan.

¹⁴ M. Kristin, „Bakke, State, Society and Separatism in Punjab,” in *Regional & Federal Studies*, XIX (2009), no. 2, p. 298.

¹⁵ Michel, Bovin, *Istoria Indiei*, p. 129.

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insurgency have given new value to the terrorist campaign that culminated in the assassination of Indira Gandhi by two Sikh bodyguards. The attack worsened the anti-Sikh uprisings and eliminated the insurgency in 1993, but separatist sentiments remain strongly entrenched in the collective mind even today.¹⁶

The defeat and elimination of the „Khalistan” movement caused a significant portion of Sikh militants to emigrate, with the most significant communities being found today in Canada, the United States¹⁷ and England, where they continue to campaign for the „liberation of the Punjab and the creation of an independent state”.¹⁸ The deep revengeful feelings of the community can have detrimental influences on the security equation in India, and can be the germ of the emergence and manifestation of terrorist entities in India.

Ethnic and religious diversity, pluralism, political orientations and separatist tendencies have, throughout history, been at the origin of the emergence and virulent manifestation of terrorism in the Jammu and Kashmir regions. They have been potentiated by the amplification of separatist insurgent movements in these regions, with Islamic accents, starting with the last decade of the last century, thus significantly affecting India's internal security. Some internal and external circles of interest, including the terrorist organizations Hezbollah Mujahideen, Jaish-e-Mohamed or Lashkar-e-Tayybia¹⁹, have sought to integrate the regions into Pakistan.²⁰ The danger of terrorist attacks or violent actions by insurgent groups persists even today, as they escalate due to the revocation of the special status of the state of Jammu and Kashmir.²¹

An unstable security situation is also found in the big cities of Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore or Hyderabad, where some Hindu entities have promoted an agenda of hatred against Muslims²², often resorting to terrorist acts, bomb attacks, armed attacks or kidnappings, even against foreigners. The beginning of 2020 is marked by the escalation of tensions between the two religious groups, eloquent being the

¹⁶ Ullah Rizwan, Akhtar Kokab, Sandhu Hussain, „Separatist Movement in East Punjab. Factors of Failure,” in *Pakistan Journal of History and Culture*, XXXIV (2013), no. p. 47.

¹⁷ Sorin Purec, “The postmodern american liberalism between the anthropological and sociological approach”, Dny práva – 2009 – Days of Law: the Conference Proceedings, 1. edition. Brno : Masaryk University, 2009, https://www.law.muni.cz/sborniky/dny_prava_2009/files/prispevky/zvysovani_konkurence/Pur ec_Sorin.pdf, accessed 12. 05. 2020.

¹⁸ Hundreds Sikh Separatists Rally in London for referendum, France 24/ <https://www.france24.com/en/20180812-hundreds-sikh-separatists-rally-london-referendum>, accessed 05.04.2020.

¹⁹ The group manages several training camps in Kashmir, being known as one of the most important and dynamic Islamic terrorist organizations in South Asia.

²⁰ Surrinder, Singh, Oberoi, Ethnic separatism and insurgency in Kashmir, in *Religious Radicalism and Security in South Asia*, Honolulu: Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, 2004, p. 175-176.

²¹ https://www.romania-actualitati.ro/mae_pericol_in_india/129654/ accessed 01.09.2019.

²² Shabbir, Hussain *et alii*, Violence against Muslims in Contemporary India, in *Journal of Indian Studies*, Vol. 4, Nr. 1, 2018, pp. 17-20. Cf. Ruslan Shavkatovich Garipov, „Indigenous peoples' rights providing by international legal tools”, in *Astra Salvensis*, V (2017), no. 10, p. 21.

Hindu uprisings in February against Muslims in northeastern New Delhi, killing more than 45 people, most of them Muslims.²³

The security equation has also been negatively influenced by the Mujahideen of India²⁴, an entity made up of Muslims who feel discriminated by the Hindu majority and who oppose the Indian domination in Kashmir, which organized numerous terrorist acts since 2008. The virulence with which this group operates has led security experts to call them „the deadliest urban terrorist group” in all of India. It is noteworthy that the emergence of more and more groups among Indian mujahideen highlights a phenomenon of „autochthonization” of jihadist terrorism, Islamist radicalism taking place in recent decades among young people, in reaction to the offensive of Hindu fundamentalists.

The volatility of the security equation in the vast Indian territory has led a group of consecrated terrorist organizations to target India in order to develop operational capabilities in the region. Thus, in September 2014, the Al-Qaeda leader announced the establishment of a new branch called Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), consisting of several terrorist organizations in the region, including the Mujahideen in India. The ideology of the regional group is represented by „Ghazwa al-Hind” (Battle for India), and the goal declared by Asim Umar, the leader of the new branch, was to overthrow the governments of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Myanmar, whose leaders are „controlled by the West”, which contradicts the ideology of this terrorist group²⁵, and to replace them with new forms of leadership with Islamic ideology. Although very active in Pakistan and Bangladesh, AQIS has not had any notable operational success in India.

Another terrorist entity that has sought to expand its influence in India is ISIS, which, through its vast online propaganda apparatus, has acted to radicalize young Indians.²⁶ The constant tensions between Hindus and Muslims are a vulnerability that ISIS could take advantage of to expand its operational area in this region as well, given that it has so far not had any notable "successes" in India.

In recent decades, the deterioration of the security equation in India has been determined by the Maoist movement, also known as the „Naxal uprising”²⁷, the roots of the insurgency being found in poor socio-economic conditions (famine, poverty, etc.), its main purpose representing the seizure of power by the removal

²³ Why India’s Muslims Are in Grave Danger, Foreign Policy/ <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/03/02/india-muslims-delhi-riots-danger/>, accessed 04. 04. 2020.

²⁴ David, Wright-Newille, *Dicționar de terorism*, Cluj-Napoca, CA Publishing, C2010, p. 222. Some experts believe that the Indian Mujahideen is another name for the Islamist Students' Movement in India, an old local organization involved in terrorist acts. They oppose Indian rule in Kashmir, wanting to restore the caliphate and establish Islamic supremacy in the region.

²⁵ Reed Alastair, „Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent: A New Frontline in the Global Jihadist Movement?”, in *The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism-The Hague* 8, I (2006), p. p. 7-8.

²⁶ Kabir, Taneja, Uncovering the Influence of ISIS in India, in *ORF Occasional Paper*, CLVIII (2018), p. 7.

²⁷ The movement was started by the peasantry since 1967 and was an important factor that affected India's internal security, in particular, through the virulence with which it manifested itself.

A Radiography of the Security Problems in the Indian Subcontinent, from the Perspective of the Recent History,” *Astra Salvensis*, VIII (2020), no. 15, p. 15-29. of government authorities.²⁸ The recent actions of the movement, from the first part of 2020, resulting in the death of more than 15 people²⁹, draw attention to some serious problems facing India, being limited mainly to issues related to non-military security, respectively security human rights and economic security.

India's internal stability is also influenced by the ethnic conflict in the state of Assam, caused by cultural differences between Assamese (Hindu), Bengali (Muslim) and other local tribes. Although it has its roots in the last century³⁰, it is still present, the most recent violent acts taking place in December 2019, when residents of the region protested against the right of immigrants to obtain Indian citizenship, which could change the demographic configuration of the region.³¹

The fight against terrorism has been a constant concern of the Indian authorities in recent decades, even though some of the measures taken, including violations of fundamental human rights, have been criticized by the international organizations.³²

Despite all these problematic issues, with security valences, India is currently a relatively stable country, aimed at promoting economic, social and political measures that will allow it to get out of the impoverished state and eliminate the phenomenon of corruption that seems to be generalized at the level of Indian society.

3. Considerations on security issues in Pakistan

The declaration of independence of Pakistan³³ and the exit from British rule in 1947 led to the emergence of the world's first Islamic republic, consisting of the provinces of West Pakistan and East Pakistan, geographically located at a distance of over 1700 km. The current state form resulted, in 1972, after the separation of East Pakistan and the formation of the new state of Bangladesh.

Subsequently, Pakistan's internal situation was characterized by tensions between fundamentalists and supporters of a liberalism claimed by certain groups, political instability caused by the challenge of Islamic socialism by government forces, religious conflicts, military coups and the establishment of Islamic Sharia

²⁸ Pratap Tej Singh, „The Maoist Insurgency in India,” in *Distilled Magazine*, I (2012), p. 1-3.

²⁹ Bastar Maoist Ambush, „Times of India,” available at <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/bastar-maoist-ambush-17-security-personnel-killed-15-injured/articleshow/74758532.cms/> accessed 07. 04. 2020.

³⁰ Ethnic and religious conflicts in India, available at <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/ethnic-and-religious-conflicts-india/> accessed 04.04.2020.

³¹ „Violent protests in northern India, Digi24,” available at <https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/externe/mapamond/proteste-violente-in-nordul-indiei-reprimare-de-armata-manifestantii-marsaluiesc-cu-torte-in-maini-si-incendiaza-masini-123053/> accessed 04. 04. 2020.

³² Rodney Castleden, *Conflictele care au schimbat lumea (Vol 2)*, p. 207.

³³ The country's estimated population is 206.5 million, making it the sixth largest in the world. About 96% of Pakistani citizens are of the Islamic religion, mostly Sunnis, 2% are Hindus and 1.5% are Christians.

law. The instability of the country has been amplified by the fact that in all neighboring countries³⁴ there are latent or manifest conflicts, determined by different political systems, mentalities, cultures and beliefs, with tendencies to spread at a regional level.

However, in this complex and tense domestic context, Pakistan consolidated its national economy by the end of the 1980s, becoming one of the fastest-growing countries in South Asia, Pakistan possessing including nuclear capabilities.

The next decade was marked by successive struggles between political groups, state instability, corruption among the authorities, all of which led to the continuous alteration of the security parameters. General Pervez Musharaf's rise to power in 2001 was followed by extensive reforms in Pakistani society, including the decision to become involved in the fight against terrorism in the region, along with US-led international coalition forces, which contributed to the change in power relations in the region.

Pakistan's internal situation has been exacerbated mainly by frequent conflicts with India over the Jammu and Kashmir regions, or by historical conflicts with Bangladesh. Also, the disagreements with the neighboring state Afghanistan, for the Durand line, never accepted by the Afghan authorities, which draw the border between the two states without taking into account, in the opinion of Pakistanis, historical considerations, have altered the area security, the relationship between the two states improving only after the support given to Afghanistan during the Soviet invasion, and later after the Taliban came to power, when, moreover, diplomatic relations between the two states were resumed.³⁵ The Taliban's rise in Afghanistan has had detrimental security effects, including on Pakistan, which has become a veritable „sanctuary” for terrorist entities and extremist religious groups, thus amplifying violence.³⁶

The huge borders with the two countries (over 2,500 km), difficult to manage, led Pakistan to develop an "enclave complex" to control radical Islamist networks in Afghanistan and then to manage the penetration of radical elements into its national territory³⁷, especially after the Soviet invasion in the neighboring country.³⁸ Despite these measures, elements of the Taliban Movement and the Al-Qaeda group have often taken refuge in Pakistan, where they have found support to restore operational capabilities in order to continue the fight to implement the proposed goals in the region. Pakistan thus became „a boiler under pressure and at

³⁴ Iran to the west, Afghanistan to the northwest, China to the north, India to the east.

³⁵ Hamid Ul, Pak-Afghan Mairaj, „Ties: Evolution, Challenges and the Way Forward,” in *Policy Perspectives*, XIV (2017), p. 61-63.

³⁶ Umbreen Javaid, „Analyzing the Dynamics of Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations: Past and Present,” in *South Asian Studies*, XXXI (2016), p. 142.

³⁷ Sorin Purec, “Originile naționalismului European”, in *Annals of the „Constantin Brâncuși” University of Târgu Jiu, Letter and Social Science Series*, Supplement 1/2015, p. 229-235.

³⁸ <https://www.revistasinteza.ro/pakistan-o-tara-care-conteaza/> accessed 21.05.2019.

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the same time a kind of huge factory of fighters in the holy war. From here radiates the most radical ideology”³⁹.

Ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity, different political orientations and separatist tendencies have been at the root of the emergence and virulent manifestation of terrorism in Pakistan, as well as conflicts between various rival groups, especially in the provinces of Sindh, Balochistan and Pashtunistan. Also, the Islamic reforms initiated by the Pakistani authorities and positioning them in a position of favoring the Sunni majority have created a climate of antagonism, which has known the valences of a real sectarian conflict between Sunnis and Shiites, which has fundamentally altered internal security.⁴⁰

The situation in Sindh province⁴¹ is eloquent, where amid the influence of the Mohajir ethnic minority group on social and economic life, the identity movement of Sindhi ethnic groups began, claiming that they had become „foreigners in their own cities”, a context in which security issues got to know a significant aggravation⁴², which led, in 2019, the leaders of the Mohajir group to request, through an official letter, the intervention of the United States of America to determine the Pakistani authorities to end the „persecution of the Mohajir community”⁴³.

The separatist tendencies in Balochistan province⁴⁴, rich in natural resources but characterized by poverty and difficult living conditions of the population, have manifested themselves on the background of discrimination by the Pakistani authorities and poor governance. The situation has worsened significantly since 2005, when the Pakistani president declared a „total war” on Balochistan, killing several insurgents, including the provincial governor, by using violence. The Balochistan crisis has taken on new values, specific to the terrorist phenomenon, since 2009, when the representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, John Solecki, was abducted by insurgents in Balochistan amid guerrilla warfare and violent conflicts taking place against state authorities, which resulted in the deaths of about 200 people.⁴⁵

³⁹ Andreea, Riccardi, *Despre civilizația comiectuirii*, București, Editura Humanitas, 2008, p.52

⁴⁰ Majeed Gulshan, „Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict in Pakistan,” in *Journal of Political Studies*, vol 1, Issue 2, p. 57.

⁴¹ The main ethnic groups are Sindhi, Mohajir, Punjabi, Baloch, Pathan, Gujrati, each group having its own language, culture and religion, which has led to the natural occurrence of conflicts throughout history.

⁴² Bhattacharya Sanchita, „Pakistan`s Ethnic Entanglement,” in *The Journal of social, political, and economic studies*, XL (2015), no. 3, p. 238-239.

⁴³ Mohajir Group Urges US to Raise Issue With Pakistan Govt, News18/
<https://www.news18.com/news/world/mohajir-group-urges-us-to-raise-issue-with-pakistan-govt-take-steps-to-end-persecution-of-community-2358265.html/> accessed 11.04.2020.

⁴⁴ Five violent separatist movement was possible in periods 1948, 1958, 1962, 1973-1977, 2002-present

⁴⁵ Rauf Abdul Iqbal, „Internal and External Factors in Balochistan Conflict,” in *ISSRA Papers*, IV (2012), no. 1, p. 80-85.

On the other hand, separatist movements in Pashtunistan represent a security issue for both Pakistan and Afghanistan, as they are the source of many acts of violence against state authorities. The division of the province between the two countries, and the imposition of the Durand Line, resulted, in fact, in the separation of many Pashtun tribes, which, since 1947, after the end of British rule, declared themselves against the concept of "one state, two nations", wanting independence and the formation of their own state.

The intervention of the United States of America in Afghanistan, to fight against the terrorist groups, determined the refuge in the province of some of the Taliban leaders. Their lack of recognition of the authority of the Pakistani government, the desire to establish an Islamic state ruled by Sharia law and cooperation with the Pashtun separatist tribes posed a real challenge to Pakistan's security equation, thus, a possible unification of Pashtunistan, on both sides of the border, would result in creating an Islamic Pashtunistan with over 40 million inhabitants that would change the balance of power in the region⁴⁶. The last few years have been marked by an increase in the separatist efforts of the Tahafuz Pashtun Movement, through which they expressed their dissatisfaction with the actions of Pakistani security forces, which, in the name of the war on terror, killed many members of the Pashtun tribes.⁴⁷

Despite the volatile, multi-causal security environment, Pakistan currently plays an important role in the economic development and stabilization of the security equation in the Indian Subcontinent, being a power of strategic importance that has nuclear capabilities. The facilities offered by the opening to the Arabian Sea have boosted China's interest in operationalizing the new „Silk Road” in Pakistan. At the same time, having the largest diaspora in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, Pakistan has become a pole of attraction for the Middle East, thus benefiting from privileged economic relations.

These realities have created the favorable conditions for the emergence and manifestation of local terrorist groups, the most known being Lashkar-e-Tayybia⁴⁸, Jaish-E-Mohammed⁴⁹ and Wilayat Khorasan⁵⁰, all of which are frequently involved

⁴⁶ Bhattacharya Sanchita, „Pakistan`s Ethnic Entanglement,” p. 244-247.

⁴⁷Is Pakistan`s war-ravaged northwestern region turning against the military?, DW/ <https://www.dw.com/en/is-pakistans-war-ravaged-northwestern-region-turning-against-the-military/a-48639272/> accessed 11.04.2020.

⁴⁸ Founded in the late 1980s by Hafiz Saeed with the support of Osama bin Laden and based in the province of Punjab, it is known as one of the most active and dynamic Islamic terrorist organizations in South Asia. They initially targeted the Soviet occupation armies in Afghanistan, later their stated goal was to liberate the provinces of Jammu and Kashmir from Indian control and to establish an Islamic state in South Asia. It has developed an important social assistance infrastructure in Pakistan. It was funded by the Pakistani authorities, through donations from Islamic non-governmental organizations and businessmen from Pakistan, Kashmir, the United Kingdom and the Persian Gulf. (See: David, Wright Neville, *Dictionary of Terrorism*, pp. 211-212)

⁴⁹ Anghel, Andreescu, Nicolae, Radu, *Jihadul Islamic. De la „înfrângerea terorii” și „războiul sfânt” la „speranța libertății”*, Editura RAO, București, 2015, pp. 357-358. According to the quoted source,

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in attacks with victims or kidnappings, for redemption purposes. The people of Pakistan have also been a pool of selection for jihadists involved in terrorist acts, both in the country and in the vicinity, such as Afghanistan or Iraq, in the context of manifesting deep antipathy to what they consider to be the West⁵¹. In recent years, they have called for closeness with the international forces involved in the fight against terrorism.

Despite all the efforts made to dismantle terrorist groups, and despite obvious progress, Pakistan's stability and internal security continue to be marked by numerous terrorist acts. Although Lashkar-e-Taiba has not had significant operational success in the last decade, its work could regain violent valence by arousing revengeful sentiments in the context of the group's leader arrest in 2019 by the Pakistani authorities.⁵²

On the other hand, the Jaish-E-Mohammed group continues to be active and concerned about the operationalization of terrorist attacks on Pakistani territory, especially since January 2020, when it planned a large-scale attack on state authorities, which was thwarted by the police forces, the intervention resulting in five members of the terrorist group being arrested and large quantities of explosives being confiscated.⁵³

4. Security issues in Bangladesh

The end of the 1971-1972⁵⁴ civil war, which resulted in heavy casualties but culminated in the independence of the new state of Bangladesh⁵⁵, led, for a short time, to the establishment of a secular multi-party parliamentary democracy, characterized by the recognition of ethnic rights and freedoms of the Bengali people and attempts to rebuild and rehabilitate the country.

However, since 1975, Bangladesh has faced fierce fighting, both between minorities and between political groups that have expressed rivalry through assassination attempts, coups, martial law, incitement to hatred and violence, and the establishment of Islam as a state religion, the violation of the constitutional rights of minorities and abuses of human rights being the daily characteristics of

the group aims to annex Kashmir to Pakistan, its supporters being Pakistani citizens, Kashmiris and Afghan veterans of the war in Afghanistan.

⁵⁰ His desire was to aim of establishing an islamic state in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

⁵¹ Anne, Nivat, *Islamiști. Cum ne vād ei pe noi*, Corint Boks, București, 2011, pg. 42.

⁵² Pakistani police arrest Lashkar-e-Taiba founder Hafiz Saeed, Al Jazeera/ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/07/pakistani-police-arrest-lashkar-taiba-founder-hafiz-saeed-190717083300268.html/> accessed 11. 04. 2020.

⁵³ Major terror attack averted before Republic Day, India Today/ <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/srinagar-police-jaish-e-mohamed-module-terror-attack-blast-1637469-2020-01-16/> accessed 11. 04. 2020.

⁵⁴ Rodney Castleden, *Conflictele care au schimbat lumea (Vol 2)*, p. 164.

⁵⁵ The population is about 167.5 million, which places Bangladesh in the top eight countries in the world in terms of population. Compared to the surface, it is the country with the densest population in the world. The majority religion is Islamic, followed by Hindus, Christians and Buddhists.

societal life. The state of affairs was determined by the establishment of a totalitarian regime by Prime Minister Mujibur Rahman on June 6, 1975, with the creation of the one-party BKSAL⁵⁶, and was exacerbated by the military coup two months later, which led to the assassination of the Prime Minister and the announcement of the „end of tyranny”⁵⁷.

The newly installed regime, led by General Ziaur Rahman, characterized by abuse of power, human rights violations and discrimination against minorities, has contributed to the escalation of separatist tendencies, especially in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, a region on the border with Myanmar and India, with insurgent movements aimed at gaining autonomy for indigenous tribes that were dissatisfied with the government policy which stated that all Bangladeshi citizens were considered Bengalis, regardless of their ethnic minority. The 1979-1993 massacres, which killed more than 2,000 people, led to the mass exodus of minorities, with a large number taking refuge in India. The signing of the agreement between the Dhaka government and the representatives of the indigenous tribes of Chittagong in 1997, which consisted of some regulations aimed at resolving the issue of indigenous tribes in the region and ending the 22-year-old conflict⁵⁸, did not eliminate the sources of security instability, violent conflicts still taking place, especially against the Jumma indigenous people.⁵⁹ They are still likely to generate new violent separatist movements, as a result of intensifying ethnic conflicts between indigenous peoples and Bengalis (who have become the majority in this region due to population movements in recent decades), thus, Chittagong can become a favorable environment for infestation with radical ideology, including for terrorist entities operating in the vicinity.

Since the last decade of the last century, Bengali social life has been characterized by the replacement of the authoritarian regime⁶⁰ with regimes that claim to militate for the establishment of democracy, achieving relative internal stability, even if society continues to be marked by increased poverty, overpopulation of the region and the struggle for access to the resources needed for subsistence.⁶¹ In reality, the Bengali state has become the scene of battle both between various minorities and between state institutions or political leaders who bring mutual accusations related to the causality of the alteration of the security equation, thus making Bangladesh one of the most insecure states globally.

⁵⁶ Explication for acronym BKSAL: Bangladesh Peasants', Workers' and People's League.

⁵⁷ Maniruzaman Talukder, „Bangladesh in 1975: The Fall of the Mujib Regime and its Aftermath,” in *Asian Survey*, XVI (1976), no. 2, p. 120.

⁵⁸ Mohammad, Salam, Hajera Aktar, „Ethnic Problems in Bangladesh: A Study of Chittagong Hill Tracts,” in *SUST Journal of Social Sciences*, XXII (2014), no. 2, p. 55-56.

⁵⁹ Hidden Bangladesh: Violence and Brutality in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Amnesty UK, available at <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/groups/wirksworth-and-district/hidden-bangladesh-violence-and-brutality-chittagong-hill-tracts/>, accessed 15.4.2020.

⁶⁰ Flavius Cristian Mărcău, „Undemocratic regimes” in *Annals of the 'Constantin Brâncuși' University of Targu Jiu: Letters and Social Sciences Series*, 2 (2014), p. 105-110.

⁶¹ https://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-12651483/Bangladesh_profile-Timeline/, accessed 05.03.2019.

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Eloquent in this regard were the military riots in 2009, which killed more than 70 people, both civilians and military in Pilkhara⁶², its repression being followed by the death sentence of more than 150 soldiers involved in the riot, and also with another 150 being sentenced to life sentence.⁶³

The security equation in Bangladesh has also been affected by the conflicts in the border area⁶⁴ with India, generated by the status of regions claimed by both states, or by the phenomenon of illegal migration (over 10 million people who illegally crossed the border between Bangladesh and India), cross-border organized crime (illegal arms and ammunition trafficking, drugs, human trafficking, etc.), but also by certain Indian insurgent bases in Bangladesh, with the Dhaka authorities refusing to acknowledge their existence.

Against this background, Bangladesh was the territory for the manifestation of indigenous terrorist groups, such as the Mujahideen Jamaat in Bangladesh or the Harakat-Jihad-al-Islami, which campaigned for the removal of national authorities and the creation of an Islamic state. Founded in 1998 under the leadership of Abdur Rahman, the main objective of the Mujahideen Jamaat in Bangladesh was to remove government officials and supporters of democracy and to establish an Islamic state. The organization has enjoyed support from the domestic political and military spectrum, becoming very virulent since 2005, when it was involved in the simultaneous detonation of 500 explosive devices in different regions of the country in order to draw attention to the need for an Islamic leadership at the forefront state.⁶⁵

In this context, it draws attention to the terrorist attack of July 2, 2016, considered the bloodiest attack in the history of Bangladesh, when a luxury restaurant in the capital Dhaka, frequented by foreign nationals, was attacked by a group of bombers. In the ensuing acts of violence, 20 people lost their lives, all foreign nationals, who were shot or beheaded after failing to recite verses from the Qur'an to prove that they were „good Muslims.” The attack was claimed by ISIS, although national authorities claim that it belongs to the internal group Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh. Several police officers and members of the special forces, as well as six of the bombers, lost their lives in the rescue operation initiated by the national authorities.⁶⁶ In this context, the leaders of the network specified that the

⁶² Omar, Zahid, *Massacre at Pilkhara: Mutiny of the Bangladesh Rifles*, p. 4-8, available at https://www.academia.edu/36511105/Massacre_at_Pilkhana_Mutiny_of_the_Bangladesh_Rifles, accessed 21.4.2020.

⁶³ More than 150 soldiers sentenced to death for riot in Bangladesh, Jurnalul, available on <https://jurnalul.antena3.ro/stiri/externe/peste-150-de-soldati-condamnati-la-moarte-pentru-revolta-in-bangladesh-654791.html/>, accessed 21. 04. 2020.

⁶⁴ Eloquent is the 2001 armed conflict between security forces in Bangladesh and India, killing 18 Indian soldiers and 3 Bengali soldiers. See Pushpita, Das, *India-Bangladesh Border Management: A Review of Government's Response*, in *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 32, no. 3, 2008, p. 370.

⁶⁵ „The Threat from Jamaat-ul Mujahideen Bangladesh,” in *Crisis Group Asia Report*, CLXXXVII (2010), p. 2.

⁶⁶ <https://www.ziare.com/international/terorism/masacrul-din-bangladesh-filmul-tragediei-ce-le-au-facut-atacatorii-ostacilor-si-de-ce-au-ucis-doar-straini-1427741/>, accessed 25. 02. 2019.

terrorist attacks will continue in Bangladesh until the establishment of Islamic Sharia law in the geographical area where the global caliphate will be established.⁶⁷

The terrorist organization Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami was founded in 1992 and had as its operational area mainly India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The organization campaigned for the creation of an Islamic state, its favorite target being state authorities, the political spectrum, but also intellectuals.⁶⁸ In recent years, the organization has had no notable operational „successes.”

Since 2004, some area-represented groups, such as ISIS or AQIS, have been involved in bloody attacks on Bengali national territory. The favorite targets were represented by the leaders of religious and ethnic minorities, intellectuals, atheist writers, bloggers, but also foreign communities. In its heyday, ISIS managed to provoke transnational terrorist movements in Bangladesh, characterized by brutality and spectacle, being involved in countless bloody attacks, the aim being to create an Islamic state, based on Sharia law.⁶⁹ It is also worth mentioning that the Bangladeshi authorities deny the presence of ISIS or Al-Qaeda on the national territory for fear of withdrawing foreign investors.

The current internal situation in Bangladesh is characterized by serious economic problems and a sharp state of political instability, caused by the systematic boycott of elections and the contestation of their results or frequent human rights violations. Thus, Bangladesh has become a semi-failed state, the guilt for the situation created belonging to both rival political parties vying for state leadership and radical Islamic groups. Despite all the economic and security issues, Bangladesh has a geostrategic role in the region, which gives it, in a short time horizon, an extra-regional importance, being "caught between the Indo-Chinese rivalry and targeted by more distant actors, such as South Korea or America".⁷⁰

5. Perspectives on the security of the Indian Subcontinent

Given the particularities of the security equation in the three state entities that make up the Indian Subcontinent, several conclusions are required, including the prospects for the evolution of the specific issues, as follows:

- Kashmir's old problem is still at the forefront of the India-Pakistan conflict, with neither side willing to accept the compromise that could lead to a solution to the crisis. If Pakistan continues to campaign for a referendum in the region⁷¹, India opposes it (given the share of the Muslim population and the possible unfavorable

⁶⁷ <https://www.mediafax.ro/externe/stat-islamic-ceea-ce-ati-vazut-in-bangladesh-a-fost-doar-o-mica-parte-din-ceea-ce-urmeaza-avertizeaza-si-15518860/>, accessed 21. 02. 2019.

⁶⁸Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami Bangladesh, SATP/<https://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/bangladesh/terroristoutfits/Huj.htm>, accessed 22.4.2020.

⁶⁹ Bashar Iftekharul, „ISIS, AQIS and the Revival of Islamist Militancy in Bangladesh,” in *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses*, VII (2015), no. 6, p. 19-20.

⁷⁰ <https://www.geopolitics.ro/bangladesh-geopolitica-unui-actor-autonomizat/>, accessed 21. 02. 2019.

⁷¹ According to the resolution of the United Nations Security Council of 1948.

A Radiography of the Security Problems in the Indian Subcontinent, from the Perspective of the Recent History ,” *Astra Salvensis*, VIII (2020), no. 15, p. 15-29. outcome), trying to maintain its influence and control over Kashmir through a military presence that discourages any separatist approach.

„Security issues are finding the right ground in the Kashmir region to develop, as an effective strategy to counter them cannot yet take shape locally, as long as India and Pakistan have seen Kashmir, for decades, as an "instrument of war" which represents "their own problem", that needs to be solved without any involvement from the outside. Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan's recent move to seek US support in mediating the conflict between the two states shows a tendency to internationalize the conflict and a relative desire to resolve it within a reasonable timeframe. On the other hand, the Indian authorities consider that the issue of Kashmir will enter a "new era" with the annulment of Article 370 of the country's Constitution and the privileged status of the region, while considering, at the same time, that the situation is under the control of the authorities, following the measures taken to stabilize it from a security point of view”.⁷²

- The activism of terrorist groups in the Indian Subcontinent has become a security phenomenon affecting the region and its proximity in recent years, becoming increasingly worrying for the international community and political tensions between India and Pakistan - both with nuclear capabilities, thus, a possible terrorist attack against military bases that have these capabilities can have devastating repercussions. On the other hand, the success of the international counter-terrorism coalition, which led to the dismantling of ISIS in Syria and Iraq, led the organization's leadership to regroup in Pakistan, India and Bangladesh, where the process of easy recruitment of new members and financial support and the group's logistics are conducive to maintaining its operability.

- The border conflicts between Bangladesh and India, generated by the reciprocal demands of some regions, the phenomenon of illegal migration, cross-border organized crime with all its forms of manifestation and diversification of forms of violence, including by local or neighboring terrorist groups, make Bangladesh a source of security instability. If we add to these realities the economic or social problems facing the population, or the political rivalries, we can consider Bangladesh as a semi-failed state, which must come to the attention of the international community to identify ways to recover the domestic situation, given the strategic position in the region from a geopolitical point of view.

- The Indian Subcontinent has become a center of intersection of global⁷³ geopolitical interests, given the trade agreements in which state entities in the region have been involved. The recently concluded arms sales agreements between Israel and India (the divergences between the Jews and the Muslim world being well known), the financial and technological support given to India by the United States in order to stop China's rise and influence as a great world power (both

⁷²<https://indsamachar.com/jammu-and-kashmir-will-truly-be-integral-part-of-india-i-want-to-tell-valley-nothing-negative-will-happen-amit-shah/>, accessed 22. 04. 2020.

⁷³ Sorin Purec (2013) *Public administration and globalization. In: 4th international conference on finance, accounting and law (ICFA '13)*, Chania, p 160–168.

economically and militarily) and, last but not least, China's support for Pakistan (if we only refer to the nuclear industry) shows us the importance of the region in the architecture of world politics.

If we also take into account the fact that Kashmir is divided today between India, Pakistan and China, we can understand China's interest in solving the region's problems, especially since it still shows interest in Ladakh province, disputed with neighboring India.

The prospects for the normalization of the situation in the region are not encouraging, given the fact that India and Pakistan are making sustained efforts to develop their military arsenal, in order to demonstrate their offensive strength in the front of China and balance the center of power in the region.

Conclusions

The Indian Subcontinent is an area of interference in global geopolitical interests due to its strategic positioning, civilizational, economic, political and military importance, if we consider that two of the subcontinent's countries, India and Pakistan, have nuclear capabilities, as well as the "great China", in the immediate vicinity, that flaunts its status as a great power eager to impose its hegemony on a global scale.

Ethnic and religious diversity, different mentalities regarding the perception of the realities of modern society, the return to radical militancy, which often becomes instrumentalized by the toxic mixture between politics and religion, also has a strong potential for social mobilization, explainable by insufficient internalization caused by the stakes of modernization, have been sources of tension that have often degenerated into major conflicts that have affected the security of the subcontinent.

Border, military conflicts between Indian Subcontinent countries are exacerbated also by other non-military threats such as illegal migration, cross-border organized crime and violence committed by local or nearby terrorist groups, making the subcontinent a source of global security instability.

Security issues in Indian Subcontinent countries need to be addressed through an effective strategy initiated at the local level, coupled with sustained external assistance campaigns, given the contemporary situation.

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