

## II. Armed conflict and peace processes in South Asia

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The security threats facing the states in South Asia—Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka—are complex and diverse. Security challenges include interstate rivalry, border disputes, nuclear risks, terrorism and internal threats arising from a combination of ethnic, religious and political tensions.<sup>1</sup> Environmental challenges, such as climate change, water scarcity and energy security, are also an increasingly common reality for the region.<sup>2</sup> In 2019 for example, drought and over-extraction of groundwater caused the Indian city of Chennai (with 10 million inhabitants) to nearly run out of water, while the controversy over water resources also formed part of India–Pakistan tensions.<sup>3</sup>

This section focuses on two important issues that are crucial barometers for peace and stability in South Asia: the long-running and devastating war in Afghanistan, and the territorial dispute between India and Pakistan over the Kashmir region. In the former, initial optimism that a peace process led by the United States would pave the way to a settlement of the conflict was replaced by renewed pessimism following the collapse of the peace talks in September 2019 (despite their resumption in November). In the latter, a February suicide attack by the Pakistan-based militant group Jaish-e-Mohammad (JEM) in Indian-administered Kashmir—the worst in Kashmir for over three decades—sparked a sharp but short escalation in the conflict between the nuclear-armed neighbours of India and Pakistan.

South Asia remains one of the regions most affected by attacks by non-state groups. For example, the *Global Terrorism Index 2019* notes that Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and the Philippines were among the top 10 countries most affected by terrorism worldwide (with Afghanistan, India and Pakistan appearing in the top 10 for over a decade).<sup>4</sup> Major non-state armed groups operating in the region included: al-Qaeda, the Islamic State in the Khorasan Province (IS-KP), Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LEJ) and the Taliban in Afghanistan; Lashkar-e-Taiba (LET), LEJ and the Taliban Movement in Pakistan (Tehreek-e-Taliban, TEP); LET and the Maoists in India; and various home-grown Islamist extremist groups affiliated with al-Qaeda and the Islamic

<sup>1</sup> Staniland, P., 'The future of democracy in South Asia: Why citizens must stay vigilant', *Foreign Affairs*, 4 Jan. 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Nordqvist, P. and Krampe, F., 'Climate change and violent conflict: Sparse evidence from South Asia and South East Asia', SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security no. 2018/4, Sep. 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Pathak, S., 'No drips, no drops: A city of 10 million is running out of water', National Public Radio, 25 June 2019; and Reuters, 'India again threatens to restrict flow of river water to Pakistan as tension builds', *The Guardian*, 22 Feb. 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Institute for Economics & Peace, *Global Terrorism Index 2019: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism* (Institute for Economics & Peace: Nov. 2019), p. 18.

State. In Sri Lanka for example, over 250 people were killed and 500 injured in suicide bombings at churches and hotels on 21 April 2019, Easter Sunday, in Colombo. The Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack, but the Sri Lankan Government said it was carried out by a local radical Islamist group, National Thowheeth Jama'ath, with foreign support. The attack led to heightened intercommunal tensions and anti-Muslim violence in the country.<sup>5</sup>

### **Armed conflict in Afghanistan**

The war in Afghanistan continued unabatedly in 2019. By some accounts it was the deadliest armed conflict in the world, ahead of the wars in Syria and Yemen. According to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) there were nearly 42 000 fatalities due to the conflict over the course of the year (see table 4.1).<sup>6</sup> Most of these were combat related and involved Afghan Government forces and the Taliban. Meanwhile, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) continued to document high levels of violence against civilians. It recorded 8239 civilian casualties (2563 fatalities and 5676 injuries) in the first nine months of 2019, of which 4313 (1174 fatalities and 3139 injuries) were between 1 July and 30 September. This was the largest number of civilian casualties that UNAMA had recorded in a three-month period since it started tracking them in 2009.<sup>7</sup>

The spike in civilian casualties in the third quarter of 2019 was attributed primarily to an increase in suicide and improvised explosive device (IED) attacks by anti-government groups, in particular the Taliban.<sup>8</sup> The Taliban was in advanced stages of peace negotiations with the USA at this point, and was stepping up its attacks against military and civilian targets as a means of creating additional leverage as the talks were progressing.<sup>9</sup> The Taliban was also responsible for most of the civilian casualties resulting from electoral violence in the run-up to and on the day of the Afghan presidential elections, which took place on 28 September.<sup>10</sup>

Another factor that explained the high level of civilian casualties was that the USA further expanded its use of air strikes. US aircraft and unmanned

<sup>5</sup> Keenan, A., 'Sri Lanka's Easter bombings: Peaceful coexistence under attack', International Crisis Group commentary, 23 Apr. 2019; *The Economist*, 'Sri Lanka responds to Islamist terrorism by terrorising Muslims', 6 June 2019; and Safi, M., 'Death toll in Sri Lanka bombings revised down to 253', *The Guardian*, 25 Apr. 2019.

<sup>6</sup> ACLED, 'Data export tool', [n.d.].

<sup>7</sup> UNAMA, 'Quarterly report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict: 1 January to 30 September 2019', 17 Oct. 2019.

<sup>8</sup> UNAMA (note 7).

<sup>9</sup> George, S., 'The past three months in Afghanistan have been the deadliest for civilians in a decade', *The Washington Post*, 17 Oct. 2019.

<sup>10</sup> UNAMA (note 7).

**Table 4.1.** Estimated conflict-related fatalities in Afghanistan, 2017–19

Event type	2017	2018	2019
Battles	26 200	31 769	26 686
Explosions/remote violence	9 517	10 891	14 647
Protests, riots and strategic developments	268	297	197
Violence against civilians	433	369	388
<b>Total</b>	<b>36 418</b>	<b>43 326</b>	<b>41 918</b>

Notes: The first available year for data on Afghanistan in the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) database is 2017. For definitions of event types, see ACLED, 'ACLED definitions of political violence and protest', 11 Apr. 2019.

Source: ACLED, 'Data export tool', [n.d.].

aerial vehicles released more munitions on targets in Afghanistan than in any other year since the US Department of Defense began publishing this type of statistics.<sup>11</sup> According to UNAMA air strikes killed 579 civilians in the first nine months of 2019—more than any other type of incident—of which 74 per cent was attributed to the USA.<sup>12</sup>

The IS-KP was less active than in previous years due to successive military campaigns against it by the Afghan Government, the Taliban and the USA. It suffered a major defeat in its stronghold province Nangarhar in November when 243 IS-KP fighters and several hundred of their relatives surrendered to the Afghan Government.<sup>13</sup> Although the IS-KP conducted fewer suicide attacks in 2019 than in 2018, it was responsible for the largest mass-casualty single incident, namely the terrorist attack at a wedding in a Shia district of Kabul in August 2019, which killed 92 and injured 142 civilians.<sup>14</sup>

The conflict displaced 345 000 people in the first nine months of 2019, and an estimated 4 million people displaced since 2012 have not returned to their communities. In 2020 an estimated 14.3 million people are expected to be in either crisis or emergency levels of food insecurity.<sup>15</sup>

### *The peace process*

The Taliban and the USA conducted several rounds of peace talks in Doha, Qatar, in 2019. The Trump administration had taken the initiative to reopen these bilateral direct talks with the Taliban in July 2018, hoping this would break the deadlock and pave the way for meaningful negotiations to end the war in Afghanistan. The USA had previously been unwilling to participate

<sup>11</sup> Borger, J., 'US dropped record number of bombs on Afghanistan last year', *The Guardian*, 28 Jan. 2020; and US Central Command, 'Combined Forces Air Component Commander 2013–2019 Airpower statistics as of 31 December 2019', [n.d.].

<sup>12</sup> George (note 9).

<sup>13</sup> Gibbons-Neff, T. and Mashal, M., 'ISIS is losing Afghan territory. That means little for its victims', *New York Times*, 2 Dec. 2019.

<sup>14</sup> BBC, 'Afghanistan war: Tracking the killings in August 2019', 16 Sep. 2019.

<sup>15</sup> UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Global Humanitarian Overview 2020* (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs: Geneva, Dec. 2019), p. 32.

in peace talks that did not include the Afghan Government. However, the Taliban does not recognize the government in Kabul and has hitherto refused to negotiate with it.<sup>16</sup>

These talks between the Taliban and the USA were the most prominent of the various Afghan peace talks that were ongoing, and they also appeared to be the most promising.<sup>17</sup> The Taliban and the USA settled on a draft framework of an agreement in January 2019, in which the USA would agree to withdraw from Afghanistan militarily in exchange for credible assurances from the Taliban that it would prohibit terrorist groups from operating from Afghanistan.<sup>18</sup> Ever since the USA intervened in Afghanistan in 2001, it has stated that the strategic objective of its military presence there is to prevent the country from becoming a safe haven for terrorist groups again. The USA also made clear that the withdrawal of US troops would be conditional on that the Taliban would agree to a ceasefire and to hold direct talks with the Afghan Government.<sup>19</sup>

The Taliban and the USA were seemingly close to an agreement in September 2019. The US special representative for Afghanistan reconciliation and chief negotiator, Zalmay Khalilzad, confirmed that the Taliban and the USA had reached an agreement ‘in principle’ and subject to the approval of US President Donald J. Trump.<sup>20</sup> The agreement stipulated that upon its entry into force, the USA would gradually withdraw its 14 000 troops from Afghanistan within 16 months, 5400 of which within 135 days. This would be conditional on the Taliban adhering to the terms of the agreement, including counterterrorism assurances and a partial ceasefire to facilitate the withdrawal of US troops from military bases.<sup>21</sup> Following the conclusion of this agreement, direct negotiations between the Afghan Government and the Taliban on a permanent ceasefire and comprehensive peace agreement would commence.<sup>22</sup>

However, the peace talks between the Taliban and the USA collapsed shortly thereafter. On 8 September President Trump suddenly announced that he had called off peace negotiations with the Taliban, which he later declared ‘dead’.<sup>23</sup> The reason he gave was that the Taliban had claimed

<sup>16</sup> Thomas, C., ‘Afghanistan: Background and US policy in brief’, Congressional Research Service, 31 Jan. 2020.

<sup>17</sup> For more information on the various international peace processes in Afghanistan, see Davis, I., ‘Armed conflict and peace processes in Asia and Oceania’, *SIPRI Yearbook 2019*, pp. 62–65.

<sup>18</sup> Mashal, M., ‘US and Taliban agree in principle to peace framework, envoy says’, *New York Times*, 28 Jan. 2019.

<sup>19</sup> Mashal (note 18).

<sup>20</sup> Mashal, M., ‘To start Afghan withdrawal, US would pull 5,400 troops in 135 days’, *New York Times*, 2 Sep. 2019.

<sup>21</sup> Hamid, S. and Qadir Sediqi, A., ‘US to withdraw 5,000 troops from Afghanistan, close bases: US negotiator’, Reuters, 2 Sep. 2019; and Mashal (note 20).

<sup>22</sup> Al Jazeera, ‘Intra-Afghan negotiations to follow US-Taliban deal: Khalilzad’, 28 July 2019.

<sup>23</sup> Jakes, L., ‘Trump declares Afghan peace talks with Taliban “dead”’, *New York Times*, 9 Sep. 2019.

responsibility for a major bomb attack in Kabul a few days earlier, which had killed 11 including a US soldier.<sup>24</sup>

The collapse of the Taliban–USA talks in September led to renewed pessimism about peace in Afghanistan. The Taliban maintained that it would not engage in intra-Afghan peace talks before it had reached an agreement with the USA.<sup>25</sup> Towards the end of the year there were indications that the talks between the Taliban and the USA might be revived.<sup>26</sup> During a surprise visit to Afghanistan in November, President Trump said that the Taliban and the USA were talking about an agreement again while implying that the USA was also demanding a ceasefire now.<sup>27</sup> Official talks resumed in Doha in December 2019.<sup>28</sup>

### *The United States and North Atlantic Treaty Organization military presence*

The withdrawal of the US military forces from Afghanistan—and the conditions and timing thereof—was one of the key issues in the negotiations between the Taliban and the USA in 2019. In December 2018 President Trump reportedly ordered the withdrawal of 7000 of the approximately 14 000 US troops in Afghanistan.<sup>29</sup> However, neither the USA nor the Resolute Support Mission (RSM), which was led by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, significantly reduced their presence in Afghanistan during 2019. The USA withdrew approximately 2000 troops towards the end of the year, of which around 500 were part of the RSM.<sup>30</sup> The RSM consisted of 16 705 troops at the end of 2019, of which 8000 were from the USA. The remaining US troops were deployed in Afghanistan as part of the parallel US counterterrorism operation Freedom’s Sentinel.<sup>31</sup>

### *Presidential elections*

Afghanistan held presidential elections on 28 September 2019. Initially scheduled to take place in April, the elections were carried out after two delays due to problems with registration requirements and biometric

<sup>24</sup> Baker, P. et al., ‘How Trump’s plan to secretly meet with the Taliban came together, and fell apart’, *New York Times*, 8 Sep. 2019.

<sup>25</sup> UN General Assembly and UN Security Council, ‘The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security’, Report of the Secretary-General, A/74/582–S/2019/935, 10 Dec. 2019, para. 15.

<sup>26</sup> Thomas (note 16); and Crowley, M., ‘Trump visits Afghanistan and says he reopened talks with Taliban’, *New York Times*, 28 Nov. 2019.

<sup>27</sup> Crowley (note 26).

<sup>28</sup> Al Jazeera, ‘First round of resurrected US–Taliban peace talks open in Qatar’, 7 Dec. 2019.

<sup>29</sup> Gibbons-Neff, T. and Mashal, M., ‘US to withdraw about 7,000 troops from Afghanistan, officials say’, *New York Times*, 20 Dec. 2018.

<sup>30</sup> Thomas (note 16).

<sup>31</sup> SIPRI Multilateral Peace Operations Database, <<https://www.sipri.org/databases/pko>>; North Atlantic Treaty Organization, ‘Resolute Support Mission: Key facts and figures’, Feb. 2020; and US Department of Defense, *Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, Report to Congress (US Department of Defense: Dec. 2019).

software (as had been the case during the country's parliamentary election in October 2018, which was also disrupted by the Islamic State and the Taliban).<sup>32</sup> Nearly 1 million of the initial 2.7 million votes were excluded due to irregularities, meaning the election saw by far the lowest turnout of any Afghan poll.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, the elections were also marred by violence, which fostered the low turnout.<sup>34</sup>

The announcement of the results was also repeatedly delayed, with Independent Election Commission (IEC) officials citing technical issues, allegations of fraud and protests from candidates. In December 2019 the IEC finally announced the preliminary election results in which the incumbent president, Ashraf Ghani, won 50.64 per cent of the votes. Ghani's main contender in the elections and the chief executive officer of the previous unity government, Abdullah Abdullah, disputed the preliminary outcome and stated that he would not accept this result.<sup>35</sup> This raised concerns of the prospect of another post-electoral political crisis in Afghanistan similar to that in 2014. The final results are scheduled to be announced in February 2020.<sup>36</sup>

### **India, Pakistan and the territorial dispute in Kashmir**

The Kashmir conflict and several military conflicts fought between India and Pakistan have largely defined relations between them. Since their independence, the two countries have fought three of their four wars over Kashmir (1947–48, 1965 and 1999)—and the other one over Bangladeshi independence (1971)—and have been involved in numerous armed clashes and military stand-offs. There have also been many talks and confidence-building measures over the years that sought to improve the relationship, but no current peace process.<sup>37</sup> Tensions between India and Pakistan surged again in 2019, especially as a result of the military confrontation across the de facto border in Kashmir in February 2019 (see chapter 1, section I).

In addition to the February 2019 air strikes conducted by India and Pakistan against targets in each other's territory, exchanges of artillery fire across the line of control are a regular part of the conflict, and ACLED

<sup>32</sup> Al Jazeera, 'Afghan presidential elections postponed until July 20: Official', 30 Dec. 2018.

<sup>33</sup> Al Jazeera, 'Afghanistan presidential election: All the latest updates', 28 Sep. 2019.

<sup>34</sup> *New York Times*, 'Afghanistan election draws low turnout amid Taliban threats', 28 Sep. 2019.

<sup>35</sup> Mashal, M. and Faizi, F., 'Afghan president leads in disputed vote as opposition protests', *New York Times*, 22 Dec. 2019.

<sup>36</sup> BBC, 'Afghan presidential election: Tense wait after day of attacks', 30 Sep. 2019.

<sup>37</sup> See e.g. International Crisis Group, *India/Pakistan Relations and Kashmir: Steps Towards Peace*, Asia Report no. 79 (International Crisis Group: Islamabad/New Delhi/Brussels, 24 June 2004); and Rashid, A., 'A peace plan for India and Pakistan already exists', *New York Times*, 7 Mar. 2019.

**Table 4.2.** Estimated conflict-related fatalities in India, 2016–19

Event type	2016	2017	2018	2019
Battles	1 007	844	1 203	563
Explosions/remote violence	69	64	148	116
Protests, riots and strategic developments	282	209	224	299
Violence against civilians	301	317	525	545
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 659</b>	<b>1 434</b>	<b>2 100</b>	<b>1 523</b>

*Notes:* The first available year for data on India in the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) database is 2016. For definitions of event types, see ACLED, ‘ACLED definitions of political violence and protest’, 11 Apr. 2019.

*Source:* ACLED, ‘Data export tool’, [n.d.].

recorded 582 such events in 2019, up from 349 in 2018.<sup>38</sup> There were 280 battle-related fatalities in Jammu and Kashmir in 2019.<sup>39</sup> According to the Indian Government, the conflict in Kashmir has killed about 42 000 civilians, militants and security personnel since 1989, while independent estimates suggest 70 000 or more deaths.<sup>40</sup> The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has reported serious human rights violations and patterns of impunity in India-administered Kashmir and significant human rights concerns in Pakistan-administered Kashmir.<sup>41</sup>

### *India’s internal security threats*

In 2019 India also continued to face internal security threats, notably from the Naxalite insurgency (Maoist rebels in rural areas of central and eastern India), which started in 1967 and entered its current phase in 2004, and also intercommunal (mainly Hindu–Muslim) tensions. For example, Maoist rebels killed five police officers in Jharkhand state in June and 15 police officers and a civilian during an attack in Maharashtra state in May 2019.<sup>42</sup> The Indian security forces claim to have inflicted heavy losses on the Maoist rebels in recent years and the insurgency appears to be using more remote technologies, including unmanned aerial vehicles and IEDs.<sup>43</sup> The

<sup>38</sup> ACLED, *Ten Conflicts to Worry About in 2020* (ACLED: Jan. 2020), p. 12; and BBC, ‘India and Pakistan blame each other over Kashmir shelling’, 21 Oct. 2019.

<sup>39</sup> ACLED, ‘Data export tool’, [n.d.].

<sup>40</sup> Kronstadt, K. A., ‘Kashmir: Background, recent developments, and US policy’, Congressional Research Service Report R45877, 16 Aug. 2019. On the number of Indian security personnel in Kashmir, see Shukla, A., ‘India has 700,000 troops in Kashmir? False!!!’, rediff.com, 17 July 2018.

<sup>41</sup> See e.g. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Update of the Situation of Human Rights in Indian-administered Kashmir and Pakistan-administered Kashmir from May 2018 to April 2019* (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights: 8 July 2019).

<sup>42</sup> Reuters, ‘Maoist rebels kill five policemen in eastern India’, 14 June 2019. On the history of the conflict, see Sahoo, N., ‘Half a century of India’s Maoist insurgency: An appraisal of state response’, Observer Research Foundation, June 2019.

<sup>43</sup> Mukherjee, U., ‘IEDs and the Maoist insurgency’, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses Comment, 7 May 2019; and Kujur, R. K., ‘The CPI-Maoist tech onslaught: Early warnings—analysis’, Eurasia Review, 27 Nov. 2019. On attempts to regulate IEDs, see chapter 13, section I, in this volume.

Maoist conflict accounted for 20 per cent of the 1523 conflict-related fatalities in India in 2019 (see table 4.2), while the fatalities in Jammu and Kashmir accounted for 26 per cent.<sup>44</sup> According to ACLED, India had the fifth-highest number of political violence events in the world in 2019, mainly mob violence (riots) with links to political parties.<sup>45</sup>

However, there were hopes that the Nagaland insurgency (in north-east India) might be nearing resolution. In particular, peace talks between the Indian Government and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Isak-Muivah (NSCN-IM), the main separatist group in Nagaland, may help to finalize a framework peace accord signed with the NSCN-IM in 2015.<sup>46</sup>

The Hindu–Muslim divide in India remains a potential source of communal violence, and growing radicalization on both sides has added to the frictions.<sup>47</sup> In December India introduced a controversial citizenship law that sparked protests across the country and clashes with security forces that left dozens dead.<sup>48</sup>

#### *Pakistan's internal security threats*

Intrastate violence involving various armed groups remained a major threat in Pakistan in 2019, especially in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province that borders Afghanistan, but also in the other three provinces. In May for example, the TEP claimed responsibility for a suicide attack in Lahore (Punjab province) that killed at least nine people.<sup>49</sup> Balochistan, the largest of Pakistan's four provinces, has faced several insurgencies from Baloch nationalists since 1948. The current phase of the insurgency (which started in 2003) has been at a relatively low level since 2012 and involves some militant Baloch nationalist groups, the most prominent being the Baloch Liberation Army.<sup>50</sup>

The risk of sectarian violence in Pakistan, mainly between Sunni and Shia groups, was also ongoing in 2019—especially by the Sunni fundamentalist group LEJ, which has been targeting the minority (and predominantly Shia) Hazara community.<sup>51</sup> On 12 April 2019 for example, a bomb attack on a market

<sup>44</sup> Author's analysis using the ACLED data export tool.

<sup>45</sup> Kishi, R. et al., *Year in Review* (ACLED: 2 Mar. 2020), pp. 19, 22–23, 75.

<sup>46</sup> Hart, M., 'Is India's Nagaland peace process nearing a breakthrough?' *Geopolitical Monitor*, 8 July 2019; *Times of India*, 'Centre holds dialogue with NSCN-IM; peace talks may continue beyond Oct 31', 28 Oct. 2019.

<sup>47</sup> See e.g. Misra, A., 'India's 500-year-old religious dispute', *Asia Times*, 20 Apr. 2019; and Malji, A., 'The rise of Hindu nationalism and its regional and global ramifications', *Asian Politics*, vol. 23, no. 1 (spring 2018).

<sup>48</sup> Ellis-Petersen, H., 'Violent clashes continue in India over new citizenship bill', *The Guardian*, 13 Dec. 2019.

<sup>49</sup> BBC, 'Pakistan Data Darbar: Bomber kills nine outside Sufi Shrine in Lahore', 8 May 2019.

<sup>50</sup> Bhattacharjee, K., 'Explained: The Baloch Liberation Army', *The Hindu*, 3 July 2019.

<sup>51</sup> Wani, S. A., 'Political indifference and state complicity: The travails of Hazaras in Balochistan', *Strategic Analysis*, vol. 43, no. 4 (2019), pp. 328–34.



**Table 4.3.** Estimated conflict-related fatalities in Pakistan, 2013–19

Event type	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Battles	1 428	1 754	1 951	1 175	891	479	620
Explosions/remote violence	2 087	2 826	1 953	805	669	410	185
Protests, riots and strategic developments	72	53	81	39	30	44	14
Violence against civilians	667	650	535	188	150	293	328
<b>Total</b>	<b>4 254</b>	<b>5 283</b>	<b>4 520</b>	<b>2 207</b>	<b>1 740</b>	<b>1 226</b>	<b>1 147</b>

Note: For definitions of event types, see Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), 'ACLED definitions of political violence and protest', 11 Apr. 2019.

Source: ACLED, 'Data export tool', [n.d.].

in Quetta carried out by a faction of the TEP in collaboration with the LEJ killed at least 20 people, including eight members of the Hazara community.<sup>52</sup> However, overall battle-related fatalities and deaths from remote violence have declined considerably since the 2013–15 period (see table 4.3).

The Pakistani military and intelligence services are regularly criticized by Western diplomats for using militant proxies to destabilize Afghanistan and Kashmir. In 2018 the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), founded by the Group of Seven (G7) in 1989 to combat money laundering and later terrorism financing, placed Pakistan on a sanctions 'grey list'. The Pakistan foreign minister estimated that it could cost the country \$10 billion annually if it remained on the list.<sup>53</sup> In addition, President Trump froze aid to Pakistan worth up to \$1.6 billion in 2018.<sup>54</sup>

The arrest of Hafiz Saeed, founder of the LET armed group, by Pakistan police in July 2019 on terrorism-financing charges was in part aimed at appeasing the FATF and the USA. India accused Saeed of organizing the 2008 Mumbai attacks that killed at least 165 people, while LET has been responsible for attacks against Indian security forces in Kashmir.<sup>55</sup> China's consent to the inclusion in May 2019 of Masood Azhar, leader and founder of JEM, on the UN's list of individuals subject to sanctions under UN Security Council Resolution 2368 (2017) could also be seen as a supportive move towards Pakistan within the context of the FATF, as well as a reaction to the group's attack in Kashmir in February 2019.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Zafar, M., '20 martyred as blast rips through Quetta market', *Express Tribune*, 12 Apr. 2019.

<sup>53</sup> Ahmad, I., 'FATF could blacklist Pak due to "lobbying by India": Qureshi', *Hindustan Times*, 2 Apr. 2019.

<sup>54</sup> Tomlinson, H., 'Pakistan must prove it is fighting terrorism, warns US', *The Times*, 14 Oct. 2019.

<sup>55</sup> Hashim, A., 'Pakistan police arrest Lashkar-e-Taiba founder Hafiz Saeed', *Al Jazeera*, 17 July 2019.

<sup>56</sup> UN Security Council Resolution 2368 (2017), S/RES/2368 (2017), 20 July 2017; Tripathi, R., 'Pakistan has third highest number in UN proscribed list', *Economic Times*, 3 May 2019; and Abrams, C. and Shah, S., 'UN designates Pakistani as terrorist after China acquiesces', *Wall Street Journal*, 1 May 2019.