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## SUPeR Feature Article: Fueling the Fire: The Causes of Terrorism in Weak States

Grace Dunigan  
*Susquehanna University*

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## **SUPeR Feature Article:**

# **Fueling the Fire: The Causes of Terrorism in Weak States**

**By: Grace Dunigan**

### **Abstract**

Terrorism is a phenomenon that affects many countries around the world, disproportionately those classified as weak and failing states. It is important to understand why terrorism continues to occur, due to the threat it poses to the international community. Once the triggers of terrorism are identified, they can be used to aid in the creation of counterterrorism policy to make it more effective and less strenuous. In this study, I sought to explain what led to groups' choice to resort to terrorism within weak states. To answer this question, I used a case study approach, examining four terrorist groups each from India and Burma in order to test my hypotheses. I hypothesized that when governments impose repressive policies that restrict a group from engaging in political privileges awarded to other citizens outside the group, terrorism will be more likely to occur. I also hypothesized that when governments lack the capacity to enforce their laws, groups will be more likely to resort to terrorism. To test my hypotheses, I examined the policy and capacity of the government just prior to the first terrorist attack conducted by each group. While there was government repression in the case of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army, it was not present prior to attacks by any of the other groups examined. In terms of capacity, no evidence was presented that showed any relationship between the capacity of the state and the decision of groups to engage in terrorism. Therefore, I concluded that neither repression nor capacity are necessary, preexisting conditions for terrorism to occur and do not have an effect on groups' decision to engage in terrorist activity.

## **Introduction**

Terrorism is a scary word. By one definition, terrorism is “criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public...” (United Nations General Assembly Resolution 15/210). It is important to understand why terrorism continues to occur, due to the threat it poses to the international community, particularly those classified as weak or failing states.

In this paper, I ask the question of what leads to groups’ choice to resort to terrorism within weak states. To begin to answer this question, I create two hypotheses. I hypothesized that when governments impose repressive policies that restrict a group from engaging in political privileges awarded to other citizens outside the group, terrorism will be more likely to occur. I also hypothesize that when governments lack the capacity to enforce their laws, groups will be more likely to resort to terrorism. Together, these hypotheses seek to explain two factors that help further the understanding of why groups choose to engage in terrorist tactics. To test these hypotheses, I use a case study approach, examining four terrorist organizations each from India and Burma. Within India, I examine the Communist Party of India – Maoist (CPI-Maoist), All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF), Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM), and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland Isak Muivah (NSCN-IM). Within Burma, I study the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), Kachin Independence Army (KIA), Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), and the Shan State Army – South (SSA-S). By limiting my scope to these two countries and eight terrorist organizations, it allows me to effectively test my hypotheses as well as provide an in-depth look at the decision making undertaken by potential terrorist organizations.

## **History and Background**

It is no debate that terrorist attacks are more prevalent and more intense in weak and failed states. This is indicated by the Global Terrorism Database's 45 Years of Terrorism Map, which marks all terrorist attacks that have occurred over the past forty-five years. As can be seen from the map, terrorist attacks are more common and more intense in weak and failed states (See Appendix 1). Therefore, it makes sense to examine them in this study, since there is a larger variety and prevalence of terrorist activity within these countries. While strong and stable states are not immune from terrorist activity, weak and failed states experience a much higher amount of terrorism. Weak states are countries that continue to provide some political goods to citizens, mostly monopolize the use of force, and are seen as legitimate by the population, but are at risk of total state failure (Piazza 2008, 471).

Terrorism is able to fester in weak states because, like failed states, they suffer from "administrative incapacity" meaning they cannot provide the basic services that most citizens expect from modern government, such as a minimal level of personal security, economic stability, functioning institutions, and political goods (Piazza 2008, 470). While failed states suffer the most, weak states contain elements of failed states and therefore share some of the elements of administrative incapacity. Because of this, terrorism thrives not only in failed states, but weak states as well since they have similar conditions.

Terrorism appears to be more prominent in certain areas over others. In 2017, the Global Terrorism Database published its background report detailing several general terrorism statistics. In 2017, there were a total of 10,900 terrorist attacks around the world. Of those terrorist attacks, 35% occurred in the Middle East and North Africa, 31% occurred in South Asia, and 18% occurred in Sub-Saharan Africa, leaving the remaining 16% occurring in the rest of the world (Global Terrorism Database).

These three regions were also responsible for the highest percentage of total terrorism deaths with the Middle East and North Africa having 41%, South Asia having 29%, and Sub-Saharan Africa having 25%, with the remaining 5% belonging to the rest of the world (Global Terrorism Database). This does not suggest terrorism is limited to these three regions of the world. Terrorism can occur anywhere, as we know, however what is seen is that terrorism is much more prominent in these three regions than other areas of the world.

This is significant because these three regions also have the highest number of failed states. While the Fragile States Index does not break it down in this way, it can easily be determined from looking at the map that a high number of very fragile states exist in the Middle East, North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, and South Asia when compared to the rest of the world (See Appendix 2). While no continent is free from weak states, there is a disproportionate number within these geographic regions. This further strengthens the relationship between weak and failed states and terrorism.

Because of this visible link, I have chosen to examine weak states in this study. I have chosen India and Burma as my two states because one is a democracy, one is not, and both are considered weak states. In order to combat the majority of terrorism, we must understand the reasoning behind the decision to engage in it in the first place. This can best be examined in weak and failed states, since they have the highest number of terrorist attacks and deaths as can be evidenced from the relationship shown above. Therefore, weak states are not to be ignored. Rather, they must be built up, strengthened, and protected in order to prevent further development of terrorism across vulnerable parts of the world.

### **Literature Review**

Terrorists are often misunderstood and dismissed as irrational actors because of their use of unconventional methods. Author Bryan Caplan rejects the argument that terrorists are

irrational actors. Rather, terrorists are rational actors that weigh the costs and benefits of their actions. Caplan suggests the use of the rational choice model cannot be discarded simply because of a few outliers such as suicide bombers and still applies to terrorists as a whole (Caplan 2006, 105). Caplan follows this up by saying rational choice is just a model and does not account for real life influences like religious beliefs and political motivations (Caplan 2006, 105). Once these are incorporated, the rational choice model can be adapted to apply to terrorists (Caplan 2006, 105). Robert Pape takes this argument a step further saying suicide terrorists are rational actors as well since their actions are strategically calculated to create a desired outcome (Pape 2006). Martha Crenshaw also weighs in on this debate when discussing the psychology of terrorism. She suggests that terrorists cannot be considered in isolation from their social and political context but must be examined based on a model that integrates the individual, group, and society (Crenshaw 2000, 418). Therefore, it is invalid to assume terrorists are irrational actors, simply because they do not fit a hypothetical model that was not designed for them anyway. It must be presumed that terrorists are at least semi-rational actors.

Martha Crenshaw also argues that terrorism is not a reflection of deep cleavages in society or mass discontent, rather it is fueled by the way governments react to that discontent (Crenshaw 1981, 396). If a government handles discontent poorly or inconsistently, groups are more likely to engage in terrorism (Crenshaw 1981, 396). Some of the ways in which governments can mishandle discontent is by being unable to or unwilling to quell the dissatisfaction. Crenshaw also argues that when the government restricts participation in the political process, it creates more motivation for terrorists. When groups cannot have their voices heard through traditional governmental avenues, they will turn to other ways to have their concerns expressed.

Smelser says that that one of the underlying causes of terrorism is dispossession. He describes dispossession as “precipitations on the part of a group that it is systematically excluded, discriminated against, or disadvantages with respect to some meaningful aspect of social, economic, and political life to which it feels entitled” (Smelser 2007, 16). He goes on to clarify that dispossession must be present as a necessary condition for dissatisfaction and collective mobilization (Smelser 2007, 16). Smelser argues that this dispossession has been at the root of many identity-based conflicts in the world linked to terrorist activities on behalf of the disenfranchised groups (Smelser 2007, 21). Perceived dispossession is usually linked to some form of government repression. Therefore, governments that repress groups’ ability to participate in the political process or voice their disagreement with the government will have higher dispossession and as a result higher amounts of terrorist activity.

Abrahms rejects the strategic model argument that has been used to analyze the causes of terrorism. The strategic model relies on three core assumptions: terrorists are motivated by relatively stable and consistent political preferences, terrorists evaluate the expected payoffs of their available options, and terrorism is adopted when the expected political return is superior to those of alternative options (Abrahms 2008, 79). Through a series of seven puzzles, he deconstructs the argument and proposes an alternative. He examines terrorist motives using organization theories, since terrorist attacks are perpetrated by members of the organization (Abrahms 2008, 94). Rather than looking at the group as a whole, Abrahms examines the members. He favors the natural systems model which “posits that people participate in organizations not to achieve their official goals, but to experience social solidarity with other members” (Abrahms 2008, 94-95). He argues that people join terrorist organizations and continue to fight for them, not because they are ideologically close to the cause or believe in the change, but because it gives them a sense of belonging

as a member of a group where they feel important.

Piazza argues that minority group economic discrimination significantly increases the probability of domestic terrorist attacks (Piazza 2011, 339). Likewise, countries lacking minority economic discrimination are significantly less likely to experience terrorism (Piazza 2011, 339). Minority economic discrimination can involve employment discrimination, unequal access to healthcare, educational or social services, formal or informal housing segregation, or general lack of economic opportunities that are available to the rest of society (Piazza 2011, 340). This discrimination reinforces social exclusion and a sense of otherness in minority group members, leaving them aggravated and upset with the system (Piazza 2011, 340). Piazza argues this makes these groups more susceptible to radicalization and fertile group for terrorist movements (Piazza 2011, 340). Piazza finds that overall economic status of a country has a smaller effect on terrorism than does the economic status of a country's minority groups (Piazza 2011, 350). Piazza concludes "countries featuring minority group economic discrimination are significantly more likely to experience domestic terrorist attacks, whereas countries lacking minority groups of whose minorities do not face discrimination are significantly less likely to experience terrorism" (Piazza 2011, 339).

### **Hypotheses**

In this paper, I seek to explain what leads to groups' choice to engage in terrorism within weak states. To answer this question, I hypothesized that two factors will influence this choice. The first hypothesis is that when governments impose repressive policies, groups will be more likely to engage in terrorism. The second hypothesis is that when governments lack capacity to enforce their laws, groups will be more likely to resort to terrorism.

The first hypothesis focuses on repression and the inability of groups to express their opposition in other ways. To silence dissent, governments can make the cost of peaceful

protest very high, giving groups fewer options to have their voices heard. As a result of this silencing by governments, groups may be more inclined to switch to terrorist tactics in order to express opposition to government action. However, since terrorism carries many more risks than peaceful protest or dissent, it is not a simple decision to begin to engage in these tactics. Terrorists, as presumably semi-rational actors, weigh the costs and benefits of their actions. When groups are looking to respond to repressive actions by their government, they may begin to engage in terrorist attacks.

The second hypothesis brings into question the capacity of the state. When states cannot enforce their laws, groups may be more likely to engage in terrorism. This is simply due to the lack of opposition and fear of the government, since it is unwilling or unable to carry out its laws. We must still assume terrorists are semi-rational actors. Engaging in terrorism may become a more viable choice since a weak and incapable government may be unable to provide much effective opposition. Lack of capacity also increases the likelihood of the organization to thrive, since the government may not have the basic ability to tamp down terrorist groups. This provides an environment in which budding terrorist organizations can grow, making terrorism more likely to occur.

### **Methodology**

In order to test my hypotheses, I will use a case study approach. I believe a case study approach is the best option because it will enable me to trace the process of terrorist group development, relationship with the government, timing of repression, and number of terrorist attacks. By focusing on the micro-level provided by a qualitative study, I believe I will better be able to test my hypotheses.

In order to carry out the testing of my hypotheses, I will use a variety of different techniques. Using the Global

Terrorism Database, I will examine the first terrorist attack, or the first terror attack conducted in ten or more years by each group. I will cross reference this with the policy of the government, looking to see if any repressive actions have occurred before the initial terrorist attack was carried out. These repressive actions can vary but must restrict or prevent the group from engaging in political privileges awarded to other citizens outside the group. I will also examine the location of the attack, the recipient of the attack, and the state of the police force and military at the time. I expect to see, if there was a terrorist attack, it was preceded by government repression. I also expect to see that at the time of the attack, the police and military were either weak or preoccupied at the time. I will be testing to see if these two preexisting conditions are necessary for terrorism to occur.

For the purposes of this paper, I am defining terrorism as “criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public...” (United Nations General Assembly Resolution 15/210). I am defining capacity as a combination of things including the ratio of police to population, the ratio of military personnel to population, and location of the terrorist attack. These three factors illustrate the capacity of the state most efficiently because they illustrate the ability of each country to carry out its laws and policies, should it choose to do so. I am defining a repressive policy as a policy implemented specifically to restrict or prevent a group from engaging in political privileges awarded to other citizens outside the group.

Since gaining independence in 1947, India has remained a democratic country, allowing much political participation and guaranteeing basic civil rights and liberties for its citizens. According to the Polity IV index, India scores a +9. This is the second highest democracy rating a country can achieve, meaning India is very democratic. India also has a very low police-to-population ration, with 138 police per 100,000 people (The

Economic Times 2018). This is grossly inadequate to support the needs of the population, let alone combat terrorist organizations. This number was the fifth lowest of the 71 countries for which the UN collected this data (The Economic Times 2018). India has almost three million people serving in its military, making up approximately 0.6% of its total labor force (World Bank). For such a populous country, this is a very low number of military personnel serving. This illustrates that India is a democratic country with little capacity.

After gaining independence in 1948, Burma fell into authoritarian rule. Up until 2011, Burma has been subject to harsh rule by military juntas and is still considered a closed anocracy with a score of -3 (Polity IV Index). Burmese citizens lack basic civil liberties and political freedoms, and their recently democratically elected government has not been upholding human rights. Burma also has a low police-to-population ration, with one police officer for every 1,000-2,000 people (KST 2016). This demonstrates that the capacity of the government to enforce its laws is relatively limited, given the low number of police officers. Burma has over five hundred thousand people serving in its military, making up about 2.0% of its total labor force (World Bank). This number is much higher than most countries, the majority of which are under 1% (World Bank). This indicates that Burma has a large percentage of its labor force serving in the military, which may in turn suggest it has a higher capacity.

## **Findings**

### **Burma**

Within Burma, I will be examining four terrorist organizations including Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), Kachin Independence Army (KIA), Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), and the Shan State Army – South (SSA-S).

***Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA)***

The Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) first emerged in 2016, though it is believed to have been training people since 2013 (BBC News). ARSA predominantly operates in the northern Rakhine state of Burma, where the Burmese government has engaged in ethnic cleansing through the forceful removal and murder of the Rohingya people (Edroos 2017, BBC News) (See Appendix 3). ARSA states its purpose is to defend, salvage, and protect the Rohingya people in line with the principle of self-defense (BBC News). The Rohingya people have historically faced discrimination and multiple human rights violations by the Burmese government, so much so that they are considered illegal immigrants (despite the Rakhine state being their ancestral lands) and are denied citizenship (Edroos 2017, BBC News). Burma is a predominantly Buddhist state and the majority of Rohingya are Muslim. ARSA is considered a terrorist organization by the Burmese government (BBC News). The Burmese government also claims that ARSA is a jihadist organization with the goal of imposing Sharia Law on Burma (Edroos 2017). ARSA has refuted this claim, saying it has no connection to Muslim terrorist organizations nor do its goals involve religious motivations (Edroos 2017). ARSA also rejects the terrorist label (Edroos 2017).

In 1982, the Burmese government passed the Pyithu Hluttaw Law No. 4, also known as the Burma Citizenship Law. This law granted citizenship to any person belonging to the listed “national races” which includes the Karen, Kachin, and Shan, or anyone whose ancestors settled in the country before British occupation in 1823 (Human Rights Watch). Many Rohingya people can trace their ancestry in the region prior to 1823 yet are denied citizenship (Human Rights Watch). Because of this, the Rohingya are considered stateless persons and are not subject to any of the rights or privileges of citizenship within Burma (Human Rights Watch). This denial of citizenship promotes the

view within Burma that Rohingya is a made-up, fabricated ethnicity (Burmese Rohingya Organization UK 2014). Therefore, the Rohingya are subject to racial hatred and violence against the community as a whole (Burmese Rohingya Organization UK 2014). They are also unable to participate in parts of political life that are awarded to other citizens due to this act.

In 2012, tensions ratcheted up between the Buddhist government and Muslim Rohingya groups. The Burmese government had failed to propose a solution for the 800,000 Rohingya living in the Rakhine state in destitute conditions resembling refugee camps (Fuller 2012). Since the Rohingya are considered stateless due to their lack of citizenship, they cannot own land, are restricted from travel, and confined to one area (Fuller 2012). This action caused the Rohingya to riot, burning down over 500 homes (Fuller 2012). The Burmese government managed to shut down the riot.

In the subsequent years the Rohingyas continued to riot, demanding basic human rights.

ARSA engaged in twenty-eight coordinated attacks on August 25, 2017, targeting police posts along the Burmese border (Global Terrorism Database). Casualties were high for both sides, killing 12 security personnel and 77 Rohingya fighters (Global Terrorism Database). This caused the Burmese government to launch a massive campaign against the Rohingya people in the Rakhine state (BBC News). Entire villages were burned to the ground and over 700,000 people were forced to flee their homelands in what the United Nations refers to as “a textbook example of ethnic cleansing” (BBC News). As of mid-April, 781,000 Rohingya refugees were living in nine camps and settlements within Bangladesh near the border of Burma (BBC News). In response to the massive attacks by the government, ARSA tried to fight back, launching another series of attacks on police in early September.

***Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) & Karen National Union (KNU)***

The Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) was founded in 1947 as the military branch of the Karen National Union (KNU). The KNU has the goal of establishing independence for the Karen ethnic group within Burma (Karen National Union). This is the longest civil war in Burma, and one of the longest in the world beginning in 1947. In February 1948, the Karen people took to the streets in Burma to demand an independent Karen state, claiming they never wanted to be incorporated into the larger nation of Burma (Ehna 2013) (See Appendix 3). The Burmese government did not grant the Karen independence and revolts began to occur. On January 31, 1949 the Karen National Union declared war on the Burmese government and the conflict has continued since.

Tensions reached their highest in the late 1980's, with the Karen National Union (KNU) joining the pro-democracy movement, along with many other groups, and engaging in peaceful protest against the military dictatorship (Human Rights Watch). The military government engaged in several repressive measures to shut down the opposition, causing human rights abuses to increase, particularly against members of the Karen community (Human Rights Watch). During the 1980's, terrorism carried out by KNLA increased significantly from zero incidents in 1985 to 14 documented terrorist attacks in 1988 (Global Terrorism Database). Between 1985 and 1988 the Karen were facing significant government discrimination, which peaked in 1988. This discrimination included suppression of religion and use of torture and forced labor (Mirante 1987).

Between 1988 and 1997, the KNU continued to launch intermittent attacks back and forth with the Burmese government as part of the civil war. After a breakdown in peace negotiations in 1996, the government launched a new offensive against the KNU, attacking their guerilla camps as well as populous cities

(Human Rights Watch) (Minorities at Risk). It is important to note that in 1996, along with the breakdown in negotiations, the KNU also launched four terrorist attacks (Global Terrorism Database). During the offensive, the military doubled the size of its armed forces and established a permanent presence in territory held by the KNU (Human Rights Watch). During this time of occupation, countless human rights abuses took place by the Burmese military, including deliberate attacks on civilians, sexual violence against women and children, attack on food supplies, and use of landmines (Gyaw Gyaw). This forced thousands of Karen to seek refuge in Thailand due to the genocidal tactics used by the Burmese military (Human Rights Watch). In 2005, the KNU launched four attacks and zero in 2006 (Global Terrorism Database). Then, government engaged in more crackdowns in 2007-2008, forcing more people to flee their homeland and seek refuge in Thailand (Pattison 2007). Between 1996 and 2007, over one million Karen people were displaced due to the human rights violations including rape, forced labor, and torture (Pattison 2007).

*Kachin Independence Army (KIA)*

The Kachin Independence Army (KIA) was founded in 1961 as the military branch of the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) with the goal to gain independence for the Kachin ethnic group (Myanmar Peace Monitor). The KIA has agreed to many ceasefire agreements over the years, all of which have been broken. Recently, the KIA has refused to join the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, which it believes is biased against minority ethnic groups (Combs 2018). The KIA operates predominantly in the areas along the Sino-Burmese border and is based in the city of Laiza (Myanmar Peace Monitor, Beech 2014). The KIA is considered an illegal organization by the Burmese government (Myanmar Peace Monitor).

The Kachin Independence Army (KIA) first engaged in terrorism in 1988 and continued intermittently until 1992 (Global

Terrorism Database). The KIA then took a twenty-year hiatus before beginning to engage in terrorism once again in 2012 (Global Terrorism Database). In 2011, tensions between the KIA and the Burmese military were renewed in the northernmost part of Burma (Human Rights Watch). Both sides argue the other was responsible for the breakdown in peace, but the conflict came after the KIA was ordered to withdraw from an area where a hydropower plant is located (BBC News 2011). After seventeen years of ceasefire in the Kachin State, the Burmese military launched offensive operations against the KIA (Human Rights Watch) (See Appendix 3). This led to a humanitarian crisis affecting tens of thousands of civilians, against whom the Burmese army is committing serious abuses (Human Rights Watch). Soldiers have threatened and tortured civilians, engaged in sexual violence, utilized forced labor, and have conscripted child soldiers (Human Rights Watch). This has caused over 75,000 Kachin to flee their homes, seeking refuge along the border in China (Human Rights Watch). In 2012, China forcibly returned approximately 7,000 – 10,000 Kachin refugees to Burma, causing an increase of internally displaced persons within the country (Human Rights Watch). The KIA launched their first terrorist attack in almost two decades on April 28, 2012 (Global Terrorism Database). The KIA attacked a government building, killing three government officials and presumably kidnapping three others (Global Terrorism Database).

#### *Shan State Army – South (SSA-S)*

The Shan State Army – South (SSA-S) is the armed wing of the Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) (Myanmar Peace Monitor). The SSA-S was formed when it broke away from the Shan United Revolutionary Army in 1996, after opposing a ceasefire made between the SURA and the Burmese government (Myanmar Peace Monitor). The goal of the SSA-S is to create an independent Shan state for the Shan

ethnic group within Burma. In recent months, the conflict between the SSA-S and the Burmese government has ramped up as the government is preoccupied with the Rohingya crisis in the west of the country (France Presse 2018). SSA-S operates in the northern part of Burma known as the Shan state, where the geography is in their favor (France-Pressé 2018). The territory is rural and mountainous, allowing the SSA-S to thrive.

In 2004-2005 the Burmese government launched an offensive against the secessionist group Shan State Army – South (SSA-S) (Human Rights Watch). This, like many of the Burmese military's campaigns, consisted of forcing entire villages to relocate and seek asylum in Thailand due to the torture, rape, and other violent acts against Shan civilians. It was estimated that between 200-500 civilians fled the Shan state daily, with an estimated total of 300,000 refugees seeking safety in Thailand (Human Rights Watch).

In May 2005, the SSA-S engaged in its first documented attack which consisted of a group of three bombings in Yangon resulting in the deaths of 19 people (Global Terrorism Database). This terrorist act occurred during the military invasion and use of unlawful war tactics in the Shan state (Global Terrorism Database). This is the first documented terrorist attack by the SSA-S, however insurgency within the Shan State has been an ongoing struggle.

### **India**

On August 18, 1958, the first version of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act was passed by the Indian government (Human Rights Watch 2008). The goal of the act was to deploy the army against an armed separatist movement in the Naga Hills (Human Rights Watch 2008). Although the original document was supposed to be a short-term measure, AFSPA has been continuously invoked and renewed for over five decades and expanded to different regions in India (Human Rights Watch 2008). Originally, the act only extended to the northeast,

particularly the regions of Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, and Tripura (Human Rights Watch 2008) (see Appendix 4). Now, AFSPA has been expanded to include Jammu & Kashmir, Mizoram, and parts of Arunachal Pradesh (Das 2018) (See Appendix 4). AFSPA has since been lifted from Tripura in 2015 (Das 2018).

AFSPA was intended to tamp down rebellion and crush the separatist movements in the Northeast. However, it has become a tool of state abuse, oppression, and discrimination. AFSPA enables the military to engage in basically any practice it deems necessary within “disturbed areas” which includes, but is not limited to, arrests without warrants, shoot-to-kill, and destruction of property. Under AFSPA, military personnel responsible for serious crimes are protected under the law, creating a sense of impunity for members of the military. The Indian government has tried to justify AFSPA as a necessity in order for the military to effectively combat insurgencies. The Indian Supreme Court has also issued guidelines regarding AFSPA to prevent human rights violations, but these are regularly ignored by the military (Human Rights Watch 2008). Regardless, AFSPA has facilitated many abuses including torture, rape, extrajudicial killings, and mysterious disappearances

Within India, I will be examining four terrorist organizations including Communist Party of India – Maoist (CPI-Maoist), All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF), Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM), and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland Isak Muviah (NSCN-IM).

#### ***All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF)***

The All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF) was founded on July 11, 1990 by a group of Tripura nationalists under the leadership of Ranjit Debbarma (SATP). The ATTF was founded with the goal of expelling all foreigners who entered Tripura after 1956 and, through an armed struggle, establishing Tripura

as an independent nation (Tripathi 2018, PTI 2018). Tripura, where the ATTF is most active, is a region in the eastern part of India that shares the majority of its border with Bangladesh (Tripathi 2018) (See Appendix 4). The ATTF was first banned in 1997 but was banned again under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act in 2018 for five more years (PTI 2018). The ATTF has engaged in the killing of civilians and security personnel, extortion of funds from merchants in Tripura, supporting and training to engage in terrorist activity, and kidnappings (PTI 2018, Tripathi 2018).

Shortly after its founding in 1990, the Indian government launched a massive campaign to eliminate ATTF terrorists in 1991 (South Asia Terrorism Portal). This campaign took place prior to the first documented attack by the ATTF. On October 7, 1992, the ATTF launched its first documented attack which targeted police on patrol (Global Terrorism Database). It was an armed assault using a shogun and machete where four were killed (Global Terrorism Database).

The people of Tripura are subject to discrimination, though there is little evidence they have been subject to full on repression by the government. Some instances of discrimination include economic disadvantages, lack of proportional representation within government, and land shortages (Minorities at Risk 2006). Yet the Tripuri are still able to engage in economic activity, have government representation, and live on their ancestral land. This does not indicate intense government repression. AFSPA has also been invoked within Tripura for many years, giving the military almost free reign over the region. In 2015, AFSPA was lifted in Tripura after 18 years of rule (BBC News 2015). The Indian government cited the reason for lifting AFSPA was the insurgency threat had been contained (BBC News 2015). However, the ATTF has since launched attacks after the lifting of AFSPA.

*National Socialist Council of Nagaland Isak Muivah (NSCN-IM)*

The National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) was founded in the 1960's with the goal of gaining independence for the people of Nagaland (Global Security). The National Socialist Council of Nagaland Isak Muivah (NSCN-IM) was formed in the 1980's as a splinter group of the original NSCN. NSCN-IM predominantly operates in Nagaland, a territory in the northeast part of India carved out of Assam in 1963 (Minorities at Risk 2006). The Naga people ruled themselves independently until British colonial rule and were later absorbed into the Indian Union. Like the Tripuri, many Naga people have not migrated to other regions of India and remain fairly isolated; however there has been an increase in migration from outside groups to the region that are predominantly Bengali (minorities at Risk 2006). Nagaland is one of India's only two Christian majority states, creating a significant religious difference from the rest of the Indian population, which is predominantly Hindu (Minorities at Risk 2006).

The Naga independence movement dates back to the 1940's, with the formation of the Naga National Council. In 1956, the Naga Central Government was formed to help unite and advocate on behalf of the Naga people. A few years later, the Indian government declared the Naga Central Government illegal and tried to crush the movement through military force. In 1962, Nagaland was established but the separatist movement continued. The Indian government persuaded some insurgents belonging to the Naga National Council to sign the Shillong Accord in 1975, which called for the peace and surrender of arms by the Naga militants. This did not sit well with Muivah and Isak, who broke off and created the National Socialist Council of Nagaland – Isak Muivah. They rejected the Shillong Accord and continued to fight against the government. NSCN-IM gathered even more strength when in January of 1993, it was admitted as a member of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples

Organization (UNPO) with its headquarters at the Hague in the Netherlands. In 1997, the Indian government negotiated a ceasefire with NSCN-IM and violence has decreased. In 2005, the ceasefire was extended despite the conflict and terrorist activity obviously continuing to occur (Khan 2006, 431-432).

On August 25, 2001, the NSCN-IM launched its first documented solo attack. This involved a grenade explosion on a truck in Kuligaon village in the Assam state of India. The state of Assam borders the state of Nagaland (See Appendix 4). This attack is classified as a bombing or explosion and targeted private citizens and property. Four were killed (Global Terrorism Database).

#### *Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM)*

Jaish-e-Muhammad is an extremist Islamic group that seeks to undermine Indian control of the province of Jammu and Kashmir, unite it with Pakistan, and institute Sharia Law (Mapping Militant Organizations). JeM receives significant monetary support as well as refuge from the Pakistani government (Mapping Militant Organizations). JeM was founded in 2000 by Massod Azhar upon his release from prison (Mapping Militant Organizations). Azhar had ties with Al Qaeda, the Mujahedeen, and Somalian insurgencies as well as many others (Mapping Militant Organizations). JeM was banned in 2001 (Mapping Militant Organizations). Many of JeM's members come from the Harakat-ul-Mujahideen, a preexisting terrorist group operating in India and Pakistan, as well as Afghanistan (Rabasa et. al. 2006, 83).

Jammu & Kashmir, where JeM is predominantly active, is the only Muslim majority region in India (Minorities at Risk 2006) (See Appendix 4). This area has been subject to many land disputes between India and Pakistan, including the attempt of Pakistan to essentially annex the region and absorb it into its territory. Jammu & Kashmir is where the majority of fighting between India and Pakistan occurs and the territory has been

under the umbrella of AFSPA since 1990. This has caused human rights abuses and repression in the area to increase, particularly extrajudicial killings (Ganguly 2018). This has led to many movements to repeal AFSPA and replace it with a law that upholds human rights while also maintaining security (Ganguly 2018). Understandably, the military has opposed this since AFSPA guarantees immunity from prosecution for military officials engaging in otherwise unlawful conduct (Ganguly 2018).

The Muslim population in India has been subject to a history of discrimination. In 2000, widespread protests broke out after Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state, proposed a law that would require state approval prior to the construction of religious structures (Minorities at Risk 2006). This law directly targeted the Muslim minority, since the government officials who would be approving the religious buildings were almost entirely Hindu. Throughout India, the Muslim population is economically disadvantaged, underrepresented in government, and has limited decision-making power in government on both the federal and regional levels (Minorities at Risk 2006). This general discrimination does not amount to repression, since Muslims can still participate in economic activity, political life, and can practice their religion.

On April 19, 2000, JeM carried out its first documented act of terrorism in which a suicide car bomber exploded his vehicle outside the Indian Army Corp's headquarters in Badami Bagh (Global Terrorism Database). Four army personnel, three civilians, and the bomber were killed in the attack (Global Terrorism Database). This was the first suicide attack in the history of the Kashmir conflict and gained JeM significant notoriety (Mapping Militant Organizations).

### ***Communist Party of India – Maoist (CPI-Maoist)***

The Communist Party of India – Maoist was formed in September of 2004 (Global Security). This organization has

roots dating back to 1920, when the first Communist Party of India (CPI) was formed with Soviet influence to support communist revolution in India (Roy 2017). In 1967, an uprising occurred in Naxalbari during a violent protest of peasants against a landlord who demanded heavy interest from them (Roy 2017). This protest was quickly quelled, but the term Naxalites, after the location of the incident, has since been used to refer to communist organizations. In 1975, the People's War Group was founded and became active in Andhra Pradesh (Aljazeera 2017). The Maoist Communist Center was also founded around this time and began to hold meetings in Bihar (Aljazeera 2017). The PWG and MCC were the most organized, best armed, and largest communist organizations in the country (Roy 2017). Despite their differences, the two groups merged in 2004 and created the Communist Party of India – Maoist (Roy 2017).

The CPI – Maoist aims to spark a peasant communist revolution and capture state power through people's war (Aljazeera 2017). The group's ideology is based on Marxist, Leninist, and Maoist principles of communism. The exact number of members is unknown but estimated to be around 8,000 – 10,000 people (Aljazeera 2017). CPI-Maoist operates predominantly in the areas of Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, where they are able to hide from the government in the mountainous and remote terrain (Aljazeera 2017). In the last fifty years, the Maoist conflict has claimed at least 40,000 lives (BBC 2018). CPI-Maoist is considered a terrorist organization by the Indian government and is a banned group.

CPI-M launched its first documented attack on April 28, 2005. It was an assassination attempt on police superintendent Mahesh Chandra Laddha that took place in a mine. Following the explosion, the perpetrators fired at police in a shooting battle. One person was killed, and nine others injured. The police superintendent survived (Global Terrorism Database).

Throughout the duration of the Naxalite conflict, both

sides have engaged in serious human rights violations. CPI-M has been linked to the targeted killings of police, political figures, and journalists (Human Rights Watch 2016). State security forces, usually police and military personnel, have arbitrarily arrested, detained, and tortured villagers (Human Rights Watch 2016). Both sides have used children in armed operations during the conflict (Human Rights Watch 2008). The government has sought to justify their actions by identifying their victims as Maoist or Maoist supporters (Human Rights Watch 2016). The Indian government has also brought politically motivated terrorism charges against Maoist supporters (Human Rights Watch 2013). This has been considered a misuse of terrorism laws to target political opponents, tribal groups, religious and ethnic minorities, and those who have a history of lower caste standing (Human Rights Watch 2013). Indian courts have repeatedly ruled that ideological sympathy cannot be interpreted as membership in a banned organization (Human Rights Watch 2013).

### **Analysis and Discussion**

The cases of India and Burma present some interesting insights as to why certain groups may choose to pursue terrorist tactics as a method to achieve their goals. In this study, neither of my hypotheses were fully supported. Some cases in Burma indicated past repression may have resulted in terrorism, however this was not present at all in India. The only organization that had sufficient evidence of government repression within my definition was the case of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA). The Rohingya as a group are denied the most basic right of citizenship, despite the Rakhine state being their ancestral land. They are not considered citizens and are unable to participate in any elements of political life that are granted to other ethnic groups within Burma. This is a concrete example of government repression against a particular

group of people, creating a potential preexisting condition for terrorism.

While the majority of the case organizations suffered general discrimination, there was not strong enough evidence to support the claim that intentional, government instituted repression led to terrorist activity. Often times, the repression seemed to increase after the first terrorist attack. There was little evidence, except in the case of ARSA, to support repression prior to the first attack. This indicates that repression is not a necessary, preexisting condition for terrorism to occur.

Capacity also seemed to have little effect on the decision of organizations to engage in terrorist activity. In fact, it appeared to have the opposite effect of what I expected to see in both countries. In Burma, the military indicated a significant amount of capacity as it was able to engage in sweeping campaigns, demanding a large amount of manpower, funding, and artillery. Weak governments and militaries with little capacity would not be able to carry out such endeavors. The Indian government also demonstrated significant capacity, as it was able to carry out counterterrorism campaigns in remote areas like Tripura and Nagaland, which are over 2,300 kilometers from its capital. This is a very far distance to travel, making it harder and more expensive to move military personnel, gear, weapons, and supplies.

One case that did indicate terrorists may consider capacity in their decision making was the Shan State Army – South. In recent months, with the Burmese military being preoccupied with the unrest in the Rakhine state and Rohingya crisis, conflict has intensified in the Shan State. In 2018, new clashes have broken out in the Shan State. Earlier in the year, the clashes were between the insurgency groups, including SSA-S and the government (Thu 2018). Now, the fighting is between the various insurgency groups in the Shan State (Thus 2018). This decision to ramp up the fighting at the same time the

military was preoccupied with the Rohingya crisis, indicates that the capacity of the state was considered a factor at some point. However, this does not explain the initial choice by the SSA-S to engage in terrorist activity.

Since neither of my hypotheses were supported, there are some factors that may have impacted my findings. The first is that almost all groups are long-lasting or splintered off of previous terrorist organizations. Rather than deciding to engage in terrorism with no history of previous violence, most of these groups indicated that they had made the decision to engage in terrorist activity long ago. Therefore, some of the terrorism I was studying was merely a continuation of violence, rather than beginning to engage in violence with no prior history. In Burma, most of the terrorism was linked to guerilla war and insurgency. Some groups, like ARSA, have launched attacks on military and police prior to their first documented terrorist attack as a part of their insurgent war. The same goes for the Karen, who have been fighting a civil war since 1947. My findings may have been altered if I had only examined terrorist organizations who did had no history of violence, rather than those who indicated a history of past conflict.

Another factor that may have influenced the results of this study is freedom of information. Certain events, like protests and government discrimination, may not become national news until they are particularly egregious. This may have influenced the information I was able to access through media sources, since some things may not have been reported on. By using a previously authoritarian country like Burma, there is also the barrier of freedom of information and press. I may not have been able to access the full extent of the issues occurring within the country and repression undertaken by the government. This may have impacted my findings as well.

**Conclusion**

Terrorism is a worldwide phenomenon affecting many countries, particularly those classified as weak and failing states. As can be concluded from this case study, repression and government capacity do not explain two root causes and necessary condition of terrorism. Government instigated repression was not present in all my cases, yet the decision to engage in terrorist activity was still made. Capacity also does not appear to have much relationship to this decision, since both India and Burma demonstrated relatively powerful military and police capacity, yet terrorism still occurred.

Understanding what causes terrorism is an important factor to aid in the creation of counterterrorism policy. Once we know what causes terrorism, we can work to eliminate those facts and eradicate terrorism more broadly. By focusing on the factors behind terrorism, rather than the terrorism itself, it can help us better shape counterterrorism police to be more effective and less strenuous.

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